

#1468 Winning battles against the forces of neoliberalism around the world

Intro 2-4-22

[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 will take a look at several vignettes of recent victories against conservative governments, implementing exploitative neoliberal policies that inspired people to fight back. We will hear from the recent elections in Chile and Honduras, the massive farmer protests in India, and the protest movement against deregulation of petroleum prices in Kazakhstan. Activists take note.

Clips today are from the *Thom Hartmann Program*, *Behind the News*, *Democracy Now!*, *Vox*, *The Anti-Empire Project*, and *This is Hell!*, with an additional members-only clip from *The Anti-Empire Project*.

Chile Votes for Socialism over Fascism (w Guillaume Long) - Thom Hartmann Program - Air Date 12-21-21

[00:00:45] **THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM:** Thank you. So tell me what happened in Chile over the weekend.

[00:00:50] **GUILLAUME LONG:** Oh, we had a pretty clear win. You just said it. Boric won the election quite convincingly. We're on 99.99% of the vote counts, very close to a hundred. They're just checking a few, the few lost ballots that have observations. And he is clearly ahead 65.8% of the vote versus 46.2. So he's winning. It's a victory of the left against the, not just the right, not just the conservative but against his opponent, Jose Antonio Kast, who is a very right wing figure who was a Pinochet nostalgic, who said a lot of things that might, some analyst might consider as Neo fascist or, it's extremely, extremely right wing, someone who admired Donald Trump very much and modeled his campaign on the campaign of in Brazil. So someone who really belongs to that kind of extreme sectors of the right wing, who was defeated.

I think this is good news for Chile. It's good news for Democrats around the world. It's good news for progressives around the world. And it's good news because the margin, the difference between Boric, the winner, and Kast, the loser is much larger than a lot of polls had anticipated. And many of us feared a very close race. In fact some people feared that Boric might not win at all. And if he did win, it would be with a very small margin. This is a convincing margin. This is something which obviously gives him a much easier beginning to his presidency for sure. And is what confirms the democratic will of the Chilean people, and the fact that he has a mandate to govern according to his progressive and democratic program.

So I think all around it's good news. There are challenges ahead, but it's good news that we had yesterday from Chile.

[00:02:30] **THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THOM HARTMANN**

PROGRAM: There are some who are suggesting, myself included, that history tends to move back and forth like a pendulum -- obviously not always identically -- but that we tend to, at least here in the United States, we tend to alternate back and forth between essentially conservative and progressive. We've been in the conservative Reagan era since 1980. Prior to that, we were in the progressive FDR, New Dealer since 1932. Prior to that, it was the conservative, William Howard Taft -- or excuse me, back to 1920, I'm forgetting the president's name. But in any case, is that what's happening in south and central America, or -- and I realize it's a huge area; you were the former foreign minister of or the minister of foreign affairs in Ecuador, we're talking about Chile -- are those kinds of, is this. Let me rephrase this. Is this a battle between two people where personality won, or has there been a shift in public opinion in Chile? And is this happening in the wider region with regard to abandoning or repudiating right wingism and the neo-liberalism and embracing something that looks like what the Europeans call social democracy?

[00:03:41] **GUILLAUME LONG:** Yeah. So I think that's a great question. I think there are two kinds of answers to that. One more macro, more regional. For sure we're seeing in Latin America a return of progressives and of the left in general. The first decade and a half, as the first decade and a half of this century, was marked by what a lot of analysts called the pink tide. So a number of left-of-center, some quite radically left-of-center governments in power in Latin America. And then from roughly -- obviously it depends on the country -- but so marching 2014, 2015 onwards, you see a political fatigue and erosion of the popularity of the left in a number of the countries. There's also commodities decline, which creates economic problems for Latin America. And you see the return of the right.

Now, I think the right put it badly wrong in Latin America. They applied the good old recipes of the good old IMF and World Bank-led recipes of the Washington consensus of the 1980s, 1990s, were aggressively neoliberal, and that's not necessarily what people wanted. They just had a decade and a half of reduction of poverty, reduction of inequality, of important GDP growth, but also in some countries constituent processes with civil rights processes with more rights, for more people, et cetera, et cetera. And when neoliberalism came back and particularly with the aggressiveness with which it was implemented from 2015 onwards the right didn't do well.

So from 2018 onwards -- again, it depends on the country -- that the victory of of the left of center candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico, is very important. And then the recuperation of Argentina on behalf of the leftist Peronists was very important. And then we saw a lot after a coup in Bolivia that [unintelligible] coming back to power. And more recent victories in Peru, in Honduras.

And so we've seen that pendulum swing back to the left. We see that you described. And in fact, the rule of the right in Latin America will have been quite short-lived. It will have been one mandate, most right-wingers not being able to reelect themselves.

So that's the Latin American macro story. But there's also a Chilean story, because this is a victory that has to be contextualized and Chile's history.

Chile was the laboratory of neo-liberalism. It was done through an authoritarian way, through a military dictatorship, led by a terrible man called Augusto Pinochet. And it was the first, it was the most aggressive place where neo-liberalism is implemented. And despite democratization in 1990s and the early two thousands and clearly to the democracy today, a lot of the legacy of neo-liberalism -- that inequality, that high hyper stratified society in terms of social classes -- has remained unscathed. And what we've seen in Chile since 2019 onwards -- and you could go back to the large student protests of a decade ago, but particularly from 2019 onwards -- are these huge protests against an economic. People taking to the streets.

So I think Bodic is also a product of that new wave of democratization, which isn't just democratizing politics, as in elections and parliamentary reserve and not going to jail when freedom of expression and not going to jail when you say what you think, but also the democratization of the socioeconomic base of Chile, which is what remains to be done in Chile, to really move away from this really unequal society, which a lot of them sort of apartheid state of rich and

poor which Bodic has inherited today. So I think this is really a very important, that kind of democratization is very important. And it's a huge challenge that Bodic faces today.

[00:07:14] **THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THOM HARTMANN**

PROGRAM: Yeah. It's a remarkable thing. And I think it's a really good sign. I think it's a good sign for democracies all over the world.

Two Interviews on Chile - Behind the News - Air Date 12-28-21

[00:07:20] **ANTONIA MARDONES MARSHALL:** It's the worst one we have had since the coming back over the dictatorship; like, the most conservative Congress, probably, that's going to assume in March.

So, we know that a lot of the things that we want to do, that have to pass through Congress, are going to be very difficult, and we're going to have to moderate a lot of our program points, so that we can get some advances passed.

So, in that sense, it's, kind of, a downer; that having this very progressive president, a lot of things are not going to be able to be done. And that is a worry, because it's going to generate frustration in the people that voted for us.

But in that sense, I think that the most important thing that this government can do, and that was in threat with the opposite candidate, Jose Antonio Kast, was supporting, getting the constituent assembly, all the support it needs to write the new constitution.

So, we are living a unique process in Chile, since the social uprising in 2019, that opened this possibility of a new constitution. We voted for people to write the new constitution, it's 155 people that were democratically elected for that; with gender parity, we have equal women and men writing the constitution, and with seats for indigenous people.

So it's a very special and unique composition of this constituent assembly.

Kast was always opposed this... this assembly; he wanted to reject it, he wanted to vote against it.

[00:08:41] **DOUG HENWOOD - HOST, BEHIND THE NEWS:** And he is likely to undermine the process too, if he'd won, right?

[00:08:44] **ANTONIA MARDONES MARSHALL:** Yeah. He could, like, because the resource has come... in some way he could, and he could do campaign to say, "They're not doing anything," because there has to be a plebiscite after the constitution is done, to say, "We accept it," or we go back to the Pinochet constitution.

And, I think, that if that Boric... like, one of the good news, that he's a president, that he's going to accompany this process, and we're going to be able, at least, to get a new constitution that changes the rules of the game, the distribution of power in the state, in such a way, that, like, for the future, it's going to be much more easy to make changes.

What happened with the constitution of Pinochet was that it had a lot of blocks that made it very, very difficult to change itself, to make reforms to the constitution. And that wouldn't allow us to get out of, like, basic things.

For example, Chile is one of the only countries in the world where water is totally privatised. It's not, like, a public.... it's not, like, for the... for the public. It's in private companies. And that's something that is going to change with this constitution for sure, for example.

[00:09:43] **DOUG HENWOOD - HOST, BEHIND THE NEWS:** And of course, one of the most notorious achievements, if you want to call it that, of Pinochet, was privatizing the public pension system. Is there anything that can be done about that? Of course, Congress going to block that...

[00:09:53] **ANTONIA MARDONES MARSHALL:** It's always going to depend, because, of course, like, congress will not support that; although the center has been moving towards changing the private system that was done during Pinochet, and there's even some center-right that has since, like, accepted that it's not good, because pensions are really of mystery.

I think we're not going to be able to do the reform we expected to do, but we for sure are going to end the AFP [?]. That is the actual system. I think that is, like, the goal to doing this government.

And, I think, how much we can pressure the Congress to actually vote in favor of that, will also depend of social mobilisation. How much people continue empower, continue mobilizing, and pressuring the Senate and the representative house to vote through, like, for more progressive laws. That has been happening in the last months, or couple of years, since the social... since the social uprising.

[00:10:49] **DOUG HENWOOD - HOST, BEHIND THE NEWS:** Yeah. What's happened with that mobilization? Is it still existing in any sense, or has it gotten folded into a political campaign? You know, a lot of people say, uh, that electoral campaigns are the death of activism. What, what is the relation of that activism to the campaign, and what is the state of the activism itself?

[00:11:04] **ANTONIA MARDONES MARSHALL:** Of course, it's not like it was at the beginning, that people were every day protesting in the streets. Like, it passed to another stage. I think that the constituent assembly process, kind of, likes a lot, because a lot of the leaders of social movements were actually elected in for being some of the people that are writing the constitution. So... so there was some, kind of, institutional path to those demands.

What we can see from that rising, like, the changes in society have to do with social organization. Like, it began, like, with massive movements going through the streets. But then you began to see, I don't know how you call it in English; like, Cabildos, like, people getting together to discuss politics, and to... and to discuss, like, the new Chile they wanted; assemblies of people that become, like, very, very common.

And that has mutated towards, like, more and more organizations. So now, for example, in the constitutional assembly, they opened a stage for social organizations to go to tell the assembly members, what are the changes they want for the new constitution. And, like, hundreds, and hundreds, of organisations have been going, with well-written plans of, like, why... I don't know, environmental crisis is priority, or why immigrant rights should be treated in this way.

And, so I think it's not that it disappeared, it just took, like, a more organized way. Like, at the beginning, it was very disorganized. It was just like the anger of people, and, like, going out and protesting, you know?

[00:12:33] **DOUG HENWOOD - HOST, BEHIND THE NEWS:** I am talking with Antonio Maradones Marshall of the Gabriel Boric presidential campaign in Chile.

And the people who are activated by that... uh, those moments; are they engaged with the... this electoral process? Are they excited about Boric, or are they looking elsewhere for a real change?

[00:12:48] **ANTONIA MARDONES MARSHALL:** The electoral participation tells us a little bit about that. Like, in Chile, participation is,

generally, very low, because vote is voluntary. So we have, commonly, like, uh, 40, 45% of people going to vote on elections. And for Gabriel Boric, we have the highest number of people going to vote in all our democratic history. Like, since, like, Pinochet, this is the election that more people went to vote. It was, like, 55%, I think, of the population. So it was very high. So I think there is some commitment.

I'm not going to say that it is all in favor of Boric. I think a lot of it was also against Fascism. It was also, like, "The other alternative is very dangerous for women's rights, for, um, for environmental rights, et cetera."

What this fear of facism did is a phenomenon of uniting the left wing... the left wing in a way that we hadn't been united in very long.

Generally, I think this happens in most countries; like, the right wing is very keen to joining through interest plus interest, and the left is very keen to separating because of, like, small ideological difference.

So we're always, like, we're always fragmenting, fragmenting, fragmenting. And now, in this moment, I think we're in a moment of coming together, because we know that it wasn't only the danger of Kast in the elections, but now what comes is gonna be to defend this government, because the right wing, the rich people, they... they, the owners of the country, will be coding [?] constantly what we're trying to do.

So we're going to need unity to defend the process.

[00:14:31] **DOUG HENWOOD - HOST, BEHIND THE NEWS:** Well, what does the left in Chile look like? What is its constituents? I mean, I imagine it goes from the far left to a central left, but could you just say, what kinds of forces are arrayed on the left side of the spectrum?

[00:14:40] **ANTONIA MARDONES MARSHALL:** After the dictatorship, politics were a demonized by what was the right wing and the center left, which we have criticized a lot, because they also have perpetuated when they were in government a lot of, like, neoliberal, and deepen a lot of neoliberal politics. But you have, like, in this center left, a broad spectrum from the center-center, to the socialist and the Socialist Party. You have people more neoliberalist, and people that are much lesser. So I think there is, like, uh, a difference.

And then you have the Communist Party that has, historically, been in electoral politics, but generally didn't pass the 5% of the vote.

I would say that, from the student movement in Chile, that was very strong in 2011, and that we elected four representatives in Congress, that, like, a new force began to emerge. That is what we call the Frente Amplio; the "Broad Front."

And this is the coalition that now one government. It's a very new coalition, that officialized with that name in 2016. So it's only five years old. And where you have a spectrum of basically leftist and social democrats, or democratic socialist, I would say, parties and social movements. And we have then an Alliance with the Communist Party and other movements that were close to them to create this block that is called Aprobado Dignidad; "Dignity Approved," or something like that, you would translate it.

And that's the government coalition that actually won the election

A Moment of Hope Xiomara Castros Likely Win in Honduras Ends Years of Right-Wing Rule After Coup - Democracy Now! - Air Date 11-30-21

[00:16:11] **AMY GOODMAN:** We begin today's show in Honduras, where leftist presidential candidate Xiomara Castro appears poised to become the country's first woman president, putting an end to over a decade of right-wing neoliberal rule. While the official vote count has not been released, Castro holds a commanding lead over Nasry Asfura of the right-wing National Party, which has ruled Honduras for 12 years following the 2009 U.S.-backed coup which ousted Castro's husband, Manuel "Mel" Zelaya. Xiomara Castro claimed victory Sunday night.

[00:16:51] **XIOMARA CASTRO DE ZELAYA:** [translated] We are going to build a new era. Out with the death squads. Out with corruption. Out with drug trafficking and organized crime. No more poverty and misery. To victory! The people will always be united. Together, we are going to transform this country.

[00:17:14] **AMY GOODMAN:** Xiomara Castro's apparent victory in Honduras is seen as a blow to Washington, which has embraced successive right-wing governments despite widespread accusations that Honduras has become a narco-military regime. In April, a federal court in New York sentenced the brother of the Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández to life in prison for drug trafficking. Prosecutors also accused the president of being a co-

conspirator in state-sponsored drug trafficking. This all comes as Hondurans continue to flee the dire social and economic conditions at home.

We're joined now by two guests. Suyapa Portillo is a Honduran scholar and associate professor at Pitzer College in California, author of the new book *Roots of Resistance: A Story of Gender, Race, and Labor on the North Coast of Honduras*. She's joining us from Claremont, California. And in the Honduran city of Comayagua, we're joined by Faridd Sierra, who's a high school teacher, has been closely following the elections.

Faridd, let's begin with you right there in Honduras. Can you talk about the significance of the apparent victory of what will become the first female president of Honduras, Xiomara Castro de Zelaya?

[00:18:23] **FARIDD SIERRA:** Yeah, definitely. I mean, the significance, first of all, I want to say that it's brought hope to the entire country. I mean, people are celebrating out in the streets. I just got back from Tegucigalpa, I was there for the weekend. On Friday, people were tense, people were going to the stores expecting something negative may have happened, or for the weekend, and when the first ballot count came out, people were exuberant, people were relieved. And even yesterday, when I woke up in Tegucigalpa, there was this sense of hope in the country, which people hadn't felt in such a long time.

[00:19:09] **AMY GOODMAN:** I want to go to one more clip, of *Democracy Now!* co-host Juan González raising the issue of the U.S.-backed coup in Honduras with then-presidential candidate Hillary Clinton during a meeting that she had with the New York Daily News editorial board. Juan worked for the New York Daily News. He asked about Clinton's decision not to declare Zelaya's ouster in 2009 a coup.

[00:19:37] **JUAN GONZALEZ:** Do you have any concerns about the role that you played in that particular situation, not necessarily being in agreement with your top aides in the State Department?

[00:19:49] **HILLARY CLINTON:** Well, let me again try to put this in context. The Legislature — or the national Legislature in Honduras and the national judiciary actually followed the law in removing President Zelaya. Now, I didn't like the way it looked or the way they did it, but they had a very strong argument that they had followed the Constitution and the legal precedents. And as you know, they really undercut their argument by spiriting him out of the country in his pajamas, where they sent, you know, the military to, you know,

take him out of his bed and get him out of the country. So this was — this began as a very mixed and difficult situation.

If the United States government declares a coup, you immediately have to shut off all aid, including humanitarian aid, the Agency for International Development aid, the support that we were providing at that time for a lot of very poor people, and that triggers a legal necessity. There's no way to get around it. So, our assessment was, we will just make the situation worse by punishing the Honduran people if we declare a coup and we immediately have to stop all aid for the people, but we should slow walk and try to stop anything that the government could take advantage of, without calling it a coup.

[00:21:28] **AMY GOODMAN:** So, that's Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, who was secretary of state, with Juan González questioning her about why the U.S. had not declared what happened in Honduras a coup. Suyapa Portillo, Honduran scholar, associate professor at Pitzer College, can you talk about this U.S. history with Honduras, which leads right into the massive flow of migrants from Honduras, asylum seekers, to the United States?

[00:22:00] **SUYAPA PORTILLO:** Thank you so much, Amy. Listening to these comments brings chills up my back, because, you know, as a scholar and as a Honduran, we followed all those incidents day by day, moment by moment, waiting for the Obama administration to declare this a coup so that constitutional order could come back to the country, and, of course, he didn't have that courage. Neither did Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

So, the other thing I want to say is that this win for Honduras is a testament to bottom-up organizing, to people without money, without any resources, facing exodus, facing migration, facing great violence, took to the streets peacefully to say, "Enough is enough. We are voting against a narco-dictatorship, but also against a nationalist party, and voting for the dead." Many of the social media posts from people celebrating, almost in tears, was, "We're voting for the dead, for those who perished since the coup d'état."

So, the history — I find that the history of the United States has been a history of intervention. The 2009 coup under a Democratic presidential administration was the most tragic event of the 21st century in not just Central America but in Latin America. It's a shameful moment in the Obama administration, and also demonstrates sort of the U.S. lack of care for Central America. That constitution that Mel Zelaya wanted to change was written during the Cold War period, during Reagan. It was a constitution that was antiquated, that needs change, that didn't reflect the community now. Linking Honduras to Venezuela or linking

Honduras to — you know, was irrelevant. Honduras has a different history, has a different kind of colonization by United States politics since the early 20th century and even before, and so, it didn't make sense that the Democratic Party wouldn't respect the rule of law in Honduras. Sadly, Honduras has not recovered from the coup until now, and this is how people are seeing it, as a moment of hope.

India's huge farmer protests, explained - Vox - Air Date 12-30-2020

[00:24:28] **NARRATOR:** This is one of the busiest highways leading to Delhi. It's been blocked for weeks. Tens of thousands of farmers from the Northern states of India have marched to the capital city to protest farming reforms. They've covered at least five major highways around the city. The police met them with tear gas and water canons, but they made it through and have now set up camp in and around Delhi.

This is all happening because prime minister Modi's government has passed new farming laws that will change how the agricultural industry has worked for decades, and in a country of 1.4 billion people where agricultural workers make up half of the labor force, the repercussions of those laws could be devastating.

In the 1960s, India, a recently independent country, was struggling to produce enough food for its citizens. A string of droughts made things worse, causing devastating famines, so the government stepped in to modernize, farming and increase the food supply in what was called the green revolution. They brought in US advisers to help boost the production of rice and wheat. Together, they ended up over-using chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation causing large plots of land to become infertile. Many crops suffered, some nearly disappeared, but rice and wheat production soared, and soon India went from having a food crisis to having a food surplus.

It was in this context that India also developed a nationwide food marketing system to ensure fair prices. It's a complex system and it differs from state to state, but here's one way to. It starts with farmers bringing their crops here to wholesale markets locally known as mandis. The farmers then sell those crops to traders through open auctions with transparent pricing. Prices can also be informed by the minimum support price or MSP, a government price for crops like rice, cotton wheat. The government only buys a couple of crops at these prices in certain states, but those prices can still serve as a benchmark. The

crops then go to secondary market or are stored by the buyers before they are sent out for future sales. It's not a perfect system though.

[00:26:52] **KAVITHA KURUGANTI:** Local traders do end up colluding with each other. The auctions, actually, are not competitive bidding,

[00:27:01] **NARRATOR:** But, for the most part, the system works on a large scale because there's oversight that aims to protect farmers by giving them market standards

[00:27:10] **KAVITHA KURUGANTI:** They've been designed, keeping in mind the fact that farmers are the weakest link and they can be exploited in numerous ways.

[00:27:20] **NARRATOR:** Over the years, state reforms have gradually redefined and regulated markets in different ways across India. In Punjab and Haryana, for example, they have become a vital part of the industry and farmers here have the highest incomes in the country, but in the state of Bihar markets were eliminated in 2006 and the farmers here are still ranked the poorest in India by income. And all of this is happening while there's a bigger farming crisis, the money in farming is disappearing.

Since the days of the green revolution, agriculture has gone from accounting for nearly 50% of the economy to just 15%, meaning millions of farmers already have trouble making ends meet in this shrinking economy. More than half of India's farming households are in debt, and this debt has contributed to a suicide crisis. In the last two years, more than 20,000 farmers have died by suicide. Because of this economic hardship, farmers have been asking for reforms for decades, but this year, instead of providing more protections for this vulnerable community, the central government went in the opposite direction.

[00:28:30] **KAVITHA KURUGANTI:** And farmers feel that the direction in which the reforms are happening are actually a direction of dismantling of them.

[00:28:38] **NARRATOR:** So let's take a look at these three farming acts that sparked the protest. Each of them deregulates a different part of the system.

The first act creates free unregulated trade spaces outside the markets. The laws in these spaces would override wholesale market rules. And although a lot of trade takes place outside already, what happens in the markets remains a benchmark across the industry, but this act will create two parallel markets with

very different rules, one with oversight and another that creates room for big corporate players to come in unregulated.

[00:29:15] **KAVITHA KURUGANTI:** And in this dual market structure, the players in the regulated markets are bound to move out and operate in the deregulated spaces, and that is where farmers are going to lose out when these traditional spaces collapse onto themselves.

[00:29:32] **NARRATOR:** The second act creates a framework for contract farming deals. Any business agreements would be strictly between farmers and traders, with little oversight, giving farmers few options to fight bad deals. As these agreements increase outside of wholesale markets, they could further fragment the market and leave small farmers dependent on terms set by big corporations, or be cut out of the industry altogether.

The third act affects a different part of the chain. It eliminates the storage limits previously set by the government to control prices. Unlimited storage means that anyone with enough money can stock up. The problem is, without oversight they can also start dictating prices.

Altogether the three acts, invite big players into a fragmented and deregulated market that could lead to volatile prices for farmers.

[00:30:21] **KAVITHA KURUGANTI:** And by deregulating the markets, the government has also put out a message in the same breath, essentially saying that they think farmers don't need any protection anymore from the government.

[00:30:31] **NARRATOR:** On June 3rd, 2020, when the government announced the farming reforms, it didn't take long for the impact to be felt on the ground. Wholesale markets around the country have already seen fewer crops arrive in their market yards. In the state of Madhya Pradesh more than 40 markets have lost business.

[00:30:49] **KAVITHA KURUGANTI:** Trading has moved out of regulated market spaces. And it is not as though good prices are being fetched by farmers. And this is the context in which farmers angle has to be understood. They didn't get what they wanted, and what was thrust down upon them is very different from what they were asking for.

Debriefing the Indian Farmers' Victory with Navyug Gill Part 1 - The Anti-Empire Project - Air Date 11-29-21

[00:31:12] **NAVYUG GILL:** It's been an incredible week. And, uh, it's really hard to, kind of, put into words, um, the... the, sort of, combination of feelings and hopes and concerns that I went through, and I'm sure lots of other people went through. Um, and yet all we have is words. So we must... we must try to make sense of it. Right?

Um, so.... Uh, I... I got the news on Thursday night, um, and with anything involving the Indian government, one has huge amounts of disbelief, and, um, you know, suspicion, um, because there is so much misinformation, and so many, sort of, feints and fakes out there.

So... so, to me, it was just, you know, okay, something has occurred. It seems like there's been a, uh, an announcement. Um, but we have to investigate its provenance, and you have to, kind of, see...

Very quickly, I started getting, kind of, flooded with messages, and it was more, and more, and different people, at different sites.

And so, that's when, um, I started to, kind of, take it seriously, and looked through some of the news sites that were carrying, uh... Modi's broadcast, and, uh, because of what we've all gone through this last year, with this protest, uh, it was, you know, those were my first thoughts; that we have to stay vigilant. Um, you know, any number of things could be happening.

So let's, sort of, hold the euphoria, and hold that anger together; um, and keep our eye on the... on the, kind of, larger prize.

Um, and then by Friday morning, uh, when it looked like this was, sort of, actually, a legit, um, occurrence, then... then there was a, kind of, rush of emotion, and then... and then a, kind of, parallel scramble to do more sense-making. What is this? What are the implications? How did this happen?

Uh, and I think I've been, sort of, in that space for the last, you know, five or six days. Making sense of this moment, feeling the euphoria, and trying to, kind of, put it in a larger context.

But this was another point I, kind of, mentioned somewhere else, about... we don't, in the west, I think, know how to engage in a sustained struggle. We get, like, struggle fatigue very quickly.

Uh, usually. There are exceptions, of course, and there's incredible, like, especially, First Nations mobilization that are sustained. But otherwise-- or, you know, pipeline access stuff, there are sustained struggles.

But by and large, our, sort of, mode, is a, kind of, protest, and expression, and then you, sort of, go home. Here, it's a sustained movement. And there were a lot of people that, sort of, fell off, and, sort of, got disinterested, and were, like, "Well, what's the next hot thing?"

And, of course, people have a right to be interested in whatever they want, and intention spans, being what they are, people can take on different things.

But there was this, kind of, lull. And I think it was just the committed people that were like, "We're not going to let this fall off the agenda. The people are struggling there, but in this, sort of, online writing, speaking world, people were still engaging in stuff.

So that, I think, happened throughout the summer, and, especially, in the fall. There was a couple of key elections, in Bengali, in Tamil Nadu, in UP [Uttar Pradesh], in the municipal elections, where the BJP suffered, sort of, defeats.

And I think then the, sort of, mobilization for the elections that are coming up in the next year, the five states that are going up for elections, there was a, kind of, eye on that.

So there's a lot of, kind of, churning. And throughout, the protest sites remain disciplined, and organized, and committed. And I think that's where we should, kind of, see the government was all out of options. They had, kind of, depleted their reservoir of dirty tricks, and delegitimation, and they were, sort of, forced to make this massive concession.

[00:35:05] **JUSTIN PODUR - HOST, THE ANTI-EMPIRE PROJECT:**
Wow.

Yeah. So, I mean, the issues, if we can, you know, if we can... if we can get to the issues, like, it... it, kind of, boils down to, um, support for agriculture, and whether... whether there's going to be an ultimate, kind of, like, guarantee that there's going to be a state procurement if, you know, given the buffering of

agriculture, and the climate, and the way things go up and down with agricultural prices and world markets.

And so, um, you... you've written, you know, before we even talked last time, you were talking about how the Indian state, after independence, set up a system... just... and all the system was designed to do was make the worst of the British Imperial famines, kind of, go away,

And they succeeded at that. Um, but that's what they're trying to remove because of the possibility of profits.

And also, you know, when I looked into it, it's... it's also, like, a longstanding, uh, campaign of the US and the European Union to have India, um... have that all be privatized.

So they're repealing the bills, but... but you've been posting stuff, and I saw this thing, uh, where they're saying, like, the minimum support price, uh, you know, it's... it's... and... and the agri... government agricultural procurement has to be expanded. It has to, you know, you can't just say, like, "Cool, you repealed... repealed the bill."

So, like, what are... what are some of the debates and discussions going on about, like, what... what happens now?

[00:36:47] **NAVYUG GILL:** So this was, you know, a, kind of, um, a knife to one's throat, right? Um, and, uh, with the repeal of the bills-- I think it's going to happen on the 29th, in the session in parliament-- that immediate, sort of, existential threat will be removed.

But the status quo was a disaster. Um, by all accounts, especially in Punjab and Haryana, but throughout the country.

But this isn't just in Punjab and Haryana. You know, the... the water table was plummeting, the soil was degrading, uh, farmer suicides, you know, land fragmentation, all sorts of inequities.

So it was nothing... there was no, you know... the status quo itself was... was, um, unsustainable, and disastrous. And so, the removing of this existential threat means that we're still back in a, kind of, crisis mode.

Now, what the government was trying to do was, as you said, sort of, dismantle a public system of procurement by creating a, kind of, parallel private arena, um, which would thrust people back into volatility and poverty.

Now that system, by and large, is only, sort of, intact and existent in Punjab and Haryana and to an extent in Rajasthan and western UP, where farmers are able to avail themselves with these two, sort of, things, or two mechanisms: one is the minimum support price, and the second is the infrastructure to actually buy crops at that price,

[00:38:09] **JUSTIN PODUR - HOST, THE ANTI-EMPIRE PROJECT:** Right, the so-called "Mondays." And without... without that... um, so they... they kept arguing... the government argued that there'll still be a minimum support price, but they're just dismantling all those markets.

[00:38:21] **NAVYUG GILL:** Right. So they would dismantle the markets, and they would allow private players in, and then, after a couple of years, they would, sort of, do away with it all. So that has been averted.

But, uh... but the point is that those two mechanisms, the struggle, the turn of the struggle, is to extend those across the country. That no farmer should just be at a hostage to, you know, market fluctuation.

Um, and... and instead... If you have-- and there is MSP support; so even if Punjab and Haryanafarmers mostly get the MSP, huge numbers of farmers across the country are aware of what MSP is, and they're aware they're not getting it.

So, if you set up an MSP system across the country, you grow what is ecologically sound, and you have the infrastructure to actually buy those, uh, that produce. You can ensure the well-being throughout.

And so the... the move.. The most immediate thing is to set up a, kind of, law on MSP, make it a legal right, so that corporations can undercut and buy at lower prices.

So you set up the infrastructure and the minimum support prices across the country, um... and so every farmer will be assured of a, kind of... of, uh... of a... of a fair price.

This is not some antiquarian, 1960s, 50s, old model. This is, actually, what they're doing in many, many other countries.

[00:39:41] **JUSTIN PODUR - HOST, THE ANTI-EMPIRE PROJECT:** Yeah. Whenever people talk about antiquarian models, it's like, "You guys are trying to restore the British Empire's agricultural model. What are you talking about, antiquated models?"

[00:39:53] **NAVYUG GILL:** Right. Or, like, the... the... the whole, sort of, fantasy of, like, the so-called "gig economy." That is plunging people into 19th century procurement and uncertainty. There's nothing progressive and, like, modernistic about it. It's like, not just, like, a neo-feudalism. Like it's... it's like the worst, umm, capitalist, market-driven nightmare you could imagine.

They're regurgitating that and repackaging it. So ensuring price supports and purchasing infrastructure is sane. Uh, and actually makes good ecological sense; you can make good economic sense.

Kazakhstan's Oyan protest movement w/ Paolo Sorbello - This is Hell! - Air Date 1- 20-22

[00:40:27] **CHUCK MERTZ - HOST, THIS IS HELL!:** You write that the event that sparked the unrest was the sharp increase in the price of liquified petroleum gas-- LPG, not LNG-- the preferred fuel for cars in Kazakhstan's Western region, and Aktau, the capital of Mangystau region. Most automobiles are equipped with an extra LPG tank, which is kept in the trunk. LPG was much cheaper than gasoline, and helped keep transport prices low.

You were mentioning market reforms earlier. Why were LPG prices increased in Western Kazakhstan, where residents depend upon LPG, and it's low price, which makes it the preferred fuel of the region?

[00:41:04] **PAOLO SORBELLO:** Well, the story is about, uh, it will sold, uh, as a market liberalization. They went from, um, a system of a few companies, essentially, uh, providing fuel, uh, at a subsidized price. So the state was paying for... for the mark-up. Uh, and then they turned into this electronic system, bidding system. Um, and this. Essentially uh, allowed, uh, the companies to... to set higher prices, and, uh, compete at a higher level of prices. And, and this, uh, in turn caused increase in prices.

Um, so the story was told, after the increase, that, "Well, it's the market baby." Um, and one public official even said that if a fuel is now too expensive, um,

people should use public transit. And, uh, for your listeners, also, to... to understand, uh, public transit is nearly non-existent in, uh, in the region of Mangystau also, because, um, the... the vast, uh, extent of the... of the landmass there. It's... it's really a huge distances, and there's no real, uh, neighboring cities there. So, it was a, kind of... it sounded like a LATAM in cake, um, in a way, uh, as a, as a public outing.

And this, essentially, was yet another decision and that was felt to be external to the population's ability to make their voices heard. Um, so they were imposed as, uh, another, yet another, uh, decision, uh, that affected their purchasing power, their ability to, uh, to survive essentially.

And, uh, and this caused a protest. Uh, and it was, uh, like you said, also in the introduction, it wasn't the first protest. Um, but it resonated so well across the country that it spiraled pretty quickly. And it mushroomed in, uh, several different cities in Kazakhstan spontaneously. Which was, um, really unprecedented, and really impressive to see.

[00:43:19] **CHUCK MERTZ - HOST, THIS IS HELL!:** So is there a disconnect between political leadership and those who live in the Western Region? Is there even a... a cultural disconnect.

[00:43:30] **PAOLO SORBELLO:** Yes, for sure. There's a total disconnect, um, between, between the leadership and the people. Um, sometimes this was also, uh, highlighted by... by the presidents themselves. They, uh, whenever there is a problem, they, kind of, reprimand, uh, the ministers, or the local governors, saying "You are not in touch with the people!"

But obviously they're not in touch with the people, because everybody is nominated by the top. Uh, even local governors are nominated by the president. And, uh, this is one, actually, one of the main, um, uh, requests and demands of the protests, uh, were, essentially, "Give it... give us, at least the possibility to elect around, uh, local governors. That way, we can at least affect that kind of local politics, uh, dimension."

And, uh, and yeah, so, and also, uh, like you mentioned, though, the west of the country, which is the oil and gas producing region, um, the one that is, uh, essentially a net donor to the budget, um, has always felt left out, and marginalized by the center. Um, because with that wealth is how, um, the former president built, um, the new capital Astana, renamed, uh, after him, Nur-Sultan, uh, in 2019, uh, in this glitzy, uh, skyscrapers, uh, hosted the expo in 2017.

Um, and that kind of wealth was transferred, uh, directly to this, uh, pet project of the former president of this country.

[00:45:10] **CHUCK MERTZ - HOST, THIS IS HELL!:** So, if those LPG prices, if they had not been increased, how likely do you think protests would... would have been? After all, there... like I've said, or like, you know, both of us were saying, there have been, uh, protests in Kazakhstan recently. Was there... was something bound to have triggered protests, whether it was the fuel price hike, or something else?

[00:45:30] **PAOLO SORBELLO:** I believe so. We had no idea, uh, what would have triggered something, but we had witnessed, for example, in 2021, a unprecedented number of strikes. It's not about the length of the strikes, uh, but about the number. Um, virtually all oil companies in, uh, in the west of the country witnessed, uh, strikes in 2021.

Um, there's been attempts to record all of them, but I think we've all failed, because there are so many. And, uh, and most of them were, essentially, demands for better conditions and better salary.

Um, and the pandemic also had a worsening effect, uh, obviously on... on the... on the people's ability to, uh, to survive. A lot of oil companies, uh, fired, um, their... their staff, um, and... and the conditions essentially became worse.

And this had... it was boiling, was... was boiling under... under the lid of this, uh, pot. And we were expecting, um, that the people would have come out on the street.

Uh, I was expecting personally something like this, uh, on the 16th of December, when I was in the square in Almaty, um, the same square, there was a theater of the violent clashes.

Um, but, uh, a lot of, um, police, uh, was met by a few dozen activists. Um, and that, to me, felt like, okay, maybe, um, the... the protest sentiment is not ready yet. Um, so you know, the situation will stay with calm, and, lo and behold, I was contradicted, uh, just a couple of weeks later.

**Has Socialism Broken The Chains of
Neoliberalism_ - Thom Hartmann Program
- Air Date 12-21-21**

[00:47:22] **THOM:** In 1947 a bunch of economists got together at in a hotel on a mountain, Mont Pèlerin in Switzerland, and created what they called the Mont Pelerin Society. Friedrich Hayek was there, Ludwig von Mises was there, and most famously from an American perspective, Milton Friedman of the Chicago School of Economics was there. And they invented this word, neoliberalism the new liberalism. Now, the European use of the word liberal meant free market, so this is the new, we're going to take ideas of free market, the government shouldn't interfere in markets, we're going to put them on steroids. And that's what they did.

They basically came out and promised that under neoliberalism governments would stop protecting their own nations economies and instead turn those over to free trade so employers could scour the world for cheap labor. That the welfare of the citizens of countries should not be taken care of by governments, it should be done by philanthropy, through churches, wealthy individuals, and corporations. That unions gave working people inappropriate power over market forces that only their employers should wield, so reunions would be neutered under neo-liberalism. That taxes which punish the productive class would be cut to the point where morbidly rich billionaires would pay less than 3% income taxes, which is where we're at now in America—3% is what Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos paid last year and the year before last in income taxes — while they're working people who "use most of the benefits of the nation's infrastructure" would therefore logically carry most of the tax load.

Neo-liberalism said that public benefits like primary and higher education, the electric power coming to your house, your water, your septic, your roads, airports, stadiums, even highways should be sold off to the highest bidders, and then operated along purely market principles using the magical profit motive. And even the military and intelligence services would end up as much as 50% in private hands. The more privatization, the better. Well we're there.

But they started this, the first experiment was in Chile in 1973, on 9/11. September 11th, 1973, general Augusto Pinochet, who's senior soldiers had all been trained at the School of the Americas here in the United States, down in Fort Benning, Georgia. Augusto Pinochet rolled his tanks and his soldiers up to the presidential palace where Salvador Allende, the socialist president and about 30 of his close friends, held the Chilean version of the White House. And after about two hours, maybe three hours, Pinochet gave a national radio address and then put a gun to his head and ended his presidency, and thus began, from 1973 to 1990, 17 years of absolute terror in Chile.

And what Pinochet did is he invited Milton Friedman down and they put into place neoliberalism. This was a coup that was set up by Henry Kissinger out of the White House on behalf of Richard Nixon, the Central Intelligence Agency, ITT—which owned all the telephone systems of Chile at the time, and three big American copper companies, because Allende had just nationalized about half of Chile's copper and was using that money to give everybody in the country free healthcare and free college educations.

And Nixon was like, we can't have this. So they went down and they flipped it. They privatized the pensions, they privatized their social security, they sold off state owned industries, they gutted the union, they basically did the neoliberal agenda. And this was supposed to be the experiment to prove to the world how wonderful this is because you know, next up is America. We're going to do this in 15 years with Ronald Reagan. It didn't work out so well. They killed tens of thousands of people. Pinochet was famously dropping dissidents out of helicopters over the ocean as a way of disposing of their bodies so that—while they were alive, he was dropping them. It's why the Proud Boys like to wear these t-shirts and say free helicopter rides for liberals.

I mean, this is a time that is, to this day, kind of celebrated by right-wingers in the United States. But what happened? Inflation went to 341%. You think 5% bad? The GDP fell by 15% because of Milton Friedman's free trade policies. Chile's trade deficit exploded. Unemployment went from 3% to 10%, in some parts of the country it was as high as 22%. So did Friedman and his neoliberal buddies say, "I guess this experiment failed," no, they doubled down. Then they came to the United States and did it with Ronald Reagan, here in 1981. We are still, we are 40 years, next year we will be 41 years into our neoliberal experiment, that's the bad news. The good news is that Joe Biden is the first president since Ronald Reagan took office to openly repudiate neoliberalism, to say, "no, we're going to go back to the New Deal way of government, and of course he's getting blow back from conservatives like Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema and the entire Republican party, of course.

In Russia, Friedman's Chicago boys went in and just took all the state owned enterprises and turned them over to people who were buddies with the Boris Yeltsin, and thus the oligarchy emerged in Russia. I was working in Russia in 1991, in Kaliningrad or in a little town near Kaliningrad, trying to revive peasant farming because the giant mass of collective farms had failed, and there was hunger stalking the country. In Iraq, George W. Bush threw open the country after he invaded. He shut down all the state run enterprises, ended taxes on corporations, ended all the laws that protected the Iraqi economy, threw it open, let any company, any foreign company come in buy any Iraqi assets,

including oil feeds, and take all the wealth out of the country and not pay a damn penny on it, neoliberalism. Here it took a little, it moved a little slower. It took Reagan, Reagan and Bush, 12 years to destroy our union movement, but like I said, we are at this point now where these two forces, progressivism and neoliberalism, are on a collision course in the United States.

Debriefing the Indian Farmers' Victory with Navyug Gill Part 2 - The Anti-Empire Project - Air Date 11-29-21

[00:54:01] **JUSTIN PODUR - HOST, THE ANTI-EMPIRE PROJECT:** If you watch, like, what's happened in Kashmir, or even what's happened with the COVID response, or, you know, the Bhima Koregaon case, and, like, the way they persecute, uh... uh, you know, Muslims, I mean, of course the killings of Muslims, and the complete impunity, the way they've attacked universities and...

It's almost... in spite of how much it costs, in spite of the 750 deaths, and all of this, you know, suffering and sacrifice that the movement has done, you can't help, but look at it with a little bit of jealousy, or, you know, and say like, "How did you guys do this? Like, what do, what do you have? What do you have that the other people, that have been trying to fight for their rights don't have?"

So like, how do you, what... what was, you know... a lot of it can't be generalized, but like, what do you think the keys were to this, uh, to the success of this movement?

[00:55:02] **NAVYUG GILL:** Yeah, it's important and... and, um, difficult questions, but... but, um, I can, maybe... my... my... my tentative thoughts are; First, I don't think... we don't have a substitute for popular mobilization-- broad-based, grassroots, society-wide mobilization.

It can't be, um, a, sort of, coterie of activists and, sort of, committed people, sort of, doing something. It has to be generalized to capture the imagination of large numbers of people.

And that, sort of, societal mobilization is what gave this protest the longevity to weather the storms, and the attacks, and the attempts to delegitimise, and, kind of, sustained... I mean, people saw this as existential, people saw this as a, kind of, "do or die" battle.

But also it, kind of, captured the imagination of everyone. So not just farmers or workers, but school teachers, and transporters, and students, and, you know, urban workers, and... and... and intellectuals, but... but... but government employees, and the rest of it.

So, I think, that... that notion of, like, mobilizing beyond the, sort of, committed core, is... sounds easy, but I think that that is what makes the struggle, um, so much harder to, sort of, just, crush and defeat.

Um, I think that agriculture has a, sort of, space in the Indian imagination... subcontinental imagination, maybe part of a global imagination as... as a, kind of, primal activity, that feeds people. And, uh, an attack on that is, kind of, felt by people that are three or four or five generations urban, that I've never seen a field in their lives, but they can, kind of, see that.

Um, I think the, uh, conjuncture of, you know, in the job Punjab, and Sikkim, and Haryana, and, sort of, this, kind of, place in the country and the, kind of, sort of, uh, religious, uh, distinctions there, played a role in making it harder to crush.

Not that it was, uh, you know, the government was... was more sympathetic, but it is harder to crush people when they're, sort of, organized, and committed, and driven, by these ideals.

Um, so I mean, those are the, kind of, immediate reasons, but, um, I think it's... there's still so much uncertainty. There's still so much, sort of, um, we're unsure about the, sort of, ways this is going to kind of play out in the next weeks and months. What are the repercussions?

But I think, maybe, the last point I'll say on this, is: Governments are invincible, until they're not. Right? I said this before, too, that the, kind of, notion that the Modi regime, that the BJP, was, just, you know, intransigent, and would never, you know, a step back; uh, that has been proven to be false. That organized, committed people can achieve anything, uh. And this regime for all its veneer of being all powerful, is not.

Summary 2-4-22

[00:58:07] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with the *Thom Hartmann Program* explaining the results of the election in Chile. *Behind the News* looked at the opportunities ahead for the government in Chile. *Democracy Now!* highlighted the newly

elected president in Honduras. *Vox* explained the origins of the farmers' protest in India. *The Anti-Empire Project* discussed the concessions that were forced on the Indian government by those protesting farmers. *This is Hell!* looked at the protests that had been simmering in Kazakhstan for some time. And the *Thom Hartmann Program* explained the origins of neoliberalism and the legacy of an experiment. That's what everyone heard, but members also heard a short bonus clip from the *The Anti-Empire Project* discussing the power of popular revolt and organization.

To hear that and have all of our bonus contents delivered seamlessly into your new members-only podcast feed to that you will receive, sign up to support the show at bestoftheleft.com/supportsupport 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.

Humanize but don't fall asleep at the wheel - Zelda from Minnesota

[00:59:21] **VOICEMAILER: ZELDA FROM MINNESOTA:** Hey Jay, this is Zelda from Minnesota. I just wanted to respond to the guy that said that it's hard not to hate people on the right, especially people on the far-right, when they're espousing views that are hateful or harmful, especially the ones that can kind of see that it's harmful but don't really seem to care. The thing is, I agree with you, we shouldn't hate anybody and we shouldn't wish harm on anybody, but I don't think that we should lose sight of the fact that the right-wingers either want to do harm to people on the left, specifically people of marginalized communities, or they're fine with it, or they're too scared to speak up about it. It's sad, but we can't forget that that's reality, and, you know, love the sinner, hate the sin mentality as we may have, I think we can't overlook the fact that we might have to defend ourselves.

A lot of experts are talking about civil war. You hear it on the news. I'm hearing it on NPR, which I never thought I'd live to see the day that happened. I don't know if it's going to turn out that way or if it's not, I hope it's not, but we can't lose sight of the threat that is in front of us. I keep remembering the book, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* by William L. Shirer or something like that, I might have that last name wrong, but one of the points that he made in that book is that part of the reason Hitler rose to power and was so successful in seizing

control of Germany and its resources is because of the left was asleep at the wheel.

They did not take the threat seriously. They believed that a lot of what he was saying was just to curry favor with his base. They thought he was pandering to a certain type of person. They dismissed him, they all dismissed him, and we can't afford to do that. We cannot afford to lose sight of where the right wing is going in this country, because we saw it on January 6th. And yeah, we saw a lot of Republicans come out and say, " we should condemn those who did this", and they disavowed Trump and what he stands for over it, and then a week later, none of them are saying that. They're all silent on the matter. They're all defending or obfuscating.

The point is, is that we know what the right-wing is about, we know where they're headed, and we should not lose sight of that. No matter what we need to show up to the polls and vote every, single one of us. And we need to convince everyone we know to do that. And we can't lose sight of that. And whether you love the sinner, hate the sin, or if you're just mad at them all, the fact of the matter is this that we all have to show up to vote. We all have to make sure that whatever the worst elements of their party has planned do not come to fruition.

We have to stop it at all costs. And I hope and pray that there will be a peaceful route to stop them, but if they start that level of persecution where our lives are in danger because of the laws they've passed, we need to stand united.

Final comments on getting focused on effective politics

[01:03:18] **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 a VoicedMails. If you'd like to leave a comment or question of your own to be played on the show, you can record a message at (202) 999-3991 or write me a message to jay@bestoftheleft.com.

Now, once again, for context, Zelda is responding to my comments from the end of episode 1467, which itself is part of an ongoing conversation. For the full context, you need to listen to the voicemails and comments found in episodes 1461, 63, 64, 65, and 67. And now I will respond to Zelda, whose point is a very well taken. I would in no way want to incidentally or accidentally tamp down political energy by humanizing our political opponents, or even under emphasize the dangers that many phase by being overly academic about it or

speaking about humanity at such a high level as to obscure the details of what we face.

I definitely see the danger in that and don't want to go down that road, but I think that's exactly why I gravitated to the quote from the civil rights leader. Not that I was having this thought consciously, but if it had been otherwise, I probably would have thought it wasn't a good fit. I think the quote from the civil rights leader was a particularly good fit because he was talking about how white supremacists have an illness and one just doesn't get mad at people for being sick, that sort of thing, and that way of conceptualizing people reduces your anger, but no one would accuse members of the civil rights movement in the 60s of being complacent, or of not seeing clearly the danger they faced.

So I'm coming at things from a very similar direction, looking at the bigger picture of the structures and the mechanisms of humanity, but that is not an encouragement to ignore the very real dangers that we face. It's more about seeing the world and the people in it clearly so that we don't waste our mental or political energy on ineffective strategies when we do get down into the details. I don't want people to waste their mental energy being angry about the existence of Nazis because I would rather that energy be directed towards strategizing how to marginalize them into insignificance. I don't want people to be angry at the existence of people who oppose mask mandates, because I would rather they spend their energy looking for strategies to convince people who oppose mandates to help protect others during a pandemic anyway. There are ways to do it, but we need to put our collective mental energy into that task.

I'm a fan of metaphors. Sometimes they're helpful, sometimes they're not, but try this one on for size. Think of yourself as a light bulb that is powered by your interest in politics. What we want out of a light bulb is light. Lighting up the room is a productive use of energy for a light bulb. What we don't want is heat. Think of those old incandescent light bulbs that'll burn you if you touch them. So getting angry about things that are unchangeable, wishing that immutable aspect of humanity could be different, fighting ineffectually with people on the internet, all of this is our mental and political energy being burned off as heat.

I talk about humanity in a sort of academic, hundred thousand foot view kind of way from time to time, not to lull you into thinking, "well, you know, Nazis are a natural part of life, so I guess I'll just turn off my metaphorical political light bulb." No, no, no. I talk about the structures of our species and our society in that way so that you can stop wasting your energy as useless heat, and to redirect it into being productive and useful light. In other words, don't get complacent, get focused.

As always keep the comments coming in at (202) 999-3991 or by emailing me to jay@bestoftheleft.com. That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show 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 the bonus show co-hosting. And thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at bestoftheleft.com/support, through our Patreon page, or from right inside the Apple Podcast app. Membership is how you get instant access to our incredibly good bonus episodes, in addition to there being extra content and no ads in all of our regular episodes, all through your regular podcast player.

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 twice weekly thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from bestoftheleft.com.