

# #1485 The Politics We Have, The Politics We Need (Socializing the Oil Industry)

Intro 4-23-22

[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 shall take a look at how we got to the form of toothless liberalism we are living with today, and begin to reimagine what a more muscular state apparatus could do in the face of the climate crisis.

Clips today are from The Majority Report, The Thom Hartmann Program, Citations Needed, and Bad Faith; with an additional members only clip from The Majority Report.

## The Liberalism Revolution & The End Of History w Luke Savage & Rana Abdelhamid - The Majority Report - Air Date 4-7-22

[00:00:27] **EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** And I want to dive into that as well. But I guess we can talk there in terms, or start there with the concept of the end of history and then move into the Obama election. For people who might not know, what is that concept and why did you make it one of the central points of your book?

[00:00:42] **LUKE SAVAGE:** Sure. Okay. So the end of history is the title, or part of a title of a book by Francis Fukuyama. That book famously posited -- it came out in the nineties -- famously posited liberalism, liberal democratic institutions, as the end point of human history.

To be very general about it, the suggestion was that we've arrived at this situation where most societies either are or contend to be, or are moving towards, liberal, democratic institutions, a kind of market economy, that sort of thing.

And it's significant for a few reasons. I think every era in some way thinks it's special, right? Every era has a sense of its own exceptionalism. I think the era in which both you and I are born was exceptional in its exceptionalism, if I can put it that way. It's quite a thing for there to be a pervasive sense. This wasn't just in the book, Fukiyama was articulating something that was really in the air at the time. It was really informing politics, particularly in the Anglo-American world, but also beyond, this belief that really there were no alternatives to this. Taking up channeling Margaret Thatcher's famous phrase, there is no alternative. From now on politics is going to be contested within this much narrower set of parameters than it had been in the 20th century, where of course you had liberalism, but you also had all of these challenges to liberalism. Obviously the communist challenge, the fascist challenge as well. And I think also it's important to add the social democratic challenge as well, which you saw in European countries and elsewhere.

That's a very truncated answer to your question. But I think all of this is significant because even today there really is still a belief that a lot of people have that there really isn't an alternative that is possible or can really even be imagined to the present that we currently live in. And I think that's still a very significant influence, the kind of an ambient influence that exerts on our politics and on really all of our social and cultural discourse as well.

[00:02:34] **EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Yeah. What's your sense of how that it's the myth that capitalism has won forever and it's going to be naturalized as the only system and also, neoliberal politics. There's really very little alternatives to it. Social democracies, that's reserved for tiny countries, maybe in Northern Europe, but we're not going to promote those policies among the broader population in bigger capitalist countries like the US. How did an entire generation of politicians all align along that same religious belief in those ideas? Because that's a huge force of group think that it's hard to even fathom how it just became so unchallengeable in such a short period of time.

[00:03:20] **LUKE SAVAGE:** Yeah, that's true. And if you go back 30 years before this end of history, lot of people felt the same thing, including many conservatives, by the way, I think had the same sense of Keynesian social democracy and the welfare state that emerged in Europe and elsewhere after the second world war, people felt that was an impregnable consensus. And that really, you could only make tweaks within it. You could have a sort of conservative version of it, or you could have a version that may be trended towards some kind of socialism, but there was nothing that could, no horizon that could be really seen beyond it.

What happened in the nineties, I think is it's complicated because you used the word "religious" and I think that's the right word. There's a secular theology almost that's developed in the 1990s around liberal democratic capitalism. And the story of how that comes about I think is complicated.

There's in the macro sense, you have the obvious seismic event of the fall of the Soviet Union and also, proceeding that, the clear failure and dysfunction of what the Soviet model had become to deliver anything. The final years of the Soviet union, especially are just characterized by such dysfunction and also, decrepit leadership that's unable to hang on to power and all that kind of thing. So that's one thing.

I think another factor -- and this can't really be overlooked either, although it's a more boring answer in some ways -- is in the countries where neo-liberalism is most potent and where it develops I think most strongly first among conservatives, but then also is taken up by liberals in some cases, in an even more fanatical way. So I'm thinking about Britain and America, especially. There's a specific context, which is that in the United States, that the liberal party and the New Deal consensus that being the Democrats, and then in Britain, the Labor Party, really suffered defeats throughout the 1980s, unlike anything that they'd suffered before. There are these big Reagan landslides and in the UK, the Labor Party loses four general elections between 1979 and 1992. And at the same time, the institutions that had buttressed the post-war settlement in these countries -- so big working class institutions, trade unions built at least partly around strong manufacturing, that kind of thing -- those institutions are completely battered, so there's no longer the popular institutional foundation that there had been before. And so there's a complicated interplay of ideas and material factors here.

But by the time you get to the 1990s -- I think I'll just turn to the British example, 'cause I don't want to be too exhaustive here -- by the time you get to Tony Blair in '97, there's really nothing left in Labor's program that has anything to do with social democracy, really. They're proudly boasting about how they're going to spend the exact same amount as the Tories. But people were so fed up with 18 years of conservative rule, and so on the hunt for some kind of novelty, Blair was able to present himself as this transformational leader, and in doing so he was able to channel a lot of the zeitgeist in the air about the end of history that we've been talking about.

So it's a big question, but I guess that's a sketch of an answer.

# Nationalizing Oil It's About Saving the World - Thom Hartmann Program - Air Date 4-11-22

[00:06:13] **THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM:** It's time to nationalize the fossil fuel industry.

Now, I know the moment you say nationalize, everybody thinks, "Oh my God, Venezuela!" Uh, "Iran!" Uh, people don't think much about Norway, but that's, you know...

And... and all the, you know, the... the... the one time that a Democrat actually said this out loud was back in 20... 2008. And it was during a hearing where the fossil fuel, uh, executives, the CEOs were refusing to answer her question. And Maxine Waters, Representative Maxine Waters-- a Black woman with power, something Republicans hate and fear more than anything else they can imagine-- Maxine Waters basically came right out and said, "If you don't start giving me straight answers, we're going to start talking about nationalizing your industry." she used the word "socialize," but you know, same thing.

And, of course, Fox News went nuts. They melted down. In fact, there's a link to it over in... in the, uh, in the op-ed at [hartmannreport.com](http://hartmannreport.com). But Fox News, and all the... all those on the right-- and frankly, Democrats-- who freaked out when Maxine Waters said this are either unaware of, or completely ignoring, the long history in this country of nationalizing industries that work against the national interest during a time of crisis. And if you don't think that this is a time of crisis, this climate crisis... well, I've got a tornado to sell you.

Or the fact that, hey, it's April 11th and it's snowed in Portland, Oregon. There's an inch of snow on the ground outside right now. It's probably down to a half inch, it's starting to melt, but you know, it's never happened before last year. It was 116 degrees for three days in a row here. That's never happened before either. We're getting Phoenix weather alternating with north pole weather. I mean, it's just... So, you know, if you don't think that we're in a climate crisis, you've... you're not paying attention.

And in large part, this crisis has been brought about by the fact that the fossil fuel industry, for over 40 years, has been lying to us about the impact of their product on this crisis. And funding organizations that are out there lying about

climate change, and denying climate change, and funding politicians... I mean, you know, look at...

Joe Biden had a plan, and the Democrats had a plan, to spend a half a trillion dollars, \$500 billion, on greening the American economy, that really would have taken a good bite out of climate change. It would have reduced our carbon emissions substantially in this country over the next five or 10 years.

And it was defeated. It passed the house, it was defeated by every Republican in the United States Senate plus Joe Manchin-- who's taking money from the fossil fuel industry. In fact, he's the single largest recipient of fossil fuel industry money in the United States Senate.

This is an industry that is calling out for nationalization.

I mean, 40 years ago, literally 40 years ago, Jimmy Carter-- this was 1979, this was 43 years ago, actually-- Jimmy Carter declared a national crisis. And he said, you know, he was going to propose legislation to create, quote, "This nation's first solar bank, which will help us achieve the crucial goal of 20% of our energy coming from solar power by the year 2000." You've heard me play the clip over, and over, and again.

And he, also, Jimmy Carter-- the part that's not in the clip that I... that I play for you so frequently-- is, he also wanted to create a program to sell bonds, essentially like war bonds. FDR did this during World War II: he created a... a... a nonprofit, a government agency that sold government bonds-- in other words, you could loan money to the federal government-- essentially sold, in today's dollars, you know, uh, billions of dollars worth of government bonds to fund an effort to... to... to invent synthetic rubber. This was during World War II. Because we were running out of rubber for tires for jet... fighter jets.

And it worked. And FDR did that.

And... and so Jimmy Carter said "Just as a similar synthetic rubber... rubber corporation helped us win World War II, so will we mobilize American determination and ability to win the energy war."

He proposed this in '79 and, you know, it all came crashing down 42 years ago this coming January, when the fossil fuel industry's candidate, Ronald Reagan, replaced Carter in the White House, killed the Solar Bank and Bond Program, and even took Carter's solar panels off the roof of the White House.

So, if there was ever an industry that merited nationalization right now, it's the fossil fuel industry.

But what's the history of this?

During the crisis of World War I President Woodrow Wilson nationalized the country's railroad, our phone companies, and our telegraph operators. He also nationalized the radio networks and all the radio stations in this country. They were returned to private ownership after the war, but he had nationalized them during the war.

During World War II, Franklin Roosevelt did the same thing. He nationalized the airplane manufacturers, he ... nationalized several gun manufacturer, he nationalized over 3,300 mines in the United States, he nationalized the nation's railroads, he nationalized dozens of oil companies, Western Electric Company, the Hughes Tool Company, Goodyear Tire and Rubber, and even Montgomery Ward, along with 17 foreign companies doing business in the United States.

After FDR died, Harry Truman came along, finished the war. He also nationalized the meat packing industry across the country, and the manana manana hang of... however you say it, Monongahela Railroad Company, and the nations steel mills and hundreds of rail companies. Nearly all were returned to the private sector after the war was over, although it did take until 1965 to re-privatize all of them.

Then came Richard Nixon. In the wake of the collapse of the Penn Central Railroad, Richard Nixon oversaw the nationalization and transfer of 20 railroads into a new government entity that was called the National Rail Passenger Corporation. Today we call it Amtrak. Richard Nixon did that.

In '74, congress created another nationalized entity to deal with freight rail. This is this, I believe this was under, uh, Gerry Ford. It was called the Consolidated Rail Corporation. We called it Conrail. And it absorbed dozens of failing rail companies. This was nationalization, and they were government-held until 1987, when it was privatized. Privatizing Conrail was the third largest IPO, or... actually, at the time, it was the largest IPO in American history.

In 1984, the Continental Illinois Bank and Trust Company was in a crisis, and Ronald Reagan nationalized it. He bought eight... an 80% ownerships to share in the company. It wasn't privatized until 1991 by George Herbert Walker Bush, and was bought by Bank of America in '94.

Also in the eighties, after Reagan recklessly deregulated the savings and loan industry, we saw SNLs crash all across the country as the guys running them made off with billions of dollars in their own private money bins.

And so Reagan and Congress created a... an umbrella agency, it was called the Resolution Trust Corporation, and they nationalized 747 of America's savings and loans. Assets over \$400 billion. They helped were held as nationalized companies from 1987 until 1995, when they were reprivatized. Then... that was Reagan.

Then George W. Bush, uh, when... when he was handed the white house by five Republican appointees on the Supreme Court, the nation's airline security was entirely in private hands. After 9/11, you know, Bush said, "Okay, that's it." And he nationalized airline... airline security across the United States. He put the entire industry out of business. He didn't even bother buying these companies up and nationalizing them. He just shut them down and replaced them with what we call the TSA today, the Transportation security administered. He also nationalized the nation's airlines, because they were in a crisis after 9/11. Um, the air... he created this thing called the Air Transportation Stabilization Board, that ended up holding seven and a half million shares at U S Airways, 18 million shares of America West Airlines, three and a half million shares of Frontier Airlines, one and a half million shares of Trans Air, uh, two, uh, 2.38 million shares of World Airways.

The Bush administration nationalized, you know, in... the George W. Bush administration, again, nationalized the two largest mortgage lenders in the United States, you know, when the crash happened in 2008. They... they... we nationalized Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. They nationalized 77% share in AIG, 36% share Citigroup, 73% share in JMAC, and forced out GM's president Rick Wagner, who was, just, doing a terrible job.

Obama came into office, and he nationalized GM and Chrysler.

So, I mean, there's a long history of this. We could buy the three largest oil companies in the United States for less than a half a trillion dollars, about \$500 billion. That's one quarter, or maybe one fifth of the cost of the Bush tax... or, of the Trump tax cuts for billionaires. For one fifth of what we paid to give tax cuts to billionaires, we could... we could take over these three large oil companies and then just run them, you know, run them well, but stop all their funding of climate denial, and start their, you know, their pure... seriously attending to the process of figuring out how to, how to shift themselves from being oil companies to being an energy companies.

I mean, this is not rocket science. I realize people are freaking out about the politics of it. "Oh my God, you're going to call... You know, they're going to call the Democrats socialist!". Every president, since Eisenhower... Going all the way back to Woodrow Wilson has done this during times of crisis. And this is a crisis.

## What Happened to Our Politics After the End of History with Luke Savage - Citations Needed - Air Date 4-13-22

[00:16:38] **NIMA SHIRAZI - CO-HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Now, at the beginning of your book, though, Luke, you know, you, kind of, note: there's a seminal moment in, especially, modern political life in the election of Barack Obama. And you had just talked about this, kind of, sloganeering, this, kind of, nod... there's the lexicon of progress, of change, of hope. But not actually the follow through: that's not actually the policy, it's just, kind of, the marketing, you know.

But, noting the really, kind of, important moment, November 4, 2008, would you say that history ended again then? Did it start up anew? You know, it's, kind of, a key moment that you identify in your own awakening and awareness, especially politically; you were 19 at the time, you're the Taylor Swiftian generation, Adam and I are old grizzled men. So, you know, remember that slightly differently.

[00:17:23] **ADAM JOHNSON - CO-HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Whoa, whoa. Hold on. I'm not in your demo buddy. Don't age me.

[00:17:32] **NIMA SHIRAZI - CO-HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** [Laughs.] Generationally, Luke, for those your age, why do you point that moment, other than being an understandably historic moment in general, even-- not to be smug or lame about it, it was-- but also, what did it signify?

[00:17:46] **LUKE SAVAGE:** Well, in my own case, I was perfectly teed up to experience the Obama moment in, kind of, the fullest and most evangelical way possible. I had just started... you know, I just moved to Toronto, I was in my first year of university, I mean, a liberal campus in a major city. I mean, granted it wasn't in the United States, but downtown Toronto, this was the perfect milieu for, like, the maximum Obama effect.

And I think that there was a widespread sense of the time-- and, you know, it went beyond my own particular milieu-- but there was a widespread sense at the time that, you know, this really was something new. And that's because, more effectively than I think any other modern political figure-- and Obama is really the key to understanding so much, because he's really the superlative expression, I think, of a lot of the things that I identify and complain about in my book-- but more than any other modern political figure, more effectively, he presented himself as a champion of progress and of democratic renewal. And, you know, he attracted more support from younger voters than I think anyone had before — although I think, I mean, Sanders never got to a general election; I think in the primaries Sanders later surpassed Obama's total — but very significant support from younger people, a lot of enthusiasm.

And I think, what many of us did not understand at the time was that, as you put it Nima, I mean, history really wasn't a sense, just, kind of, ending again. I mean, it was, kind of, the exact opposite of what we thought it was. It was really the status quo consolidating itself, albeit under a new umbrella, and with a new- - albeit, you know, it turned out pretty fleeting-- kind of, sense of dynamism.

And, I think, for that reason, it was a Rubicon crossing moment for many people-- or, at least, not the event itself, but the events that came after. And, particularly people of my generation, people of our generation, broadly speaking — although it sounds like there's some dispute about to which generation all of us belong — but, you know, the stars in 2008, I think (a lot of people really belonging to different political tendencies, to some extent anyway), the stars did seem aligned for at least some kind of progressive change, even if you were a cynic about Obama, or you were skeptical — and I mean, in my own defense, I did maintain a certain skepticism about Obama in 2008, and I would say, I turned against him quicker than some anyway —

But, you know, if you go back to the punditry from 2008-- which I actually do in one essay in the book-- I mean, it is absolutely... it's very instructive to go back and read that stuff, because it's absolutely gushing about a new political consensus that's on the way; there's going to be progressive, liberal hegemony for decades to come; Democrats are going to control Congress... they have ironclad control of Congress, sort of in the way that they often did after the New Deal.

And all of that is significant, because when you're promised something like that, and it doesn't happen, and-- you know, in the case of Obama, it's important to note here that the administration was coming to power at a very significant moment, not just as support for the War on Terror, and the

legitimacy of the War on Terror, were waning, but also amid what was then the greatest financial crisis since the Great Depression-- and so, we all ended up watching as, you know, this new liberal administration that had talked a pretty good game when it was campaigning, I mean, basically, sat back and did very little while the financial sector was allowed to, kind of, just get off the hook without really paying much of a price. There was no significant overhaul, certainly nothing on the scale of the New Deal of the American or the global economy.

And meanwhile, millions of homeowners, and renters, and all kinds of people, were just allowed to sink. The administration did not care to do anything about that. In Obama's memoir "A Promised Land," which came out, I guess, at the end of 2020, you know, he's quite explicit about that. I mean, he dismisses all alternatives, even to this day, when it's clear how catastrophic the administration's negligence was, he dismisses the possibility they could have done anything else. I mean, he says something to the effect of that, the calls for more radical action would have involved a violence to the social order, a wrenching of social and political norms that would have caused more harm than it would have provided assistance, something like that, I'm paraphrasing.

But so.... it's very significant that there was this initial enthusiasm that was so strong, and then this was the result that we got. And I think people reacted to that in a variety of ways, I mean, some people just became reactionaries; a lot of people were more likely to switch off of politics entirely, or to become more cynical about them, understandably. But I think for a lot of other people, the conclusion you can draw from something like Obama, and the conclusion many of us did draw, was that, "Well, if this isn't what's needed to actually create any kind of progressive momentum moving forward, clearly, we need something else and let's think through what that is."

And I think, you know, in the, kind of, decade or so after 2008, a lot of people arrived at a basically socialist answer to that question.

[00:22:28] **NIMA SHIRAZI - CO-HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Yeah, I remember in 2008 watching this all play out, and, like, the first thing Obama did after locking up the presidential nomination-- in, I think it was, like, June 3, 2008-- the next night, he spoke at AIPAC and I was like, hmmm...

# Should We NATIONALIZE the Oil Industry w Matt Bruenig & Johanna Bozuwa - Bad Faith - Air Date 3-21-22

[00:22:41] **BRIAHNA JOY GRAY - HOST, BAD FAITH:** Johanna, I do want to ask you if... if the, um.. In these moments where we had, uh, ownership stakes, if we weren't so self constrained by saying that we didn't have, um, voting... voting control, what would you have liked to see have seen done? What, from a climate perspective, for instance, could be done at these energy companies to advance the interest of climate, a just transition, these kinds of things?

[00:23:10] **JOHANNA BOZUWA:** Yeah. So, when we were thinking about, okay, yeah, what would it look like to actually nationalize the fossil fuel industry? Like, what would you do? I think it would... there are different pathways in which you can acquire these entities. You know, you can take over a substantial part of their market share; you can use eminent domain-- um, that's something that... actually, we don't talk about it that much, but eminent domain is used on, like, basically a daily basis in the United States, and is a form of nationalization.

Like, even when they're trying to take over the Wendy's in Washington, DC-- I don't know if y'all know this, like, there's this like terrible intersection, um, where there's this Wendy's in the middle, and it like has created, mayhem on traffic. And so, like, washington, DC. uses eminent domain to buy up the Wendy's so that they could fix the intersection. That is in fact, like, that is, actually, like, the public acquiring something that is private.

So you can also use that for, like, you know, the ground that is being extracted from.

Um, as well as, you know, put it in using the Federal Reserve to, kind of, acquire the stocks as we talk about.

But okay. Let's say we get it. We have it, it's in hand; like there are a few principles that we said, you know, you actually have to apply this. And the ultimate mandate has to be that you are going to wind these assets down. Like, that is something that I think is really distinct from other nationalization attempts.

Um, you know, in the past it's been to, let's say, ensure that the economy doesn't fall apart, or to, um, stabilize a specific, uh, sector. What we're saying is, we actually want to ensure that the economy is going to continue to work, and we are going to wind this thing down over time in a way that prioritizes people over the polluters themselves; like, the CEOs.

So, that's a really different type of mandate that we haven't seen a lot with nationalization in the past. And of course we would want this to be aligned with the climate success. So, saying that all of the extraction that does have to happen from now until, like, full wind down needs to stay within the limits of 1.5 degrees.

And then, we say that there needs to be communities that are in control. Because when you are taking out one economy from an area, what are you actually, um, what are you putting in instead? Are you going to put another form of extraction, there? Another form of corporate greed? No, we want to put in, like, a regenerative economy. We want public, you know, let's say, community control; we want, um, you know, local, uh, economies that are thriving, and that's got to be a core, part of that transition.

[00:25:45] **BRIAHNA JOY GRAY - HOST, BAD FAITH:** I gotta interrupt, because my, you know, corporate-law-brain is going off, and saying, "Well, are there.. Is there going to be... are there going to be a million legal challenges because of the presumptive interest of shareholders being paramount," and this idea that we're now saying as corporate board members, "We're going to actively do things that are against the profit motive and shareholder interests for these greater public interest."

What do you imagine the pushback there is going to be?

[00:26:12] **JOHANNA BOZUWA:** I'm sure that there will be abs... like, this will be taken to the courts. That is true. But sometimes we have to, like, we have to take that risk. We have to absolutely do that. And there's a certain... a part of this, that I almost be, like, "Okay, let the shareholders get some amount of funds in order for us to keep on going."

But it's, for me, the climate, and, like, the people who are experiencing the extraction are far more important. And the national government has that ability.

And that's actually been part of the way that, um, nationalization has happened in the past. With the railroads, basically, the national government sweetened the deal so that the railroad, uh, CEOs and execs would get out of the way when...

when World War I was coming around. So you could actually imagine something like that so that you can expedite the transition.

Um, this is not to say that, you know... and when it comes to, uh, the shareholders, some of those are pension, some of those are workers' money that's there because of how interconnected our energy system is. Who I don't care about getting the pay outs are, as much, the CEOs, you know? As our dear friend, Kate Aronoff likes to say, "Yeah, yeah, let's nationalize them and then send them the hell to The Hague."

[00:27:24] **MATT BRUENIG:** And Brianna, I mean, related to shareholder lawsuits, I mean, this is part of the case for nationalizing them, is when you nationalize, you don't just take the company, right? You buy out the existing shareholders. So those shareholders would be out the door, and then it would just be the federal government. So you wouldn't worry, you wouldn't have to worry about shareholder lawsuits anymore.

Whereas, if Exxon right now, were to start making those steps with its current shareholders, then maybe it could face certain lawsuits about them not exercising business judgment, or what is the rule?

Um, so yeah, so... so I mean, that's actually one of the cases, is that we can get out of some of these, not just corporate law issues, but just get those shareholders out the door, get them paid. And now we can focus on, you know, what we need to do without having to worry about having these conflicting interests involved in the governance of the company.

## **What Happened to Our Politics After the End of History with Luke Savage Part 2 - Citations Needed - Air Date 4-13-22**

[00:28:13] **ADAM JOHNSON - CO-HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Let's talk about the, sort of, ascension of the Biden campaign.

Obviously, unlike 2016, which I do think was definitely heavily favored-- and we now know, kind of, in many key ways, against Sanders, the DNC kind of settled on Clinton and everything else was basically reverse engineered around that--

Now, obviously, in Biden, you have the, sort of, obama phone calls and such. But without, you know, necessarily appealing to nefarious backroom deals — although there was — Biden won. He was very popular, he has a very popular association with Obama; charming guy, does that, sort of, cutesy, Irish uncle thing, where he says offensive things and, sort of, gets away with it.

But he, kind of, reestablished the center, as it were; the sort of quintessential centrist — you can even look at profiles from the '80s, where he literally calls himself a centrist, and that was his whole shtick — so clearly, some plurality of people still thinks that the center order is either good or preferable to the alternative.

Without getting too much into the circular problem of people-not-being-sufficiently-socialist-because-they're-being-propagandized-not-because-my-ideas-are-bad, let's talk about the, sort of, current state of play as you see it. Is this just a band aid situation? Is this just, kind of, a holding the center while shit falls apart around them, or do you see this as being a vindication of that system?

Obviously, the polling is not great; "Build Back Better" shit the bed; there doesn't seem to be any political, or moral, or ideological cohesion in the party; obviously, everyone's gearing up for a huge meltdown in November of 2022.

So what is your take on the current state of the center, and what about your prognostications, or lamentations of post-2020 do you think have been proven correct or incorrect?

[00:29:49] **LUKE SAVAGE:** All of them have been proven correct. Or just about all of them.

I mean, you know, you, kind of, asked to what extent can Bidenism be understood as a... or should it be understood as a kind of reigniting of the center, versus a band aid. I mean, I think it's very much the latter. And I maintain that, I think, without coronavirus, there's a very good chance Donald Trump would have been reelected.

If you look at the-- you know, this is... obviously, I hate to sound like a pundit, really-- but if you look at the economic indicators, as flawed as those are, from, sort of, january 2020, before COVID hit, the conditions existed by which an incumbent president tends to be reelected, in terms of these, you know, very crude measures of quote-unquote "economic performance" that are used.

I think that Bernie Sanders was the only candidate in the Democratic field who had a strategy that might have been able to beat Trump without coronavirus. I think that Donald Trump so hideously mishandled coronavirus, and also that, I mean, just, the... things were, just, looking so, kind of, bleak, and everybody was so exhausted by, you know, the fall of 2020 that even, in my opinion, the pretty lackluster campaign the Democrats ran, you know, it was able to get out a record number of voters.

Of course, Donald Trump got more votes in 2020 than he did in 2016, but Biden won by something like 8 million votes. So people were certainly motivated to beat Donald Trump.

But I think Biden winning the Democratic nomination, as opposed to any of the other "Stop Sanders" candidates is also significant. Because, as you said, Adam, I mean, in 2016, the Democrats had decided, I mean, this was going to be Hillary Clinton's coronation. I mean, no one remembers poor Martin O'Malley, but you know, he didn't make it outside of Iowa. And then it ended up being surprisingly close with Sanders, and that wasn't, you know, that wasn't what was supposed to happen.

2020 wasn't like that. I mean, 2020 and many of the essays in the book, at least in the section on political personalities, were written during this time, but, I mean, 2020 they just were, kind of, scrolling through every few months, like, a new figure that was going to repeat, you know, some version of Obama's meteoric rise and that, I think, really —

[00:31:41] **NIMA SHIRAZI - CO-HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Bloomberg!

[00:31:42] **LUKE SAVAGE:** Michael Bloomberg! I mean, it's... I mean, if you go back before the thing actually started, there was talk about Oprah, there was talking about Mark Zuckerberg; I mean, there was, like, "Are the Democrats can have their own celebrity?" And then when it started you had all these... you know, you had Beto, you had Pete, you had the "Klobmentum[?]," you had Kamala Harris was going to be a front runner, Kristen Gillibrand was going to be a frontrunner; you have all these people that no one remembers; Eric Swalwell, Bill de Blasio ran for president!

[00:32:07] **ADAM JOHNSON - CO-HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Poor Bill de Blasio!

[00:32:09] **LUKE SAVAGE:** Bill de Bungler did not go anywhere in that campaign.

[00:32:12] **ADAM JOHNSON - CO-HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** I was sitting there the other day and I was, like, "Wait, Bill de Blasio ran for president? Did I dream that?" There was a moment, you know, you're kind of like half awake or something.

[00:32:18] **NIMA SHIRAZI - CO-HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** It was both: he did, and you also dreamt it.

[00:32:19] **ADAM JOHNSON - CO-HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** And you're like, did he run? And I'm like, and I turned to Sarah, like, "Did Bill de Blasio? Oh yeah he did run. So weird."

[00:32:26] **LUKE SAVAGE:** But there were so many of these people, and that reflected... you know, people looked at what happened in 2016, in the GOP, and they thought, 'Well, maybe it'll be me,' and that was definitely part of it.

But I think it also reflected the fact that, you know, the liberal project was and is quite incoherent. And in the end, it turned out that the figure who was able to carry the, you know, consolidate the anti-Sanders forces with, obviously, with a lot of help from the media, and a number of other things that, you know, we don't need to get into here, because then we'll just digress for the rest of the night, and only talk about, you know, what happened in March 2020, but, you know, Biden ultimately was able to consolidate, you know, having completely bungled the early primaries, and I think come fourth in Iowa, or fifth or something; doing badly in New Hampshire, et cetera, he was able to consolidate the anti Sanders forces.

And it turned out that the last, you know, what was behind the emergency glass when Liberalism, Inc. smashed it was just this, kind of, avatar of old, you know, Democratic machine politics, this guy who'd been in DC, you know, who first came to the Senate in 1972. So really it was just, kind of, an echo of Democratic consensus-- consenses? I'm not sure what the plural is-- past, and, you know, had this association with Obama.

And so I think that's a reflection of the weakness rather than the dynamism of liberalism. It's a reflection of the incoherence. And we've seen that carried into Biden's first term. We've seen it carry beyond the Trump era. Because, you know, the Biden campaign really did two things: it, sort of, told the Justice Democrats wing of the Democratic Party, that "You're not going to get all the

Sanders stuff, but don't worry, there's gonna be a public option, there's going to be this hugely progressive agenda that's more progressive than anything you've ever seen. You're going to get a kind of American social democracy," really, that was the pitch. At the same time, you know, if you watched the DNC, this was very similar, in many ways, was worse than the 2016 DNC, there were, you know, they had John Kasich speak, they had Michael Bloomberg, it was grotesque.

So Biden was really pledging to do two things, and what people like me were writing at the time, contrary to the, sort of, view that Biden was going to bring in a second new deal, was that, all you really had to do to know Joe Biden was just look at his record, and I think that that's largely been borne out as he's governed.

I mean, they did table, you know, they had the American Rescue Plan, which was more money than you would have expected Joe Biden to spend in a single go; and then they did table these kinds of bigger spending plans; but there wasn't a strategy. I don't think they undertook a strategy that would be the strategy that you would do to actually pass these things. They very much adopted a conventional, you know, 'We're going to do everything inside the beltway, we're going to broker, we're going to try to get bipartisan support for things like the infrastructure package,' all of that.

And where we're at now is that Biden's term is consisted of really, you know, two bills: a rescue plan that provided short term relief and had some good measures that have not been extended; and then this bipartisan infrastructure bill, which, i'm not an expert on climate policy, but I've been reliably informed is actively counterproductive on the environment.

And I think it's safe to say that any legislation passed with the support of — what was it? — ten Republican senators, is probably not anything to brag about, and it's certainly not going to reignite the lost flames of American liberalism. So that's, I think, where we're at right now.

## **Climate Incrementalism is the New Denial w Kate Aronoff - Bad Faith - Air Date 5-15- 21**

[00:35:31] **VIRGIL TEXAS - CO-HOST, BAD FAITH:** The problem isn't that the market signals are, " the carbon isn't properly priced," the problem is the

market itself. How is someone like Joe Biden? How is any government like this government, which is, for the time being, the only kind of government that we can imagine right now, or that we can at least see an electoral path to. How is it that any sort of government that is effectively subservient to the market and these powerful, wealthy interests and the profit motive, how is that going to intervene?

[00:36:02] **KATE ARONOFF:** That's a good question. The thing I would point out first, it's a fact that markets are created by states. They're a product of state policy at different levels. The United States has all of these different market creating mechanisms and international institutions where the US has a huge sway over things like trade policy that play out in forums like the World Trade Organization. Markets do not exist without states, and that's the big lie that a lot of companies, including the fossil fuel industry, try to say.

The fossil fuel companies in particular are hugely dependent on massive amounts of subsidies. In the US, we pour roughly \$20 billion a year at the state and federal level into the fossil fuel industry directly, and they cannot exist as they currently do without that support. They just will not exist. As much as 50% of oil developments are unprofitable without subsidies.

So it's not as if the markets are just doing their thing and the state have an obligation to intervene, it's that the states are creating markets actively, constantly. They're co-creating them, as some people who've studied this more deeply than I do would say.

So I think state policy is essential, and I think one of the failures of the... well, one of the successes of neo-liberalism, I would say, is in really limiting what we think states can and should do. And so state policy can be a hugely beneficial thing in people's lives, can be something which drives transformative changes. But there's a deep deep pessimism about that, including from Democrats, including from very progressive Democrats, about what the scope of the state is.

People have compared, the American Jobs Plan until The New Deal, which is laughable. The New Deal, for all of its flaws and contradictions, really took a very expansive view of state power, both in cracking down on corporate power, making big moves around things like antitrust, but also in just creating a welfare state virtually from scratch. That's the scale of thing we need to do, not just we need big investment, not just that we need better regulations, but that we actually have to have a conversation about how the state itself needs to change and respond to meet this crisis, which requires the state to do things that it has not done before.

We haven't euthanized one of the most powerful industries on Earth in recent memory, and that is the challenge at hand, is to dismantle the fossil fuel industry, and capitalism is very deeply bound up in that.

[00:38:22] **VIRGIL TEXAS - CO-HOST, BAD FAITH:** That's kind of more what I'm getting at, the limits of this current policy regime. We can call it the Biden policy regime, but a big part of that is essentially far conservative judiciary. At what point would the most effective intervention come? Is it changing this entire policy regime that's been built up over the decades?

[00:38:44] **KATE ARONOFF:** Yeah, it demands a lot more creative thinking about what the state can do.

[00:38:48] **BRIAHNA JOY GRAY - HOST, BAD FAITH:** Are we talking nationalization here? Come on, hit us with it, we're not afraid.

[00:38:52] **KATE ARONOFF:** Yeah. I think that's the type of thing that asks me on the table, and I talk about it in the book. Nationalizing the fossil fuel industry, which should be a pretty straightforward proposal. So far as they have shown absolutely no willingness or interest and meeting this crisis, and dramatically changing their business model or just screwing people over, firing tens of thousands of people, raking in support from the US government.

Things like public ownership of electric utilities, which have been part and parcel of all of the same sorts of climate denial that the fossil fuel industry has participated in over the years. A federal job guarantee, which has been a historic demand of movements dating back decades. It was core to the Democratic party's platform until 1980, and it's just off the table. The idea of hiring people directly is a foreign weird concept to quote unquote progressive policymakers.

[00:39:42] **BRIAHNA JOY GRAY - HOST, BAD FAITH:** Unless it's hiring them to be in the military to go and grab oil from elsewhere.

[00:39:46] **KATE ARONOFF:** Exactly. The US military is the closest thing we have to a federal job guarantee. Those are a couple of things that I draw out in the book, but the comparisons to FDR and LBJ are just so--are really absurd.

[00:39:59] **BRIAHNA JOY GRAY - HOST, BAD FAITH:** So what are the real life impediments? Politically speaking, I think we can all frame out the arguments that are going to be thrown out there against, "oh my gosh, this is socialism. Don't take over the industry, blah, blah, blah," but just assuming a world where nobody cared because there was actually enough narrative work

done to make the scope of the crisis clear to people involved, it feels like the the unspoken part of these conversations is the amount of money in terms of lobbying efforts and purchase influence that is going on on a bipartisan basis. What you talk a lot about in some of the early chapters and the degree to which so much of our legislation, our rulemaking... PAYGO, which is a Nancy Pelosi special, is significant, a major obstacle to environmental reforms.

A lot of these other built-in... What was it, EE11 blah blah blah... The environmental rule that makes us that you have to do a cost benefit analysis for any regulation. So you have to show... It has to be basically profitable, it has to not hurt profit to do something that's socially beneficial... Is nuts. You can sprinkle a little bit of carcinogens so long as I can prove to you the value of producing this carcinogen is more valuable than the lives that are lost or harmed as a consequence, which we all know is something that is very, very difficult to measure.

[00:41:29] **KATE ARONOFF:** And it's so deep. the amount of fossil fuel money just sloshing around Washington and state capitals around the country is just immense. There's so much money, but it's not only that whenever a climate bill comes up, that ExxonMobil and the American Petroleum Institute and all of these bad actors pour money into lobbying efforts, into advertising campaigns, and to fighting those measures themselves, it's that they've done this work dating back 70-80 years, and as a part of this bigger business conservative movement to really ensconce minority rule at every level of government, including things like the mandate for leadership that the Heritage Foundation gave to Ronald Reagan in his first week in office, this thick book of policies that they wanted him to introduce, and he took up two thirds of them. He took up an enormous amount of what was essentially an organizing project.

Kimberly Phillips-Fein's book, *Invisible Hands* really makes this clear, that there's this long thoroughgoing effort among the biggest companies in the United States to congregate this stuff and to law so that even if public opinion shift, even if we know the climate policy is popular, we know that a green new deal is popular, and we have a political system which is really bad at translating public opinion into law, into policy change. And that's not an easy problem to fix. The US Senate is not an easy problem to fix.

I don't want to make it seem like dealing with climate change is easy, but it really does root back to these very, very anti-democratic institutions that surmount so many barriers to doing the bare minimum of what's needed.

# Should We NATIONALIZE the Oil Industry w Matt Bruenig & Johanna Bozuwa Part 2 - Bad Faith - Air Date 3-21-22

[00:43:07] **BRIAHNA JOY GRAY - HOST, BAD FAITH:** So you do have to fight against the realistic perception, the not incorrect perception, that the government's ability to be effective has been neutered, and also make the case that we can make it better and then it can work better than the private industry. Republicans are wily and they're very good at this.

Matt, I've heard you go back and forth about whether or not the word nationalization is accurate in terms of what has happened in the past, namely in 2008, but do you have any thoughts, from a messaging perspective, if that's something we should take head on and say, actually the government can do good things here, all these historical precedents. Remember how much you love the Tennessee Valley Authority, grandpa. Or you think, given the sensitivity around that word, we should just stealth do it and stealth advocate for it the way it was done in 2008 and basically wrap it and Obama and say your favorite guy did it, let's try this again. It's a crisis.

[00:43:56] **MATT BRUENIG:** Messaging's always tough, and in reality your opponents are going to use the word anyway so it's not like you're going to be able to escape it. With TVA, I think that's a really good example, and that's a different case because we're talking about building an institution from scratch and people do love that.

It's really funny, as much as people... the S word, socialism and nationalization, those things can be real hot button for some people, but in polling, and I think even just in general, the actual socialist institutions we have, meaning our state owned enterprises and public utilities, and stuff like that, you don't see a whole lot of heat about that. People really get heated about the welfare state and, cultural issues, I don't mean to demean those, but whatever, you know, what people put in that bucket, but people love the post office. In Tennessee, they love TVA. In fact, Obama tried to privatize TVA and it was state Republicans that made it impossible for him to do that. I don't know if they love Amtrak so much.

[00:44:58] **BRIAHNA JOY GRAY - HOST, BAD FAITH:** Well Joe Biden does, maybe that can be, [inaudible].

[00:45:01] **MATT BRUENIG:** Joe loves that. There's this Amtrak station named after Joe. And people, public utilities, you get maybe some back and forth depending on how you feel about yours personally, but public production doesn't really face the same kind of... it doesn't really set off the right as much. The rank and file right-wingers, they're upset about critical race theory and trans rights and stuff like that, they're not really banging the table for privatizing the postal service or something like that.

When it comes to taking over existing entities, I do think there's at least a way to talk about it like you were hitting at, where, especially if they're in need of assistance, you could hit upon, "look, if we're going to give you taxpayer money, you got to give the taxpayers a good deal," or something like that. We're going to ask of you the same thing that a private financier would ask of you. A private financier is not giving you money equivalent to 30% of your equity stake with no voting rights. So why does the public have to do that?

I think there's a reasonable way to draw on equivalence there and say, look, we're not going to get ripped off. We're going to get the same deal that a private investor would get here, and if you were in this kind of dire financial situation and you were about to collapse, they would ask for a lot, and they certainly would ask to be in the driver's seat.

[00:46:21] **BRIAHNA JOY GRAY - HOST, BAD FAITH:** I want to put a fine point on how possible this is, because as I try to make these lists, as I'm doing right now, of common pushbacks from liberals, it's that things that are obviously good, but which haven't been very publicly considered by the politicians that they admire and they think of as #goodpeople, they tend to do this kind of "just world" hypothesis thing, where you try to make sense of that cognitive dissonance by saying, "well, it must just not be possible. It must be out of reach. If Obama didn't do it, and he's a real mench, it must just not be possible."

There's a part of your paper, Johanna, that talks about executive action. What could be done right now? What kind of moves could Joe Biden make in this moment that could start us along the right path?

[00:47:11] **JOHANNA BOZUWA:** That's a really good question. I think that, one, there are ways for him to start constraining the industry, and working to end subsidies that he has control over; implementing, when it's right, import or export bans. These things that are actually going to make the the fossil fuel industry cringe. He has some power over stopping drilling, and so that actually

could potentially put them in a situation in which they're clamoring for that government receivership.

[00:47:41] **BRIAHNA JOY GRAY - HOST, BAD FAITH:** That's the opposite of what's happening. All of the incentives right now are for him to drill more and to subsidize more because people are paying so much at the pump.

[00:47:52] **JOHANNA BOZUWA:** But then that's where we can bring in some of the... I think it's a combination of demand side and supply side. So the supply is like, okay, we can't work with people at the pump, what we need to do is ramp up our production of renewable energy as quickly as possible. Start transforming those systems as we're winding down the oil and gas industry, so that we are no longer dependent on this volatile commodity, oil and gas.

Also, we already have things like the strategic petroleum reserve that they have unleashed, that Biden has the control over. Are there ways for us to actually extend that so that we're managing our oil and gas production in a way that actually is relevant to geopolitics and to the climate goals as well?

## **The Liberalism Revolution & The End Of History w Luke Savage & Rana Abdelhamid Part 2 - The Majority Report - Air Date 4-7-22**

[00:48:34] **EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** And you talked about the Supreme Court justice thing. I mean, that's that's where we are in terms of Democratic opposition. I mean, they've caught up recently, but to the Supreme Court picks, which brings me to one of your other essays, "Why liberals pretend they have no power", we'll get people who write into the show or who call in and say, why do you guys, Sam and I, why do we cover Democrats is incompetent or bad at their jobs as opposed to losing on purpose? I think losing on purpose is too conspiratorial and not accurate. But they are incredibly incompetent, but they're also incentivized -- they're feckless by design and their incentives are all wrong.

Curious about your take or what you'd say, if you were here during the call portion of the show and we got one of those calls.

[00:49:20] **LUKE SAVAGE:** Yeah. I mean, so I would agree. It depends on what somebody means by "they're losing on purpose." I think there is a sense in which the incentive structures for a lot of of senior people, the consultant class that underwrites much of what happens in the Democratic leadership, a lot of the Democratic leaders themselves, right? A lot of these people are exorbitantly rich. Even if you lose your seat or whatever in a midterm, there's going to be some white collar legal firms, some kind of consultancy you can go to, where you might have a little bit of lost honor because you lost an election to Yosemite Sam or something. But the stakes are kind of low for you.

So in that sense, I buy the idea that in that sense, maybe Democrats are quote unquote losing on purpose, or at least they're ambivalent about the possibility of losing in some cases. That essay, dealt with this strange phenomenon of liberals actually in positions of power, acting as if they have no power, which is something you really saw in the Trump era.

So I think the occasion for that essay was Nancy Pelosi calling Donald Trump a third-world dictator or something. This was just ahead of the 2020 election, I think. And then, she was asked, are you going to shut down the government to stop some appointment he's going to make or something? And she said, oh no, of course we can't do that. Can't do anything. And that's a theme, a kind of dissonance if you want, that runs right through the Trump era where Democrats were, on the one hand, the House rhetoric of liberalism for four years, and even before that during Trump's candidacy was, This is a state of emergency; we're gonna have the Fourth Reich in America; this is unlike anything we've ever seen. And then what did Democrats do? Well, they approved a lot of his appointments. They kept the regular functioning of government. As it was, you had absurd moments like Trump's first State of the Union, Van Jones went on TV after and was celebrating some part of Trump's speech where he'd addressed a widow of someone who'd been killed in a recent raid or something.

There was just a clear commitment to status quo-ism, and to all of the normal etiquette of American politics, even as there was all this stuff about how there was a state of exception.

You see the same thing on all kinds of issues: on climate change, where, you can have the governor of California tweet, Climate change is real. Someone needs to do something about it. And it's like, yeah, if only there were some executive in charge of the world's fifth largest economy.

[00:51:37] **EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** But process, I mean, we gotta commit to process or commit to procedure. It's so silly.

[00:51:43] **LUKE SAVAGE:** Right. And that's related to this because there is - and again, I hate to keep bringing up *The West Wing*, but there is almost a kind of fantasy of impotence here that you see channeled in that show. And of course there are material reasons for this and ideological reasons as well.

But the house style of liberalism today really is, you make these sweeping statements about how bad everything is, how precarious everything is, how dangerous everything is. And then at the same time, throw up your hands and you say, Oh, we can't do anything about it. I mean, we only have 50 seats in the Senate or we don't have the courts or Fox News was mean to us.

And, there's a political belief and almost a celebration, in fact, I think of these impediments to doing anything, in addition to --

[00:52:23] **EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Morally righteous in and of themselves, the impediments are democracy, which is a good sweet. Yeah. It's very self-serving.

[00:52:31] **LUKE SAVAGE:** That's right. And I'll just bring up -- I don't want to make my answers too long-winded here, but I'll just bring up one thing that I think is very telling that is quite exemplary of this -- which was something Biden actually said in 2019 when he was running for president, where he said something to the effect of it's good when you don't have unified party control of the US government. So this is something Biden saying while he's running for president, to be the Democratic president, he's saying it's good when no party has too much power.

So in the kind of centrist worldview of someone like Biden, the fantasy is that you have to deal with Mitch McConnell. And I think that's really telling, and it's importantly also not something you see on the right, right? You'd never hear Mitch McConnell or Donald Trump say that.

[00:53:14] **EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** They'll be the opposition party to oppose the Democrats. And Sam said this I think yesterday, Democrats have completely disengaged from being an opposition party.

[00:53:23] **LUKE SAVAGE:** Absolutely.

## Summary 4-23-22

[00:53:24] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with *The Majority Report*, discussing the rise of neoliberalism at the end of history. Thom Hartmann explained why we need to nationalize our oil industry and why that shouldn't be controversial. *Citations Needed* in two parts discussed first, the letdowns of the Obama administration, and then the mediocre liberalism of Biden. And *Bad Faith* in three parts discussed the process of nationalizing an industry and the political barriers that we would need to overcome.

That's what everyone heard, but members also heard a bonus clip from *The Majority Report* discussing the Democrats' seeming pride in their powerlessness.

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And now we'll hear from you.

## Thoughts on doing psychology right - Nick from California

[00:54:25] **VOICEMAILER: NICK FROM CALIFORNIA:** Hey, Jay!, this is Nick from California. I wanted to call in about your comment about psychologists and how they -- I'm assuming psychologists in general -- believe that everything is all in the head.

First off, I wanted to comment on that, 'cause I don't think that's really a fair assessment of psychology as a field.

[00:54:45] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** She sent over a podcast hosted by two psychologists. And I listened to a couple of episodes of it; it gives me a very "when all you have is a hammer" sort of vibe in that as psychologists, they seem to always think that everything, including being trans, is just in people's heads. Which on one hand it's sort of is, right? I

mean, everything is in our heads. Our entire perception of the world is just in our heads. But there's an interplay between the real world and what's in our heads that they don't seem to be addressing very often.

[00:55:17] **VOICEMAILER: NICK FROM CALIFORNIA:** You know, your intro to psych book will define psychology as the study of behavior and mental processes. But I don't like that definition. I like the one by Henry Gleitman, 1981, who defined psychology as "a loosely federated, intellectual empire that stretches from the domains of the biological sciences on one border to those of the social sciences on the other."

Psychology is barely a thing. This federation, so to speak, of almost different disciplines is nominally held together by using the scientific method to answer questions in our various areas of interest. Again, even that is only mostly true. But this is a very big field with lots of sub areas. And thus to say that like "psychologists view something that way" would just be very difficult because there's so many different types of psychologists. So it's not fair to say that psychologists say everything is in the head when you have some people explicitly focused for 70 years answering questions in behaviorism about how the environment shapes behavior, and ignores this quote, unquote, the head. And then you have other people that are basically biologists and then others who are more similar to sociologists or social workers. It's a gigantic field. Even within the domains of clinical psychology there is a wide variety of different clinical approaches.

And I also just want to comment that these two psychologists, what they were doing is fine when you're brainstorming for potential hypotheses, it's good to come up with potential other explanations. But then you have to test those explanations. You're correct; we don't then just randomly pick one or because there are many possibilities that we can dream up, that that means the one that has the best evidence somehow loses support. Yeah, that's not how that works at all.

What they should've done was they could test those things. And then clearly you even came up with reasons why those tests would fail. And so what they were doing was just supporting their wild ideas with mystery mongering, which is not a way to do psychology.

So in sum, I guess I would say they weren't doing psychology right. And although I'm not very knowledgeable in that sub area, I would also suggest that

the reason the consensus is around gender-affirming care at this juncture is because of psychological research that largely it falls in line, or even created that consensus.

Okay. Thank you. Have a good day. Stay awesome.

## Final comments on talking about psychology done wrongly... wrongly

[00:57:58] **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](mailto:jay@bestoftheleft.com).

So we just heard from Nick from California and he was referencing a commentary I did on episode 1481 if you want the full context, and here's what I had to say about it after thinking a little bit more. When making those comments, I had just been thinking about gender affirming care through the lens of there being lots of talk about multi-disciplinary treatment teams.

I'd been doing research and reading up on the subject, and not only was there a lot of talk about that in the literature describing how gender affirming care works, the podcast in question and the two psychologists who host it were actually interviewing either a doctor or a pair of doctors who were members of a multidisciplinary team, and so this is what was on my mind as I was formulating that commentary. These teams of various medical and mental health professionals, all working together. These psychologist who were hosting this podcast seemed to be coming at the issue from such a relatively narrow focus on, not only just psychology, but within that field of psychology, they focus even more narrowly on pure mental maladies, and there was almost no talk or concern, it seemed, for physical or environmental factors that could play into those mental maladies.

But beyond that, the other reason I zeroed in on their focus of mental sources for gender dysphoria was that it wasn't just their search for the sources that was the problem, it was that they also wanted to **only** focus on potential mental solutions as well. So the subtext was basically, "this is just a mental malady. There's likely a psychological solution that doesn't involve the need for medical treatment, such as hormone or a surgical intervention." Start to finish, that's the angle they were coming at it from.

So I'm glad to hear from Nick that perhaps a good psychologist would go about this process much differently, and look more deeply at factors outside the realm of purely the mind. And very much admittedly, I was thinking of psychology more in the way that a lay person might, that a psychological problem or a psychological solution has to do with what's in one's mind. Of course a psychologist trying to figure out what is going on in a person's mind should take a lot of other factors into consideration. I certainly agree with that, and I'm not surprised that that is actually how it's supposed to work.

Now, the real scary thing is that these two psychologists in question actually do specialize in the treatment of gender diverse youth. This is their clientele, so as I said to the listener who suggested this podcast to me, it's a bit like needing an abortion and ending up in a crisis pregnancy center staffed with people who have already decided what is best for you based on their ideology, rather than keeping all options on the table and approaching each patient on a case by case basis.

So thanks to Nick for calling in with that clarification. I genuinely didn't mean to put all psychologists in one bucket, and say this is how psychologists feel or act or think about things. I use the analogy in that commentary about how, when all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail, and obviously a reasonable take away from that is that psychologists only have a psychological hammer, and that isn't even what I meant, so that was me being not as specific or as clear as I could or should have been. I really thought a good psychologist would have a full set of tools, but these psychologists only had a hammer. So for them, they ended up staying in a very narrow lane, whereas other psychologists, or particularly what I had in mind at the time was psychologist who are members of a multidisciplinary team, would very naturally not stay in such a narrow lane because they'd have a whole team of people pulling in different directions and analyzing from different angles to make sure that a consensus could be formed from a variety of perspectives.

Now as always just quick, last thing, before I go, I'm still putting out the call for interesting stuff. I've been getting some great suggestions of podcasts or books or documentaries, sometimes new stuff, sometimes old, and so I would love if you keep that stuff coming in. I never know where the next bit of inspiration for a great episode topic is going to strike from, and so these are helping with that. I hope that it's also fulfilling to share things that you find interesting. That is certainly how this show got started, was my nearly irresistible urge to share the interesting things that I was finding. So as always, you can tweet that stuff at me, send me an email or a voicemail, however you like.

Keep your comments coming in on this topic or any other at (202) 999-3991 or by sending me an email to [jay@bestoftheleft.com](mailto: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 bonus show co-hosting. And thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at [bestoftheleft.com/support](https://bestoftheleft.com/support), through our Patreon page, or from right inside the apple Podcast app.

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