

#1502 Conflict, Climate, Capitalism and Famine

Intro 7-22-22

[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 the war in Ukraine is exacerbating the food crisis that was already underway in a world of climate chaos and capitalism driving resources to the brink.

Clips today are from *The Takeaway*, *RealLifeLore*, *Democracy Now!*, *Prolekt* on YouTube, and a *TED Talk* with additional members-only clips from *The David Pakman Show* and *RealLifeLore*.

Global Food Prices Are at A Record High - The Takeaway - Air Date 6-22-22

[00:00:30] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** It's not only gas prices that are up this year. According to the United Nations, global food prices remain close to record highs that they reached in March following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In the US the consumer price index for food is up more than 14% since 2020. That number is much worse in other places.

In Lebanon, for example, which gets the majority of its wheat from Ukraine, the CPI is up over 3000%. Yes, thousand, since 2020. One significant factor in these high food prices, a Russian blockade of Ukrainian exports. It's having a cascading effect that's threatening the world's food security, especially in the most food-vulnerable nations. Last month, during an event organized by the US state department, UN secretary-general issued a warning.

[00:01:22] **ANTÓNIO GUTERRES - UN SECRETARY GENERAL:** Global hunger levels are at a new high. In just two years the number of severely food insecure people has doubled from 135 million pre-pandemic to 276 million today. More than half a million people are living in famine conditions, an increase of more than 500% since 2016. These frightening figures are inextricably linked with conflict as both cause and effect. If we do not feed people, we feed conflict.

[00:01:57] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** With me now is Anna Nagurney, Chair in Integrative Studies at the Eisenberg School Of Management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and a board member at the Kyiv School of Economics. Welcome to *The Takeaway*, Anna.

[00:02:10] **ANNA NAGURNEY:** Thank you so much for having me on your show.

[00:02:13] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** What's going on with the blockade of food exports in Ukraine right now?

[00:02:17] **ANNA NAGURNEY:** This is a very, very serious topic and it's really, really important to be broadcasting to the world what is going on. Since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24th, 2022, there have been major issues in terms of agricultural production and also in terms of agricultural supply chains. There are now silos that are heaving with grain that has been grown in Ukraine. The demand is huge in many countries, which you had mentioned, for example, in the Middle East and also in Northern Africa.

Typically 90% of the grain that was harvested and grown in Ukraine would be shipped through the Black sea. That is no longer possible because of the blockade and also the mining of the ports. At the same time, the new harvest is on the horizon. Typically in Ukraine, from July to December, that would be very busy time for the exports. There have been all sorts of other discussions going on in terms of different transportation routes but that is really not the solution. This is a crisis that has to be paid attention to. The next couple of weeks are absolutely critical, I think, for the world.

[00:03:47] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** I keep trying to imagine what it means to be a farmer in the context of the devastation and war that we are seeing in Ukraine. Is this about the Ukrainian government? Is this about the Ukrainian economy? Are these outsiders trying to do the they or are these Russian occupiers trying to get the grain out? What's happening here, who's the they?

[00:04:09] **ANNA NAGURNEY:** Okay. Well, obviously the Ukrainian farmers and the government, they want to get the grain out because that's a very important component of their national economy. To get the grain out you have the United Nations now under discussions, Poland is helping, even Romania's talking about using one of its cities, but that's really challenging. Obviously, you'd have to be talking to the Russians and there are all sorts of sensitivities associated with that.

[00:04:44] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** What are you hearing from some of your colleagues at the Kyiv School of Economics about this food crisis?

[00:04:52] **ANNA NAGURNEY:** They've actually just recently, a few days ago, released a major study on the damages in the war to agriculture in terms of the machinery that's been damaged, the silos that have been damaged, and the thefts, and so on. Also even the mining of agricultural fields. It's in the billions of dollars already. That is huge. At the same time, the analyses are showing that the way to really get the food out is via the Black Sea. That's the most efficient way. That's the most cost-effective way, because you have these big containers and so forth and these big ships, and using trucks and rail is just a stop-gap measure.

Right now only about 1.5 million tons are being exported a month and we really need at least the level of 5 million metric tons each month. You see there are great, great challenges right now, logistically. We need greater cooperation, a lot of attention being put on this major crisis, but we need also a resolution to it and we need it soon. This just shows another reason why this unprovoked war of Russia against Ukraine needs to be stopped. It is having global ramifications and will continue to have global ramifications.

[00:06:30] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** Is what's happening one of these unfortunate painful externalities of war or is Russia weaponizing food?

[00:06:43] **ANNA NAGURNEY:** That's an excellent point. I'm actually grateful that you bring it up. It's been about 90 years that we're marking now since what is known as the Holodomor, which occurred in 1932-1933 in Ukraine and also USSR. Holo in Ukrainian means hunger. It was essentially death by hunger. It arose because Stalin collectivized the farms and also confiscated a lot of the food that was grown by the farmers in Ukraine. It's been estimated that about 4 million Ukrainians perished because they starved, there were even cases horrific of cannibalization, and about probably a million people if not more in other republics of the then USSR.

This has essentially happened before. Ukraine has very rich soil, fantastic agriculture. The farmers, they are my heroes. They're still somehow managing to plant and harvest even in wartime as best as they possibly can. It's historic, Déjà vu again 90 years after, see what's happening.

Why War in Ukraine is Causing Apocalyptic Famine Part 1 - RealLifeLore - Air Date 6-30-22

[00:08:14] **MR. BEASLEY:** This is all ultimately why there really aren't any good solutions to fix this looming global starvation problem coming from around the Black Sea. The West blames the Russians for engineering the crisis, while the Russians are blaming the West for imposing sanctions upon them. Moscow has offered to loosen up the blockade and allow the Ukrainian grain shipments to continue in exchange for the West relenting on their financial sanctions, which they've so far refused to do, accusing the Russians of holding the Ukrainian food as a hostage in the negotiations. Antonio Gutierrez, the current serving United Nations Secretary General, has stated his opinion that a compromise should be made wherein the Russians agree to lift the blockade in exchange for the West relenting on many of the sanctions that have been placed on Russian and Belarusian fertilizer products.

But to be honest, that seems pretty unlikely. Because as the Russian army continues to struggle and fails to make any big gains on the Ukrainian battlefield, their shifting strategy towards economic warfare is only likely to continue. The blockade of Ukraine's ports, from the perspective of Moscow, is generally intended to strangle the Ukrainian economy into submission by simultaneously blocking their exports from leaving, and blocking most imports of weapons, food and cash from entering by sea. The side effect of this blockade, preventing critical food shipments from reaching hungry countries across the middle east, north Africa and Eastern Africa, is, if anything, a bonus to the Kremlin's greater geopolitical objectives.

Because the massive levels of instability that it's going to cause in all of these places has the very high potential to trigger another round of revolutions and mass migration that is likely headed straight in the direction of the European Union, just like during 2015. Since Europe has already taken in nearly 8 million refugees now fleeing from the war in Ukraine since the war began, millions of additional refugees coming to the continent from the middle east and north Africa will inevitably become politically turbulent. And this is almost certainly what Putin and the Kremlin are actually banking on. They have no geopolitical incentives to actually end this blockade. And as a result, it's going to cause one of the greatest humanitarian catastrophes of the 21st century. And then, to make this horrific situation even worse, further problems around the world since the invasion began have added even further fuel to the already raging fire.

Fertilizer worldwide is currently in a short supply for a number of factors. Fertilizer production within the United States last year was hurt tremendously by the great North American winter storm in February, that became the costliest natural disaster in American history, as it devastated states from New York to Texas and caused nearly 200 billion in economic damages.

Hurricane Ida, that struck the coast of Louisiana later on in August, caused even more devastation, adding a further 75 billion more in natural disaster-induced economic damages to America for the year, and disrupting America's production of fertilizer even further.

Then China, the world's third largest exporter of urea, a critical raw material that's used to create nitrophosphate fertilizer, completely banned all of their urea exports back in December in the wake of their zero COVID lockdown policies. And then, following the Western sanctions placed upon Russia after their invasion, Moscow decided to retaliate by suspending all of their own fertilizer exports, which is pretty bad for the global market, because of the three main types of industrial fertilizer, Russia ranks in the top three biggest global exporters in all of them. Back in 2021, a total of 25 countries worldwide imported more than 30% of their fertilizers from Russia alone. And they probably won't be getting any of that supply this year.

All of this has contributed to a skyrocketing price for fertilizers worldwide, which has inevitably made the process of farming more expensive for farmers across the world and will decrease global crop yields this year.

And then in India and Pakistan, the most severe spring heat wave seen in the subcontinent in more than 120 years struck in March, bringing drought and rainfall levels only a quarter to a third of normal. This historic heat wave struck during the final weeks of the wheat growing season in India, killing many of the plants before they could actually be harvested. And as a result, and in addition to the skyrocketing prices of wheat and fertilizer owing to the fallout from the war in Ukraine, on the 13th of May, the Indian government, which is ordinarily the world's 10th largest exporter of wheat, imposed an almost complete ban on the country's wheat exports, with minimal exceptions.

There are currently 26 countries around the world that have now issued serious restrictions on food exports, including the Russians, who partially banned their own wheat and corn exports following the Western sanctions. In total, all of these export restrictions combined from these 26 countries are currently restricting roughly 15% of all the calories that are normally traded worldwide,

which -- I cannot stress enough -- will become a absolute catastrophe if it isn't resolved very quickly.

There are some creative methods that have been proposed that could help solve the problem, but they all have a number of associated cons. While increasing the supply of food. This year is going to be very difficult, perhaps it would be easier to ease off of the demand. For example, roughly 10% of all the grains grown worldwide are currently being used to produce biofuel. And roughly 18% of all vegetable oils are used to produce biodiesel. Demand for biofuels have exploded recently, as many countries around the world have tried to find alternatives to fossil fuels. But their production is having a huge impact on the availability of our finite and stretched food supply to feed the world right now. According to Grow Intelligence, a data firm specializing in agriculture, the calories that are currently being diverted to produce biofuels could soon be enough to feed the equivalent of the annual needs of 1.9 billion humans.

Temporarily overturning and repealing biofuel mandates across the world could therefore greatly lessen the blow from this current food crisis.

But even more consuming than biofuels are animals. Last year, in 2021, the Chinese alone imported a record-breaking 28 million tons of corn, which is more than what Ukraine ordinarily exports in an entire year. And it was all simply to feed their pigs. Nearly one-third of all the corn grown in America is simply used to feed cattle, along with roughly 40% of the European Union's entire crop of wheat.

Simply cutting down a bit on the feed for the world's livestock herd for just a moment could do wonders to get us through this current food crisis. But since it would inevitably and conversely mean skyrocketing costs in meat and dairy products worldwide, it will almost certainly face enormous backlash and difficulties.

Ultimately there presently aren't really any easy solutions to this problem, one of the greatest faced by us so far in the 21st century. And the countries that will suffer the worst are the most vulnerable and the ones most heavily dependent upon foreign imports of food, especially the ones that are usually reliant on grain shipments coming in from around the Black Sea, like all of these ones across the middle east, north Africa and eastern Africa, but most critically Lebanon, Egypt, and Yemen, who will each struggle to acquire alternative supplies of grain that they need to feed their populations this year. Expect that many of these countries are going to have a lot of problems and even worse

instability than usual within the next nine months from when this video was posted.

This is a global problem that is the culmination of both global climate change and global geopolitics.

The Famine Is Coming: War in Ukraine & Climate Crisis Contribute to Food Insecurity in Somalia - Democracy Now! - Air Date 6-23-22

[00:16:51] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** As experts warn of a pending global food shortage, not to mention the one that exists now, the United States and European Union have blamed Russia for preventing grain exports from Ukraine, which is one of the world's top wheat suppliers. On Wednesday, Russia pushed back and blamed the food crisis on sanctions imposed on Russia by the United States and European Union over its invasion of Ukraine.

This comes as the U.K. is offering to help escort Ukraine's grain from its ports under a plan designed by the United Nations that's designed to prevent a mass famine across Africa, where the Ukraine war has led to sharp increases in food prices. African countries import nearly half their wheat from Russia and Ukraine. Almost all the wheat in Somalia comes from Ukraine and Russia, and the United Nations says as many as 13 million people there are already facing severe hunger amidst an ongoing drought.

On Monday, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Somalia made an urgent call to drastically increase humanitarian aid in the region.

[00:17:56] **ADAM ABDELMOULA:** One-point-five million children below the age of 5 are already malnourished, and we expect that 366,000 of them may not survive through the end of September of this year. ... There are eight districts that are already in what is known in IPC 5. That is catastrophic. That is famine situation. That number is bound to increase, unless — unless — we are able to scale up our response plan in a very, very major way.

[00:18:37] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** For more, we continue with Jan Egeland in Mogadishu, Somalia. Jan Egeland is secretary general of the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Again, welcome back to Democracy Now! You arrived earlier this week. What have you seen? How devastating is the problem? And how much of it relates to the war in Ukraine?

[00:18:58] **JAN EGELAND:** Well, I've been — I'm now in Mogadishu, the capital, but I've been two days up in Baidoa, which is in one of the hardest-hit areas in central Somalia. What I saw there was heart-wrenching, really, mothers and fathers having walked for 250 kilometers, many of them, to save one child from dying from acute severe malnutrition, bringing them to the therapeutic feeding stations in Baidoa town. They told that they had more children at home that had not been able to escape these drought-stricken areas. It's devastating, really.

It is a creeping, devastating drought, which is coming after four failed rainy seasons. So it's climate change. It's the climate change that we in the industrialized world caused. And who are dying from this? The children of Somalia, from a people who did nothing to cause climate change.

And then, again, we are underfunded. We have hundreds of aid workers on the ground, but very little funding for the lifesaving efforts.

[00:20:28] **NERMEEN SHAIKH:** And, Jan, could you speak specifically, first of all — obviously, climate change is a massive factor, but do you think that the war in Ukraine has exacerbated the situation because so much of Somalia's wheat came from one of the two countries — both the countries together?

[00:20:49] **JAN EGELAND:** It has. I mean, the food prices has more than doubled in some areas. The 90% of the wheat came from Ukraine, number one, and Russia, number two. That's gone. So, the Somali traders now need to compete for grain with Norwegians and Swiss and others, who can afford high prices.

So, it's two things, two external factors: the climate change, that leads to the drought, and the war in Europe, that leads to an exploding price — exploding prices for food, that is really causing this massive famine. And none of these factors were caused by the people.

And that's why we're hoping that the G7 nations, including the U.S., now in Germany this weekend, will stand by their pledge to not allow biblical famines in this century. At the moment, the famine is coming.

[00:21:58] **NERMEEN SHAIKH:** And in addition to that, another contributor, perhaps, is the fact that farmers across Africa have been reporting, in addition to, of course, the increase in prices of wheat, also as high as a 300% increase in the price of imported fertilizer. Could you talk about that?

[00:22:22] **JAN EGELAND:** Yeah, and that is curbing food production in the continent of Africa, that could increase its food production and need to increase its food production. But again, in Somalia, the people I met are living from hand to mouth. They are living from goats and sheep and camels that have died from thirst and from drought. These are pastoralist farmers, as well, that did not use fertilizer. Here it is the lack of aid and the drought and the food price increase that is the enormous killer.

For Bread on capitalism's global food crisis - Prolekult - Air Date 7-2-22

[00:23:07] **NARRATOR:** When the Earth is bled and the crops will not grow, then all will fall to ash. The truth of this simple observation can be seen at every turn of human history, forgotten when the fruit of the land is in plenty and then brutally remembered as hunger's painful barbs snare. Famine is an old evil, and it has razed many grand halls to ruin.

With this in mind, it is clear that we do not speak lightly when we say that capitalism today is in the early hours of the most profound food crisis in human history. The pangs are already evident. As is always the case in this world of empire, they're are felt most profoundly in oppressed nations. In Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya.

One person dies of hunger a minute. With agricultural collapse in motion due to four years of drought and rampant fertilizer costs, this reality threatens to bloom into an all consuming catastrophe. Over 20 million are threatened with starvation by September. In Sri Lanka, lower crop yields due to a ban on fertilizer put in place in response to rising prices in 2021 have brought the country to its knees, seeing a rise in food prices of 46.6% between April 2021 and 2022 and the nation default on its debt. Even within the centers of imperialist power, the reality of the food crisis is becoming known. Inflation at highs not seen in 40 years in the United States and Europe driven by record-

breaking food and energy price increases. Agriculture, in particularly Europe, faces total breakdown with the majority of farmers already skirting bankruptcy and the continent's largest producers of industrial fertilizers cutting production drastic. Globally, the UN predicts that the number of people facing food shortages could increase by around 47 million over the course of just this year and that the crisis itself is expected to last years. In the first volume of *Capital*, Marx observed that all progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil and that every method by which capitalism has increased the short term fertility of the soil is a progress toward ruining the more long lasting sources of that fertility.

This is particularly important in the case of nitrogen, vital for soil health and crop growth. But only gathered by legumes in nature. The guano fertilizer industry, established in 1824 and grown to a mass industry fundamental for capitalist agriculture's nitrogen supply by the 1850s, elegantly illustrates Marx's observation.

The first high quality guano reserves subjected to capitalist exploitation were depleted by 1870, just three years after *Capital's* publication. After a century of warring and competition for island deposits of the material, which is composed of bird and bat excrement, the last guano reserves were exhausted in the 1970s.

The short term gains of increased fertility for the farming of cash crops had consumed its basis. Not only this, they saw agricultural practices shift away from the traditional methods which had previously sustained food production to nutrient application, requiring new forms of nitrogen fertilizer to sustain food production. Industrial ammonia fertilizers produced from natural gas stock, first brought to the market in 1929 by Shell, provided the answer. This set the stage for the contradictions observed so far to play out at an increasingly elevated level and for the broader contradictions of capitalist over-accumulation to assert themselves directly in the composition of agricultural capital. From the 1960s, industrial production of ammonia fertilizer ballooned and global agriculture output grew enormously.

However, to sustain this required an exponential increase in fertilizer. For example, across Asia fertilizer use grew between 3 and 40 times faster than agricultural output through the 1980s. In both industrialized, imperialist nations, and oppressed nations, this process prevented a return to older forms of agriculture, further eliminating traditional methods of soil maintenance, even simple crop rotations, increasingly concentrating land in large scale farms or under monopolies, and draining the soil's long term fertility. It also served to raise the ratio of capital invested in agricultural means of production relative to

labor power, thus lowering profitability, and to tie agriculture directly to cheap gas production. Eighty percent of the productive input for ammonia fertilizers today still derived from natural gas.

With the energy crisis of 2021 sending gas prices skyrocketing, this situation was given an explosive catalyst, fertilizer prices cascading far beyond the limits of profitability. With increasingly capital and resource intensive extraction and refining techniques necessitated by greater reliance on non-conventional fossil fuels and new gas reserves, cheap gas prices are not going to return. Global capitalist agriculture has fallen into an epochal collapse.

Capitalism is not only destroying its own capacity to create food, nor simply depleting soils for future generations, it is ending the environmental conditions which have allowed for agricultural production *per se*. The entire history of human agriculture, indeed of organized human labor in any sense, has taken place within around 11,500 years of climactic stability.

This is the only period of such stability within the last 110,000 years. Today, this period is rapidly ending, driven by capital's need for insatiable consumption of natural resources and, particularly fossil fuels, emissions still rising exponentially despite their clearly disastrous impact. This year, the consequences of this process for global food production have become apocalyptically evident.

Drought stalks the globe. The worst water shortages in their history racking the Horn of Africa and the Southwestern U.S. and severe drought cascading through Italy, France, Canada, India, and more. Whole lakes evaporate in Chili and drowned city ruins surface in Iraq. The implications for crops are staggering. A near total collapse of east African agriculture expected and outputs in the U.S. expected to plummet, up to three quarters of fields in the Southwest expected to stay dry and grow nothing.

It is estimated that 75% of the world will face conditions of drought by 2050, something which has already prompted Wall Street to open a water futures market. Even if a solution to this water crisis brought by extreme temperature is found the heat shall still stifle the crops. A June 2022 study showing that heat can suffocate pollen and prevent fertilization in many key crops, including canola corn, peanuts, and rice. Meat production will fare worse still, livestock already dying *en masse* from heat stroke and thirst, millions of cattle lost this summer. The accumulated weight of capitalism's entire history, its endless bleeding of our Earth, its fires which thunder without pause, this is sweeping away the environmental basis of all human civilization.

The Earth is bled and the crops are limping withered and wrinkled in the aching sun. All is falling to ash.

Food Shortage or Economic Crisis Experts Say Poverty & Capitalism Are Real Drivers of Global Hunger - Democracy Now! - Air Date 6-23-22

[00:33:03] **SOFIA MONSALVE SUAREZ:** And I'd like to bring in Rachel Bezner Kerr. You were the lead author on the food aspect of the latest IPCC report, the climate report. Could you speak about the impact of the climate crisis on food production and access?

[00:33:22] **RACHEL BEZNER KERR:** Certainly. And just to clarify, I was one of the coordinating lead authors. It was a team of scientists that worked on that chapter, and that's important because there's many different dimensions to the climate crisis.

What our assessment showed and emphasized is the way the increasing number of extreme events can lead to acute food insecurity experiences, as we're seeing in places like Somalia and Ethiopia, and they often interact with nonclimatic factors to really lead to these acute food crisis situations. So, conflict is a very common nonclimatic factor that's really leading to these acute food crises.

But I also want to agree with Sofia in terms of the points she's raised. We highlighted in the report the vulnerability of smallholder producers to climatic events, in part because they depend on rain-fed agriculture for their livelihoods, as well as for food production, and they also play a really important role in providing these diverse food sources to communities and to the globe. They're often neglected from a policy perspective.

When you have these extreme events, you often get this lethal combination, where you have a drought, so you have reduced food production, or you have flooding, and then you may have infrastructure disruptions. You get a loss of local diverse food types and a spike in food prices, and then poorer households can't afford to get access to that food anymore. This lethal combination, combined with something like conflict, can really lead to acute food insecurity experiences. And what we documented in the report is increasing scientific evidence of the increased temperature rise from greenhouse gas emissions being directly linked to increased numbers of acute food insecurity events.

But I would also agree with Sofia that it's not a crisis that is short-term. This is something that has very much been long-term in the making. And our food system really needs to transform fundamentally to serve the needs of all and to be recognizing the underlying ecosystem that we depend on for our food.

[00:36:11] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** Rachel Bezner Kerr, you have said that poor nations in Africa and other regions of the world have become increasingly dependent on food imports. Why is that? And particularly looking at the Horn of Africa, at Ethiopia, at Kenya, at Somalia, Oxfam and Save the Children just did a report saying a child is dying every 48 seconds in just those three countries.

[00:36:40] **RACHEL BEZNER KERR:** The reliance on food imports has been a long-term structural process that was really brought about starting in the 1980s under structural adjustment programs throughout Africa, where countries that were indebted were obliged to carry out programs that reduced their own food production, and they became increasingly reliant on food imports. It's been a long-term process, and much of what Sofia raised in terms of some of the structural problems with our food system has led to the current circumstance in the Horn of Africa. Of course, in the Horn of Africa, you also have this combination of conflict and drought in the current moment that has really led to this acute food security crisis.

[00:37:28] **NERMEEN SHAIKH:** Rachel, you've also pointed out that the current food production system is heavily reliant on fossil fuels. Could you talk about the impact of that on the climate crisis and how the climate crisis also impacts food production that's reliant on fossil fuels?

[00:37:47] **RACHEL BEZNER KERR:** Yes. This is one of the bitter ironies of our current industrial food production system. It's deeply reliant on fossil fuels, so it's a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, which also makes it vulnerable to shocks, and really creating vulnerability through the way it produces food. Fertilizer requires a lot of fossil fuel to produce. It also has to have fossil fuels to distribute and to apply. And there are many other components of the way we produce food using this industrial model that leads to considerable greenhouse gas emissions.

So, in order to have a long-term reduction in the number of crises, we really need to transform our system to not be reliant on fossil fuels. In our report, we highlight ecosystem-based approaches, such as agroecology, that rely on ecological processes and reduce this reliance on fossil fuels-based inputs, as really the way forward if we're going to have a food system that is stable,

resilient, and that is supporting our ecosystem that we depend on. Things like pollinators and water quality, all of those ecosystem services that we depend on, are also undermined with the industrial model. The key solution for getting out of the crisis, that we will be continually experiencing unless we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, is transforming the food system to be much more ecological in the way that we grow and distribute food.

[00:39:31] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** And, Sofía Monsalve Suárez, as we begin to wrap up, if you can comment on what you think are the most critical ways to deal with the hunger crisis in the world today, and who should be making these decisions?

[00:39:46] **SOFIA MONSALVE SUAREZ:** I think we have to move away, finally, from this world food security strategy based on global trade and based on an industrial food system. It's just simply not working, and it's putting us at an enormous peril of all these famines that we are facing. Therefore, we need to transform the food systems, industrial food systems, as Rachel is saying, to transition out of fossil fuel-based food systems towards agroecology and food sovereignty.

Food sovereignty is about strengthening democracy, strengthening the groups and actors suffering most from hunger and malnutrition. But who is asking them what they need? Who is asking Somalia what they want to have? Nobody. The G7 is making the decisions. G7 want to continue with global trade as it is, no changes at all in the architecture of trade, investment, and finances, and this is the problem. So, we really urgently need to tackle this and to speak and listen to the populations in the countries which are suffering most now.

The future of the food ecosystem -- and the power of your plate Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli - TED Talks Daily - Air Date 5-9-22

[00:40:57] **NDIDI OKONKWO NWUNELI:** lenses a need for urgent action from at least three lenses. A health lens, an equity lens, and a climate lens.

Starting with a climate lens: we must modify how we grow food and reduce food waste. Our food ecosystem is one of the largest contributors to climate change. We keep cutting down trees to grow more food and we keep wasting food, which ends up in landfills and rots, generating methane. The good news is

that we have the technology and the science today to grow enough food to feed the world and to address our food waste problems.

We have the knowledge. We're not using it. There are exciting examples from my ecosystem where we're seeing dramatic impacts. The Songhai Center in Benin Republic educates young Africans on regenerative agriculture and zero waste. Total production. And one of these young people is doing just that. Through his company Bioloop he's feeding waste, casava peels, yam peels, to black soldier fly larva. They're growing really quickly and becoming wonderful fish feed. The byproducts and the residue from this process is wonderful soil supplements. And the entire production process is run on renewable energy. Through my work with Sahel Consulting, we're demonstrating that farmers can double and triple yields without hurting the environment.

We're using technology and science from our local research institutions and we're proving that in Africa, there are great examples for the rest of the world to emulate. Now we need to scale these interventions and we need to ensure that our governments, our private sector, our farmers are incentivized to change behavior and to improve lives.

If you're as impatient as I am, you also have a role to play by reducing the food waste in your home. Every single person here can take up a policy to ensure that their schools, their companies, their civil society groups have a sustainability policy and a food waste policy. And please don't tell your children to finish their dinner because there are hungry children anywhere. Tell them to finish their dinner because it's good for the environment and healthy food is good for them.

Second, we must ensure that healthy food is affordable and accessible for the most vulnerable. This is a huge challenge. Unhealthy food kills and we know this. One out of every five deaths is linked on healthy food. And yet one third of our world's population cannot afford a healthy diet. This is a big challenge.

Now food is medicine. Healthy food gives us long and productive lives and during COVID we've seen the impact of closures, shipping challenges that have affected food prices. And the most vulnerable have had to shift from healthy diets to unhealthy diets because they're cheaper. This has caused more damage to lives all over the world.

We must take a stand on this and we can learn a lot from Africa. The Hadzabe people in Tanzania live in harmony with the land and through their lives we've seen the ability to have a healthy diet. They eat 10 times more fiber than the average American. Oftentimes we don't realize that even in our own traditional

communities, we have so much to learn. In urban communities, we also have exciting social enterprises like mDoc that's using digital technology, cell phones, and training to get urban populations that are struggling with diabetes, high blood pressure, and so many other health challenges linked to eating ultra processed food, to shift to more traditional diets. And they're seeing measurable outcomes.

We must scale these type of interventions, but we must also hold our private sector companies responsible for the amount of sugar and salt contained in food. We must set standards for what healthy food is and define healthy food, according to plant-based diets, low salt, low sugar, and keep all of us accountable.

We must also encourage our governments and ensure that at the local, state, and federal level, our school feeding programs prioritize healthy food, our public procurement programs prioritize healthy food, and collectively we ensure that we keep the standards high for everybody, every child. If you're as impatient as me, you must also set standards and hold those in your space of influence accountable for delivering unhealthy food for the most vulnerable.

Third, we must support small and medium-sized enterprises. In the food ecosystem, small and medium-sized enterprises are the bedrock of our economy. They create jobs, they're innovative, and they can pivot very quickly. But during the pandemic we've seen something. They're most affected by shocks. The mortality rates of small and medium-sized enterprises in the food ecosystem has been quite high.

Now through my work, I've seen the value and the power of small and medium-sized enterprises. I'm the co-founder of a food company called AACE Foods. We have over 50% of our staff are women, 50% of our board are women, and we produce healthy foods sourced from over 10,000 farmers. Through this company, we're demonstrating that when you empower women, you empower communities.

One product that we sell has a ripple effect through the entire ecosystem. Another company that's worthy of emulation is Twiga, using mobile money and cell phones to connect farmers to urban retailers. Now their efficiency and removing the middlemen, creating shorter value chains, ensures that not only the farmer benefits, the retailer benefits, but the consumer has access to healthier food.

Through Nourishing Africa, I work with entrepreneurs in 37 African countries who are scaling sustainable business, building healthy food companies, and demonstrating that strong, small, and medium-sized enterprises committed to sustainable agriculture and healthy food can become change agents. We need to support our small and medium-sized enterprises, creating an enabling environment for them, providing catalytic financing, enabling them to scale, and supporting women own businesses, especially businesses run by young women.

In the food ecosystem we're often told to be patient when we plant the seed to let it grow. We're often told to let the vegetables simmer so that the juices will flow. We're told that "ndidi amaka", "patience is a virtue". But a wise woman once said, "For the dreamer, impatience is a virtue". I am impatient about the current pace of change in the food ecosystem. And I think we all must be courageous and bold to transform this landscape. The next time you eat a meal, ask yourself a few questions: Who grew this food? Where was it grown? When was it grown? How many steps and stops did it make before it got to your table? How much food waste was generated because of this meal? Let your answers influence your next meal.

The fact that you have a choice gives you privilege and also gives you a voice to demand that the solutions to the food ecosystem align with what works for people and planets. We must collectively create a food ecosystem that works not just for us, but for future generations. Our children and grandchildren will hold us accountable for what we chose to do today to transform the food ecosystem.

Are Food Shortages Coming to the United States_ - David Pakman Show - Air Date 4-20-22

[00:49:40] **DAVID PAKMAN - DAVID PAKMAN SHOW:** There is a new storyline. A new narrative claims that food shortages are imminent in the United States, and that there's going to be no food. The shelves will be bear, as the failed former president Donald Trump would often like to say. Joe Biden even said it. This was about three weeks ago and the context was the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the related sanctions and responses. Here's Joe Biden three weeks ago.

[00:50:06] **PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN:** Nothing more to report. With regard to food shortage, yes we did talk about food shortages, and it's gonna be real. The

price of these sanctions is not just imposed upon Russia, it's imposed upon an awful lot of countries as well, including European countries and our country as well.

[00:50:25] **DAVID PAKMAN - DAVID PAKMAN SHOW:** So, on the other hand, we also have the more hyperbolic, fear based, reactionary claims. Here's one example from a right-wing host, Dan Bongino who had a segment called the devastating food crisis is coming. Please prepare now. And the preppers loving this.

[00:50:43] **DAN BONGINO:** The food crisis coming up. It's a topic we've covered on the show and the radio show often. There's a devastating food crisis coming ladies and gentlemen, and you darn will better be prepared. Listen, I care about you. A lot. I'm not kidding. I love the audience. That's why there's an email on our website. That's why I leave the Facebook page open for your messages. I am here for you. I am one of you. I came from you. I'm a middle class kid who had a middle class job with a middle class life.

[00:51:08] **DAVID PAKMAN - DAVID PAKMAN SHOW:** Okay. So anyway, without his full biography, the point is the right is increasingly saying food shortages are coming. Many of the people predicting the food shortages will also sell you food, packaged food, bonus buckets. There's a lot of comments if you look at the Dan Bongino piece where people saying, "from my Bible study group, we can get food and all of this different stuff."

So let's talk it through. Is it possible that we could have a food shortage? Of course. Of course. There have been food shortages in history and they are possible. The first step in really thinking critically about this is what do we mean by a food shortage? Because there are some people who seem to think that a food shortage is my favorite orange juice wasn't available. I had to get pulp instead of no pulp. Or, I like Turkey bacon, but there was no Turkey bacon so I had to consider regular bacon or plant based bacon.

That's not really a food shortage. Now I'm gonna get to that, which is the products we expect just aren't there. Okay. We're gonna talk about that in a moment, but a food shortage, when we talk about it economically is there's not enough energy or there's close to not enough energy, meaning calories available, for the proper nutrition of a population. And I would even go further. I would say there's not enough calories available from a reasonably diverse set of foods. What I mean by that is imagine that in order to meet our caloric needs, everybody had to be drinking corn syrup. We'd be getting our calories, but I

would still consider that to be a food shortage because it's not a calorie shortage, but it's definitely a shortage of a reasonably diverse diet.

So the first question is, is an actual shortage based on that softer definition, not even gonna be able to really get the food groups we need, is that likely this year based on the evidence we have? And the answer is no. It's hard to say more, but there's not going to be a food group calorie deficit. There's going to be enough meat. There's going to be enough dairy. There's going to be enough produce. There will be enough grains. We're not going to actually have a shortage of calories from any particular food group.

Now, might there be a situation where in Portland, Oregon there's no chicken breast for a day at the local store and you've gotta get chicken thigh? Yeah, that could happen. Those things anecdotally are happening and we'll talk about why in a moment, but my store was out of a particular cookie and so I had to get the Milano. Most of us aren't savages so we get dark chocolate - you might have to get the milk chocolate. I know it's not good. It's ugly. I get it. It's ugly. I'm for dark chocolate as much as the next guy, but, that's not really a food shortage. The shelves aren't bare.

Now, let's get into what might happen, just so we all know and we're aware and we're prepared. Is it possible that specific products might ebb and flow in their supply so that you might have to choose something different that you're used to getting. Yeah, that is possible, and that's definitely different than what most of us in the United States are used to. The war in Ukraine is likely to disrupt wheat and sunflower seed oil, and sunflower seed oil is actually in a lot of foods that many of us buy, but it's more likely to be disruptive to countries other than the United States. The US is actually a big wheat exporter and producer. Poorer nations that rely more heavily on imports of wheat are gonna be more at risk, for example.

So the wheat issue will hit Egypt, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, some other countries. There will likely not be shortages, but there might be some limited availability of meat, dairy, and some animal products. There might also be a shortage, lack of availability, I think, is the word I should say, of some plant-based vegan proteins, for two reasons. One, there are some people who, if they don't see the meat that they want, they might try the plant-based alternative. The plant-based alternatives are also highly processed foods and the supply chain can't be accelerated that easily. A lot of those processed items - you can't easily adjust the supply chain quickly, it can take six to nine months. So you might see that. So we might see slight sporadic, regional, temporary lack of availability of certain products.

Now what could cause the appearance of an actual shortage? Panic buying like we saw early in the pandemic. And in that case, is it really a shortage? If a ton of people are pre purchasing a year's worth of whatever. And what I mean by that is think back to the so-called toilet paper shortage. There was no toilet paper on the shelves, that's true, but the reason was that a ton of people bought a year's supply. So they're good now for a year, and as we saw, once the supply normalized we had fewer people buying the toilet paper because they pre-purchased it in the first month of the pandemic. So that was an apparent shortage. It wasn't a real shortage. It's also, by the way, interesting how a lot of the producers of some of these foods, Tyson, Purdue, for example, in poultry, they've had record profits above and beyond the rate of inflation. So it's not just inflation, that's driving their profit at a time of allegedly significantly higher costs to them. So I'm not ready to say that there is price gouging going on, but it is interesting that profit margins remain at record highs despite supposedly higher costs and inflation and all of that.

So we're going to follow it. That's the best assessment we have right now based on the information that we have.

Why War in Ukraine is Causing Apocalyptic Famine Part 2 - RealLifeLore - Air Date 6-30-22

[00:56:41] **JOSEPH PISENTI - HOST, REALLIFELORE:** This is David Beasley. He's the man who currently runs the United Nations World Food Program, the largest humanitarian organization in the world, that is focused on global hunger and food security. Listen to what he has to say during this speech back from February of 2022, while speaking about impoverished countries around the world.

[00:56:58] **MR. BEASLEY:** Also, these are the countries that are struggling in such a way that if we do not address immediately over the next nine months, we will see famine; we will see destabilization of nations, like you are already seeing in certain places like in the Sahel; and third, you'll see mass migration. And I can tell you from experience, we've got the solutions, we've got the programs. We need the money and the follow-through. Otherwise, nations around the world will pay for it a thousand fold.

[00:57:30] **JOSEPH PISENTI - HOST, REALLIFELORE:** Mr. Beasley was commenting on a global food supply problem back in February of 2022, that

was already in a very bad shape for a very long list of reasons. In China, a series of catastrophic floods across the previous summer in 2021 damaged more than 30 million acres of farmland across the country, leading the Chinese agricultural minister to announce that their winter crop yield could end up becoming the worst in history.

The La Niña meteorological condition over the Pacific ocean began back in 2020 was persisting into an unusually long third year, bringing less precipitation than usual across the American west and dramatically exacerbating the already worst drought that the region has seen anytime in the past 1200 years from California to Western Kansas, and seriously negatively impacting US agricultural output in the process.

Eastern Africa is currently experiencing the most severe drought there of at least the past 40 years. In August, the Taliban's recapture of the government in Afghanistan had plunged the country into an even worse food security situation, as financial sanctions from the west began to bite, while internal civil wars continued to rage across many of the countries in the middle east, from Syria to Yemen, negatively impacting their citizens' abilities to acquire food. Back in 2020 in the capital and biggest port of Lebanon, Beirut, a catastrophic warehouse explosion took out most of the country's huge grain silos, leaving the country without any ability to store large amounts of grain and forcing them to become heavily reliant upon regular grain shipments coming in by sea instead, largely from Ukraine and Russia. And the lingering supply chain bottlenecks of the COVID-19 pandemic were still hampering the world's ability to ship products, including food.

Largely because of all these issues, the numbers of people around the world whose access to food is so poor that it directly threatens their livelihood increased by nearly 80% over just the past five years, from 108 million people to 193 million.

So as you can see, the global supply chain of food was already under a lot of stress, when Mr. Beasley publicly announced his warnings of famine, instability and mass migrations around the world over the next nine months at the Munich security conference on the 18th of February, 2022.

And then, just six days after those warnings were made, Vladimir Putin ordered nearly 200,000 Russian soldiers to invade Ukraine, and the global food situation immediately went from bad to absolutely catastrophic. Before the invasion began, Ukraine was among the world's most significant agricultural powerhouses, ranking fifth in global wheat exports, third in barley exports, third

in corn exports, and first in oil seed exports. Blessed with an abundance of some of the richest and most fertile black soils found anywhere in the world across the vast Eurasian steppe that spans throughout Southern Ukraine and Russia, these two countries have been among the world's top agricultural powerhouses for hundreds of years. Ukraine alone provides nearly 9% of all the wheat that's traded in the world. And when combined, the food that has grown upon these rich fields in both Ukraine and Russia supply nearly 30% of all the wheat that is traded across the world, 20% of the traded corn, 75% of all the traded sunflower oil, and nearly one-eighth of all the calories that are traded globally.

An overwhelming percentage of these calories are usually delivered by cargo ship across the Black Sea and through the Turkish straits towards countries across the middle east, north Africa and Eastern Africa, where the environment is significantly more arid on average. The soils are of lower quality and the widespread production of crops is therefore more challenging. Egypt alone is the world's single largest importer of wheat, with a hungry population of more than a hundred million people who largely all live immediately within the narrow oasis that the Nile river carves across the barren Sahara desert. As a result, Egypt has one of the lowest ratios of arable land to people in the world, with even less arable land overall than Serbia, a country with nearly 15 times less people, which ultimately means that inevitably Egypt is a country that is heavily reliant upon importing food from other countries. The primary food staple within Egypt is bread, which accounts for roughly 30% of all the calories that are consumed by Egyptian citizens. This means that the country consumes around 21 million tons of wheat per year, and 62% of all that wheat is imported from abroad. And the overwhelming majority of that imported wheat, roughly 82% of it, all comes from just the rich black soil fields found across Ukraine and Russia.

And Egypt is far from alone in this high level of dependence on food coming from around the Black Sea. The rich fields of Ukraine and Russia ordinarily supply 81% of Lebanon's imported wheat, 79% of Turkey's imported wheat, and significantly high amounts of imported wheat across the middle east, north Africa and eastern Africa.

This is one of the world's most crucial trade relationships that is entirely defined by geography. And it is very difficult for any of these countries who receive large amounts of Black Sea grains to find economic, alternative suppliers. Other rich and fertile agricultural areas in the world, like Western Europe, Canada, the United States, Brazil, India, or China, are all significantly further away and have their own geographically-determined trade routes already going on.

And so sending any grains from these regions to the middle east or north Africa would consequently take longer and be more expensive when compared with the closer-by fields of Ukraine and Russia. Within Ukraine itself, these were the provinces that produced the most of that hugely important food supply that fed some 400 million people around the world in the years immediately prior to the invasion, heavily concentrated within the southeast, central south, and western portions of the country. However, these are largely the exact same areas of the country that have seen the most intense levels of fighting since the Russians invaded back in February. At present, nearly one-third of Ukraine's rich farmland is either directly beneath Russian military occupation or has been bombed or mined so severely that it's no longer considered safe for farming.

Summary 7-22-22

[01:04:24] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with *The Takeaway* discussing globally rising food prices and the weaponization of food. *RealLifeLore* looked at geopolitical destabilization, the fertilizer shortage, and impact of grain used for animal production. *Democracy Now!* looked at the impact of climate and conflict already causing starvation. *Prolekult* discussed the role of capitalism in consistently depleting resources. *Democracy Now!* looked to the UN climate report section on food production and the need for food sovereignty. And finally, we heard a *Ted Talk* on improving food production and reducing waste.

That's what everyone heard, but members also heard bonus clips from the *David Pakman Show* clarifying the difference between a shortage of specific products and a true shortage of food. And *RealLifeLore* looked at the warnings of famine just before the war in Ukraine began. To hear that and have all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly into your new members-only podcast feed that you'll receive, sign up to support the show at BestoftheLeft.com/support, or shoot me an email requesting a financial hardship membership, because we don't let a lack of funds stand in the way of hearing more information.

And now, we'll hear from you.

Requesting a Culture Wars episode - Phil from California

[01:05:40] **VOICEMAILER: PHIL FROM CALIFORNIA:** Hey, my name is Phil, um, here in California. And, um, I just discovered your podcast. I absolutely love it because I feel like I am listening to a lot of commentary

politics podcasts, which is, I think, good if you're progressive and you can find the right progressive politics podcast to listen to, but also balancing it out with just the knowledge-based podcast that I get from you and Unfucking the Republic and I really enjoy listening to you both. My big request, if it's possible: I just got done listening to your podcast that was about Fox news. And I think it'd be amazing if you can come out with something that really centers around the culture war. Because I feel like that's kind of the big push for Fox News, is trying to fight culture war, as well as a push for, you know, the vast majority of conservative senators and congressmen. And I just feel like if we could break down culture wars and what they talk about, I'd love to hear what y'all's perspective is on that and, um, clips you might play off of that. So thanks again. Keep doing what you're doing. I think it's incredibly impactful. Have a good day. Bye.

Final comments on our coverage of the culture wars

[01:06:40] **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. And thanks today to Phil for his call. In response to his question about an episode about culture wars, I would argue that essentially every issue Republicans address these days are part of the culture wars, because they don't have any other ideas for society or policies that they advocate. It's just about controlling people they generally don't like and telling people how to think, particularly about our own history. So, if you want my take on the culture wars, I would just go through them issue by issue. I'd start with the war on the LGBTQ community. You could start with episode 1479 "Torturing Children and Families in the Name of Protecting Them" about trans rights, then 1498, much more recently, "Pride and Prejudice". Then there's the culture war against facing a history of systemic racism in America. You could start with #1470 "Distorting History and Banning Books is a Power Play of Exclusion", and a little bit further back #1453, "The Tea Party Too", which is from last year's school board nearly-riots that, uh, were breaking out over Critical Race Theory. I would also say that the dismantling of bodily autonomy also qualifies as the culture war, as there's no sound reasonable basis for the government to step in between doctors and patients, other than the religious beliefs of a minority of Americans who want to impose those beliefs on the rest of society.

So for more on that, there's our very previous episode #1501 about post-Roe America. And then getting back to history, you can go all the way back to the beginning of the New World, from the European perspective, and there's the culture war over Columbus Day and the effort to continue to ignore the genocide of Native peoples. And for that there's episode #1374, "Tell Stories, Not Myths (Columbus and the Centrality of Colonialism)". And then speaking of genocide, let's not forget about the much more recent colonial atrocity that many are equally invested in continuing to cover up, the attempt to exterminate Native cultures through the kidnapping and raising of Native children in abusive residential schools.

I mean, if that's not a culture war I don't know what is. For more on that check out episode 1431, "Stealing Native Children and Their Future" as well #1492, "The Great Replacements", which compares the conspiracy theory - Great Replacement Theory - with the actual, literal great replacement that happened in the genocidal effort to exterminate Native peoples.

I don't know. There's something about American culture that, you know, no one loves to look back on dark things in their past. But what's interesting about American culture, I think in particular, is that we love a redemption story. We almost like a person more if they've done something bad and recovered from it. We love the redemption story, but for whatever reason, we have not gotten that to translate into a nationwide culture of redeeming ourselves for our past history. People are so dead set on covering up, washing away, ignoring the dark parts of our history. They accuse people like me of just wanting us to feel terrible about the past for some unknown reason, which they then, you know, take a stab at guessing that I guess we just hate America or whatever. But no, what I would love to see is a redemption story. I would love to love this country even more because we overcame our dark past. Unfortunately, for now, it looks like we're nowhere near doing that, but lots of people are trying. Chipping away, making progress.

Other than that, I just wanna say it's good to be back after COVID. Thanks for all the well wishes. We were particularly happy to have been triple-vaccinated when we were infected as that almost certainly was the reason that our symptoms were kept relatively moderate. You know, I couldn't help but think back as the symptoms were on the increase, thinking back to those early days of COVID and 2020 and we began to hear all those stories of people feeling like they could hardly breathe, like there was a weight pressing down on their chest. And I thought, Oh no, how bad is this gonna get? But no, we got away with sore throats, congestion, fatigue, that sort of thing. We sat around for a week and just let our bodies do their thing and fight the infection and now we're like pretty...

very nearly back up to normal, just some lingering weirdness that we're working through just fine. So we were glad that it was moderate, but obviously it wasn't particularly enjoyable by any stretch. So keep up on your vaccinations and keep wearing high quality masks when indoors and sharing the air with others.

That is gonna be it for today. As always keep the comments coming in at 202-999-3991 or by emailing me to Jay@BestoftheLeft.com. 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 Brian, 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, 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 you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, D.C., my name is Jay, and this has been the Best of the Left podcast coming to you twice weekly thanks entirely to the members and donor to the show from BestoftheLeft.com.