

#1581 Indicted Authoritarianism Up For Debate

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:00:00] Welcome to this episode of the award winning Best of the Left podcast, in which we shall take a look at the first GOP presidential debate, which happened without the frontrunner, Donald Trump, who instead just hung over the proceedings like a specter. Meanwhile, Trump's legal troubles continue to mount, and we examine what it is that keeps Republican voters and presidential candidates alike, with minor exceptions, firmly defending the former president.

Sources today include In the Thick, Straight White American Jesus, Democracy Now!, Today Explained, the Thom Hartmann Program, and additional members only clips from Democracy Now!

The Party of Authoritarianism - In The Thick - Air Date 8-23-23

MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: Mike, you joined us on our show in 2016 and we're gonna actually take a listen to how you framed all of this seven years ago. Let's go to the archive tape.

MIKE GERMAN: There are people who have been white supremacists, publicly acknowledged white [00:01:00] supremacists for 50 years and they haven't changed what they've been saying for those 50 years. And three years ago, they were saying it, and no mainstream media organization put a microphone in front of their face. Nobody put a camera in front of them. Nobody asked them what they thought about mainstream issues and ideas. And yet, somehow over the last six months, it's become prevalent that we put a microphone in front of these people who are exploiting that opportunity.

MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: So, Mike, you were giving us the context of how the media was amplifying these perspectives. I mean, we've gotten to a point where we have a presidential candidate who's been indicted four times, so all of it is strange. I'm gonna ask you, I don't think shocked is the right word, but I don't know if you're shocked about how right the GOP is gone, or were you like, yep, this is exactly the trajectory that I've been talking about?

MIKE GERMAN: It's certainly the trajectory I've been warning about since I left the FBI in 2004. [00:02:00] I don't think most people really understand how authoritarianism works and the elements of fascism that as an undercover agent in white supremacist groups, I really learned a lot about the history of white supremacy in Europe and the United States and how foundational it was to so many of our policies.

We were overtly white supremacist nation for a century, and then through Jim Crow and Black Codes and other hundred years of effective white supremacy, and that didn't just evaporate with the Civil Rights movement, it was pushed to the margins to a certain extent, but was still a feature of our politics and the way that politicians, particularly on the right, but broader than that, would make appeals to racism that were often muted. It was called "dog whistle" politics. The people who like me had been trained to listen to those dog whistles, could hear them [00:03:00] regularly, but the general public might view this language as facially benign.

MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: I like that. Facially benign. Okay. Right. In other words, you were like, it's your just weird uncle who's kind of acting up again and it's like, nope.

MIKE GERMAN: Right. Exactly. And we all understand that there are racists in our society, but we look at them as an aberration. In fact, even the FBI and the Justice Department treat white supremacist violence as a form of extremism, compared to Muslim fundamentalism or Black nationalism. But they don't understand how deeply entwined white supremacy is with government power. And that's where it's more dangerous. It's not just the violence that the so-called extremists are committing, but that they're so tied to people who actually hold the levers of government power, who use state violence in a way to maintain the same racial hierarchy that [00:04:00] they're seeking to influence by their extremist violence.

MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: There you go.

Trickle Down Trumpism -Straight White American Jesus - Air Date 8-26-23

DANIEL MILLER - CO-HOST, STRAIGHT WHITE AMERICAN

JESUS: You know, and I'm not the first one to say this, lots of people have said it, they always do the "who won the debate?" kind of thing, as much as debates are debates now, regardless of where they are in the political spectrum, right?

It's just people trying to score points on each other. But everybody agrees, and I think they're right too, that the sort of looming presence in the debate was the person who wasn't there, right? It was Trump. I've never seen a presidential primary like this where everybody's afraid to criticize the candidate that they want people to vote against, right? You had Chris Christie, who was the only one who really consciously or vocally said something anti-Trump or was taken as anti-Trump gets booed. Everybody says that they'd support, ongoing support for Trump and so forth. And like a lot of other people have said, Trump was the big winner in this.

In any debate, everybody knows the person who's leading has the least to gain from being in a debate. And Trump's not unique in being in the position of [00:05:00] deciding not to participate or doing that. Most candidates end up doing it because they feel like they have to, of course, that doesn't hold to Trump.

That was the big one is just how present Trump was, despite the fact that he's absent. I still can't fully get my head around why in the world people would vote for you if you won't say that your opponent is somebody that you're gonna do a better job than, or something like, I just don't know. I don't know what they're just running down the clock and hoping that he tanks because of legal stuff or what, but that was a piece. And then I think the other one, I'll throw it over to you to lead on it, is the trickle down Trumpism like you're talking about, again, he was present there because so many of -- I think not just the policies or the positions or the attitudes in the GOP, but the articulation of it and the rhetoric of it and the kind of militaristic, hyper masculine, whatever kind of rhetoric is [00:06:00] so prevalent and so common in the GOP now, and I think that is a Trump effect.

BRADLEY ONISHI - CO-HOST, STRAIGHT WHITE AMERICAN

JESUS: Yeah, let's talk about that. So we have this situation where Trump doesn't attend and Ruth Ben-Ghiat, who wrote *Strong Men*, many of you will know who Ruth is, had a great tweet and explanation of that. She says, "Trump's not there because dictators don't debate." If you want to be an autocrat, you don't debate. You are just supposed to be the leader. You have authority inherently. It comes from heaven, it comes from the divine. It is whatever. But you don't need to debate because you're not there to show that you're one of the best candidates. You are *the* candidate, and I think that's something we should take away from Trump not being there.

How can you be a viable presidential candidate if you won't debate the issues? That seems like a fair question. The answer is, I am the candidate who is chosen by God as an inherent right to be the leader, because that's who I am. And he

[00:07:00] even said it in his interview with Tucker Carlson, why would I get on stage with a bunch of people who have no business running for president?

And you're like, dude, you've been indicted four times. A judge decided that you sexually assaulted E. Jean Carroll. You are the only president to be impeached twice and you incited an insurrection. What right do *you* have to run for president? And yet he's turning it around on everyone else. So I think that's something to keep in mind.

The very fact that Trump would not debate is not normal. Just don't lose sight of that. That's one. Two, As you said, Dan, most of the folks -- Christie and a little bit of Hutchinson aside -- would say nothing negative about him. When asked, would you vote for Donald Trump, even if he's convicted for crimes?, the majority of the stage raised their hand and said yes.

So there was this fealty to Trump, and as you said, Dan, there was this lack of desire to criticize him, and it almost just felt like a group of people [00:08:00] thinking, well, if he gets arrested and put away, or if he just flames out or something happens, and then hopefully they'll pick me, right? It almost felt like there's no way for me to beat him. There's no way for us to actually usurp him. So let's just hope that he's out of the picture. And if he's out of the picture, hopefully I'll be the guy who they pick.

I'll give you an example of this. I'm a surfer, and when you're out there surfing, there's a very delicate and ritualized order of who gets what wave. And I won't go into it, but if you're surfing and you know the rules, you know that when a good wave comes, you know that somebody in a certain position has the right of way, and you better not take the wave if they're already on it because they're gonna be pretty upset and you're gonna break surfer code and it's a whole thing, right? Fist fights happen, blah, blah, blah. Alright. Why do I say that? I say that because one strategy that you can use as a surfer is sit in a certain position, hope that the person with the right of way wipes out, doesn't [00:09:00] get the wave, messes up, and then you jump on and you take the wave when they are no longer available to get it 'cause they wiped out or messed up or something else.

I felt like that's what was going on at the Republican debate is they're just waiting for Trump to wipe out and then maybe they'll ride the wave of GOP support.

I'm gonna talk about two more things related to this and I'll throw it back to you. The Trumpism was there not only in their fealty to him, but also in the

ways that a lot of the candidates discuss the issue. So I'll just go over a couple so that we don't spend all day on this.

One is Ron DeSantis says on day one he will use troops in Mexico. Not at the border; in Mexico. If you go back to 2016, Dan, Trump really -- if you go back to that terrible year of 2016 that I know none of you listening wanna do, and I'm not asking you to -- but if you did, you would find that Trump's meteoric rise in the GOP primary [00:10:00] came when he started talking about the border. He said all the time in 2016, you guys weren't even talking about this until I came on. You guys weren't even talking about this until I showed up. What happens years later, two cycles later? His leading rival is talking about invading Mexico in an act of war on the first day of his imagined presidential term. Dan, this is what happens when you platform a radical. It trickles down. Ron DeSantis: I will invade Mexico. That's an act of war. What are you talking about?

Second, a number of the candidates, including Mike Pence and Ron DeSantis, said they would get rid of the Department of Education. Now, we've heard this before, but I just wanna reiterate, this is an extreme position. So you're telling me you're gonna get rid of the Department of Education, right? We're talking about 200,000 federal employees. Or we're also [00:11:00] just talking about having standards for the ways that our students learn, having an agency that oversees that, and does not allow runaway states or runaway actors to go rogue in the most egregious senses. Dan, it's a radical position to say you want to get rid of the Department of Education, especially in a context where, as we've covered on this show, we have Oklahoma, funding with taxpayer money a Catholic school. We have Texas trying to put the 10 Commandments in schools. We have Idaho saying that coaches, teachers, might be able to pray in front of their students at practice or in the classroom. When we have books being banned, LGBTQ teachers being run out, the teacher of the year in Idaho leaving the state 'cause she feels like she can't teach there anymore.

So the Department of Education, that's a radical position.

An Argument at the Kids' Table John Nichols on First GOP Debate Held Without Trump Part 1 - Democracy Now! - Air Date 8-24-23

AMY GOODMAN: At last night's debate in Milwaukee, Republican presidential candidates were also asked about the [00:12:00] climate crisis. This

was on a day when the heat in Milwaukee forced the closing of the Milwaukee schools. During the debate, Fox News played a question from Alexander Diaz, a student at Catholic University of America.

ALEXANDER DIAZ: Polls consistently show that young people's number one issue is climate change. How will you, as both president of the United States and leader of the Republican Party, calm their fears that the Republican Party doesn't care about climate change?

MARTHA MacCALLUM: So, we want to start on this with a show of hands. Do you believe in human behavior is causing climate change? Raise your hand if you do.

GOV. RON DESANTIS: Look, we're not schoolchildren. Let's have the debate. I mean, I'm happy to take it to start, Alexander.

MARTHA MacCALLUM: OK. You know what?

BRET BAIER: So, do you want to raise your hand or not?

GOV. RON DESANTIS: I don't think that's the way to do. So, let me just say to Alexander this: First of all, one of the reasons our country's decline is because of the way the corporate media treats Republicans versus Democrats. Biden was on the beach while those people were suffering. He was asked about it. He [00:13:00] said, "No comment." Are you kidding me? As somebody that's handled disasters in Florida, you've got to be activated. You've got to be there. You've got to be present. You've got to be helping people who are doing this.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: Can we stop the filibuster and answer the question?

MARTHA MacCALLUM: Yeah.

GOV. RON DESANTIS: And here's the deal —

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: Let's just answer the question, actually.

BRET BAIER: Is that a "yes"? Is that a "yes"? Is that a hand raised?

MARTHA MacCALLUM: You do not —

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: I think it was a hand raised for him. And it's — my hands are in my pockets, because the climate change agenda is a hoax.

GOV. RON DESANTIS: No, I didn't raise a hand.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: Let us be honest as Republicans. I'm the only person on the stage who isn't bought and paid for, so I can say this: The climate change agenda is a hoax.

ASA HUTCHINSON: Oh, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. That's ridiculous.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: The climate change agenda is a hoax, and we have to declare independence from them. And the reality is, the anti-carbon agenda is the wet blanket on our economy. And so, the reality is, more people are dying of bad climate change policies than they are of actual climate change.

BRET BAIER: Governor, Governor Haley, are you bought and paid for?

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: The death rate is down by 98% over the last century.

BRET BAIER: Hold on. Hold on. Listen. Listen. Listen.

CHRIS CHRISTIE: Look, I've had — no, no, no. I've had enough. I've had enough already tonight of a guy who sounds like [00:14:00] ChatGPT standing up here. And the last person in one of these debates, Bret, who stood in the middle of the stage and said, "What's a skinny guy with an odd last name doing up here?" was Barack Obama, and I'm afraid we're dealing with the same type of amateur standing on stage tonight.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: Well, come over here. Come over and give me a hug. Give me a hug just like you did to Obama.

CHRIS CHRISTIE: The same — the same type of amateur.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: And you'll help elect me just like you did to Obama, too. Give me that bear hug, brother.

CHRIS CHRISTIE: The same type of amateur.

BRET BAIER: Hold on. Hold on. Governor Haley, would you like to respond? Are you bought and paid for?

NIKKI HALEY: So, Bret, what I would like to say is the fact that I think this is exactly why Margaret Thatcher said, "If you want something said, ask a man. If you want something done, ask a woman." First of all, we do care about clean

air, clean water. We want to see that taken care of. But there's a right way to do it. And the right way to do it is, first of all, yes, is [00:15:00] climate change real? Yes, it is. But if you want to go and really change the environment, then we need to start telling China and India that they have to lower their emissions.

AMY GOODMAN: That was the former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, who was the South Carolina governor. John Nichols, very quickly, before we move on to foreign policy?

JOHN NICHOLS: Sure. Look, we saw peak climate denial in a Republican debate, and it's kind of amazing at this late stage in history that it was, A, stated and, B, even on the candidates who weren't quite as aggressive as Ramaswamy, there was avoidance. And you noticed that in that clip you played, the candidates immediately tried to go off to other topics to talk about whether they were bought and paid for, to talk about China, to talk about Russia, rather than to focus in on the issue that was raised.

And I think this sums up the Republican Party at this point. The moderate [00:16:00] position in the Republican party is avoidance. But I think a very strong position is — you know, a very popular position within the party is one of actual denial. And you saw a candidate on stage go full board on that, which was quite remarkable, especially on a day when, literally, the heat index was 114 degrees in Milwaukee.

Why top Republicans want to bomb Mexico - Today, Explained - Air Date 8-29-23

ALEX: SCORING IN <BUBBLING OVER>

Let's start with Congress. So you have Congressman Dan Crenshaw.

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FoxNews Rep. Dan Crenshaw: If we don't accept the fact that we are already at war, then we're going to lose it pretty quick.

ALEX: Mike Waltz.

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FOXNEWS Rep. Michael Waltz: Cartels are running our border. The cartels are destabilizing the entire Mexican government. We need to go on offense.

ALEX: Both Republicans. They introduced a bill seeking an authorization for the use of military force to go after cartels, which, broadly speaking, gives the US government broader authorities to use the military to start bombing parts of Mexico where the cartels are, but targeting the cartels specifically.

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FoxNews Rep. Dan Crenshaw: This has to be a whole of government approach, with CBP leading the charge, but also with the DEA, the [00:17:00] CIA, the FBI, the military. This is a serious problem. This is some of the most well-equipped, well-armed, most dangerous people on Earth just south of our border.

ALEX: You've got Tom Cotton, who's open to sending U.S. troops into Mexico to target drug lords.

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FOX News TOM COTTON: If al-Qaeda or ISIS set up shop in Juarez or Monterrey or Tijuana and they were killing 100,000 Americans every single year, what would you expect our government to do? Whatever it is, that's exactly what we should do to these cartels.

ALEX: They're not alone in Congress, but they're sort of more prominent ones. But to be clear, all of that would be happening without Mexico's support. So they're basically saying the U.S. needs to take unilateral action against the cartels, even if the Mexican government doesn't help, even though the U.S. would try to pressure them to do so. Now, this is permeating up to, let's say, the presidential level:

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60 Minutes Mark Esper: [on President Trump suggesting missile strikes against drug cartels]

Mark Esper: The president pulls me aside on at least a couple of occasions and suggests that maybe we have the U.S. military shoot missiles into Mexico.

Norah O'Donnell: [00:18:00] Shoot missiles into Mexico. for what?

Mark Esper: He would say to go after the cartels.

ALEX: So when Trump was president, he considered using military force against drug cartels. He didn't for myriad reasons, one of which was he was worried about an influx of asylum seekers coming north of the border. That's a border that has been a big issue for him. And he was worried about the optics of that. But it is now a part of the campaign. So not only DeSantis, but Vivek Ramaswamy:

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Forbes Vivek Ramaswamy: [Secure The Southern Border] Here's. What we're doing. I'm taking over in January 2025. We take undeployed troops by the hundreds of thousands. We secure the southern border full stop. If we've done it to ISIS in a different part of the world, this should be simple.

ALEX: You have Trump and his acolytes basically saying that DeSantis is stealing Trump's policy, right? They're basically saying that, Oh, wait, bombing Mexico in parts of Mexico to go after cartels is Trump policy.

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KUSI News Trump: [Plan to Destroy the Drug Cartels] The drug cartels are waging war in America, and it's now time for America to wage war on the cartels.

ALEX: And I should note that pretty much every Republican candidate [00:19:00] supports designating the cartels as terrorist organizations. So, like, that's the minimum bar. But I think the big takeaway here is, from what once was kind of a fringe idea within the Republican Party has made its way through Congress, to a Trump administration, now to this campaign, to the point that you have the three polling Republicans, Trump, DeSantis, Vivek Ramaswamy, all supporting this idea. So you could imagine that a Republican – should a Republican win in 2024 – the 'strike Mexico to go after the drug cartels' idea isn't going to go away. In fact, it will probably be one of the earliest foreign policy commitments that people will see if they fulfill.

SCORING OUT

SEAN: Is going after the drug cartels in Mexico with forces, with bombs, with a full military engagement, whatever it might end up being, is that going to war with Mexico?

ALEX: It's not really. So let's take a quick step back. So the one thing they all the candidates [00:20:00] pretty much say is they want to work with the Mexican government to rid themselves of the cartels or at least to substantially curb the amount of fentanyl that comes into the United States, which we should foreground, the opioid epidemic has been, you know, killing tons of people in this country. I'm sure this podcast has talked about it quite a bit.

TAPE SFX IN

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TODAY EXPLAINED: Addicted and alone [August 2021]

SEAN: More than 90,000 people died of an overdose in 2020 in the United States. That's a thirty percent jump from the year before. A lot of us didn't notice, but Rachel Lambert did.

TAPE SFX OUT

ALEX: The opioid crisis, which includes a lot of fentanyl, is killing more people than the Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan wars combined on a yearly basis. So this is obviously something that's top of mind, not only just for Republicans or for Democrats, but this has sort of been the latest and biggest Republican suggestion. So to the point about war. If the Mexican government doesn't help, then what they're basically saying is we would do special targeted either cyber operations or special forces operations or limited strikes on labs. There [00:21:00] is a call to send troops in, but it wouldn't be like a massive invasion. It would be kind of like anti-terrorist operations in, say, Syria and Iraq or Libya or elsewhere against terrorists like ISIS or al Qaeda or anything like it, right? I mean, if we're going to treat the cartels as terrorist organizations, then we're going to fight them like terrorist organizations. And so we're going to do counterterrorism operations. Now, and in differing cases, you know, you have countries that either sort of tacitly give permission or openly give permission and others that simply don't. Right? I mean, lest we forget that the operation to get bin Laden was in Pakistan and Pakistan did not particularly like that we did that.

SEAN: Are there any Democrats taking this idea seriously or is this strictly a Republican thing? Has the president of the United States, the current one, said anything about this notion?

ALEX: I mean, Here's what Adrienne Watson, who's the National Security Council spokesperson, told me: You know, the administration is not considering military action in Mexico, and they actually think that designating cartels as foreign terrorist organizations would not give them any more [00:22:00] authority than they already have. In fact, this is sort of the administration's argument, is that what you're doing by designating them as terrorists is just opening up military options. All the other options like economic sanctions and more law enforcement authorities have already been granted by this administration. Even Mark Milley, the Joint Chiefs chair, has said it was a bad idea:

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CSPAN Chair Mark Milley: I wouldn't recommend anything be done without Mexico's support and they have to request and so on, so forth. There are capabilities that we in the military have, but these are very, very difficult policy decisions. And having spent a fair amount of time in Latin America, I would argue that the best thing that can be done is by, with, and through the local governments that are friendly to the United States.

ALEX: Now, I should say it's not solely Republicans that are calling for treating cartels like terrorists.

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FoxBusiness Rep. Tony Gonzales: [label cartels terrorists] I think it's time to label cartels what they are. They are terrorists and they're terrorizing not only migrants and people along the border. Now they're terrorizing Americans.

ALEX: After there were four Americans kidnaped in Mexico, Rep.. Gonzalez, who's a Democrat [00:23:00] from Texas, he said that the U.S. should start treating cartels like terrorists. Now, he didn't say, you know, he would support an authorization for the use of military force, but he has basically said, look, these cartels are terrorist-like organizations.

SEAN: I think we all know how these presidential primary debates work, Alex. You've got, you know, one party's presidential candidates sort of trying to win the votes of one side and then they have to sort of regress to the mean and try and capture both sides. Is this just some of the top Republicans in the field trying to sort of out-extreme each other, or do you think there's a genuine desire here to go to war — war-war — with Mexican drug cartels?

ALEX: A couple of things here. The first is that I think they are finding it to be lucrative for their campaigns. DeSantis, for example, is fundraising off of the proposal that he said at the debate. [00:24:00] He's selling T-shirts that you can buy for, I believe, like \$44 that say that he will leave drug lords, "stone cold dead". And that's in all caps. So clearly, they're finding that this could be a resonating message to his base. And, you know, Desantis had a military career. He was a military lawyer. And so this is a way for him to sort of say, look, I've served. I've got military credentials and here's the things I'm thinking about. I look tough here. And then also to match, I think, Ramaswamy and Trump. But point is that there seems to be an audience. I think that's part of it. The other aspect that I don't really want to miss is that, you know, this really is like the major concern. I've been talking to Republicans for a long time, you know, even before really the primaries got underway in earnest. And when I was saying, what do you think the big foreign policy challenge is going to be or the big foreign policy thing is going to be? Obviously, China is sort of, you know, above all, but second was fentanyl.

SEAN: Hm!

ALEX: And it seems to be that that their constituents are really concerned about what's going on.

Trickle Down Trumpism Part 2 -Straight White American Jesus - Air Date 8-26-23

DANIEL MILLER - CO-HOST, STRAIGHT WHITE AMERICAN

JESUS: So that's a piece of it, but part [00:25:00] of it, if people are like, why the extremes? Just a fact to think about is that since 1988, the GOP has won one popular presidential vote. They won the popular vote for president one time. It was 2004, when George W. Bush won his second term. That's it. It was Bush/Kerry, thank you. And the last GOP president before him was his father after Reagan's two terms. They have to become more and more extreme. And again, I don't see this as Trump invented this. He didn't invent it, but he brought it up from the depths. He brought it out in the open. And this is why for me, things like the election denial and everything else, number one, they make sense. There's a certain logic to this. We can't win an election if we're the GOP on even ground in a presidential election. We'll say that it was fake. We'll say that it was stolen, whatever. But it's also gonna push us to more and more far extremes, and we've talked about this for years too, and you [00:26:00] see the culmination of it now. They're so beholden to the far right and a shrinking electorate, an aging white population. And so they just have to get more and more radical to keep those people on board. They can't lose them because if they lose them, they

have really nobody to vote for them. And so you get this kind of cycle where they're caught in these radical positions, even if they didn't believe them.

And people ask you, I know they ask you, they ask me, do they really believe this? Do they just say it? Do they, whatever. We brought this question and posed it to our panelists at our Denver event. And the short answer is, it doesn't matter, 'cause the effects are the same. And why I bring that up, I bring that up because I think Ramaswamy's statements are the same kind of thing. Because people also, and I've seen in the wake of that, lots of people posting things and writing, why are people drawn to believe these conspiracy theories and so forth. And one answer is -- and this is gonna sound weird, we think of conspiracy theories often in terms of belief, people get really wrapped up in the how can they believe these things and the data says [00:27:00] this, and how can they ignore, Brad, all the evidence that you're giving, the hints of changing climate patterns and events all over the US, not to mention the rest of the globe -- and the answer is, it feels good to believe it. It feels good. It feels comforting to believe that not that humans screwed up the planet. It's gonna be really hard to try to fix it. Not we have supported the West, the US, countries like this, for generations. Laissez-faire economic policies that despoil the planet, and not because that stuff also gets us wrapped up in all kinds of stuff that we also don't wanna talk about on the right, about colonialism and race relations. And, arguably, why a response to what's going on in Maui is more muted. And it's far away and people don't even realize it's part of the US or there are lots of non-white people who live in Hawaii, including native Hawaiians, right? All of these kinds of things. *It feels so much better* to say it's a hoax. And then I can just sleep well at night and I can [00:28:00] feel good about it. And this is what the GOP is pandering to.

And I think this is part of why people have to recognize how potent this is, because there are a lot of Americans that it just feels better to feel all these things. It feels better to be angry all the time than to be scared. It feels better to know that, if I'm nervous around people of color, they scare me, they make me nervous, my kids are learning stuff in history classes I didn't learn, it's a lot easier to just be angry about that and shut it out than it is to have to look in a mirror and take a look and say, wow God, what if all the stuff my teachers told me wasn't the way it is?

Obviously I can go on about this forever, but I think that's for me, I guess what I'm trying to get at, which is for me, the emotion that I think all of this ties into that's on display in the debate, that's on display in the election, that's on display in this kind of ramping up of rhetoric, which will jump me over ahead and jump to the next topic then, if we're talking about emotion here, which is the role of abortion in the debate I thought was [00:29:00] really significant. CNN, others

have had really good summaries and they summed it up well. It would take a while to go through every candidate and try to pin down what they've said, but they're all over the map, right? Some candidates were like, 15-week federal abortion ban is what we should do. Some said they were opposed to a nationwide ban. Some have been in states that have enacted six-week bans, but nobody was really willing to say whether or not they actually support that at a federal level or if they would as president and so forth.

But I think what it highlights, and this is another piece, is where the GOP is still caught between at least three poles here. One is that same group on the far right who are so adamantly opposed to any form of abortion that they have to take radical positions. As you hammer all the time, a majority, around two-thirds of Americans in general approve, favor some form of abortion access. Then the ones who don't know whether they support a federal ban or whether all that rhetoric they had about state's rights for decades was true, and they don't know [00:30:00] what to do. And I think that was on full display.

The Party of Authoritarianism Part 2 - In The Thick - Air Date 8-23-23

MIKE GERMAN: ...and it reminded me of a shooting in Detroit of a Black Imam.

Narrator: The FBI says Abdullah was a highly placed leader of a nationwide Sunni group of African Americans who converted to Islam. However, members of the community shocked by the allegations tell *Al Jazeera* that he led a relatively small mosque and was known for his charitable work in the Detroit area.

MIKE GERMAN: And the FBI had a sting operation and it just involved stolen television sets. It wasn't a violent crime that he was being set up for, but the FBI went in full guns blazing in a warehouse where he was completely cornered and then set a dog on him knowing that he was armed with a handgun. So, when he shot at the dog, they shot at him and killed him. And I'm not necessarily questioning the people who are in that shooting incident - you know, when somebody fires a weapon, you can't do a deep analysis of where [00:31:00] exactly they were aiming, and, uh, likewise in Utah when somebody points a gun - but there were choices about how to address that crime and it almost seemed like the part of that state violence that it was, Oh, you want to intimidate us? Well, we're gonna show you, and made it more likely that violence was going to occur.

MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: Which is why when you look at what happened on January 6th, for example, and the fact that law enforcement was just, like, Oh wait, what's happening?

MIKE GERMAN: Right. Law enforcement was the part that was going, Nah, nah.

MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: Exactly!

MIKE GERMAN: The FBI, the Capitol Police.

JULIO RICARDO VARELA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: Exactly. That's what I'm fascinated by, right? What you just said there, Mike, in the heart of January 6th, like, you were just saying, I don't know what's going on. And then now we're living in a post-January 6th world. So, in a post-January 6th world, where do we stand? Is the FBI defending democracy? Are we dangerously close to this authoritarianism type of mentality? I mean, what are your thoughts?

MIKE GERMAN: Absolutely. And as you mentioned earlier, one [00:32:00] of the elements of a growing authoritarian movement is to challenge government institutions, and so we have Republicans who had been steadfast defenders of the FBI when it was accused of abuses of minority communities and religious communities and leftist political activists, are all of a sudden treating the FBI as the enemy and undermining the FBI at a time when they're involved in the largest investigation ever in their history, the January 6th assault on the Capitol, that I think in many ways is admirable. They've charged over a thousand people. That's a little confusing what their strategy is on how to address the other thousand plus people that may have committed crimes that day with the resources they have. But they still seem very focused on that day as if it appeared out of nowhere and the problem went away afterwards. When groups like The Proud Boys who [00:33:00] the government has successfully charged with sedition for leading the attack on the Capitol, have reconstituted and are still engaging in public violence all across the country with very little police intervention.

And even though they're, uh, interstate organization, you haven't seen the FBI using its tools to address this ongoing violence and it doesn't even seem to register that it's happening. I mean, one of the big problems which we've been trying to address is the FBI can't tell you how many people White supremacists killed last year. Or the year before that. Or the year before that. Because even though they've now said that they have raised domestic terrorism investigations

to a top priority, they don't collect domestic terrorism incident data. So they don't know how many attacks are out there.

JULIO RICARDO VARELA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: You know, wait, can I just stop for a second? This is a Mike German moment.

MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But I bet if it involves a Muslim person that immediately [00:34:00] categorizes something else. Mike is saying, if you have White men committing crime, murdering people, what will it take for those to be seen within the context of domestic terrorism?

MIKE GERMAN: Exactly. That's fascinating.

MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: 'cause it gets to a very, you know, I mean, Timothy McVey, Oklahoma City bombing, 1997. Yeah. I'm fixated on this because this is what he said in his only interview to *Time Magazine*. He said, Well, wait, do I look like a terrorist?

MIKE GERMAN: Right.

MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: It's a central point: because I'm a White guy, so therefore I can't possibly be a terrorist. This is so important because there's that element, right? The Timothy McVay element, like, do I look like a terrorist, or something else? Right? Which is a complicated element to the conversation about White supremacy, but we're not afraid to take on complicated issues when it revolves around White supremacy, which is, there are a lot of POC a lot of people of color, who express White supremacist views. You do not have to be White to believe and support White supremacy. So, most notably, Enrique Tarrio, the former leader of the Proud [00:35:00] Boys who is Afro-Cuban, the mass shooter who killed eight people in Allen, Texas back in May, many of them, Asian, including a child, he was a Latino man who expressed neo-Nazi views, he had a patch that he was wearing with the initials RWDS, which stands for right-wing death squad.

So, we have been talking about and acknowledging Latinos and Latinas who identify with White supremacy. So can you talk a little bit more about why White supremacist groups are actively engaging people of color, to get them to come over to, as it were, their side? And what tools are they using, misinformation, disinformation?

JULIO RICARDO VARELA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: And Mike, I'm sure from your history, and Maria, too, back in the nineties, like, this is nothing new, right?

MIKE GERMAN: Right. So it *is* nothing new. Race is a social construct. It's something that we invented to establish a political-economic-social hierarchy in our [00:36:00] societies. So who is White under the social definition of it is malleable and people are let in and people are pushed out depending on what's going on in a different society's political demographic.

And from the perspective I learned as a White supremacist undercover, they focus on European ancestry. So of course Spain is in Europe, and so anybody with a Spanish surname, as long as they could prove or even just claim ancestry going back to Spain, they were White. And Latino communities aren't exempt from racism. And, you know, Hispanic is an ethnicity, not a race, and right there have always been considered White Hispanics and Black Hispanics and Asian Hispanics. So you've always had an element of that. And with the growing Latino population in the United States, obviously they're attaining more political [00:37:00] power. So there's a interest in incorporating more of them into the far-right movement. And that is the other part of it, is the far-right politics, the authoritarianism, the fascism, is racially exclusive in context. So of course fascism is also something that has been in South and Central America, in many ways. So, you know, you saw White supremacists wearing t-shirts that said "Pinochet did nothing wrong".

MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: Exactly.

JULIO RICARDO VARELA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: And you and people bring up Spain and we completely forget if you start looking at the history of Spanish colonialism, there were literal caste systems that based your status in society on the blending of races of how White you were or how Black you were, or how indigenous you were, right?

MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: And the amount of violence that was learned and is perpetuated by a theory of White supremacy from, you know, colonial times. And then you see that manifested in authoritarian dictatorships in Argentina where they are torturing [00:38:00] people based on political views.

JULIO RICARDO VARELA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: And White supremacy has a Latin American slant as well, Mike. I think that's one thing that people continue to miss.

Is America Run By A Psychopathic Cult w Seth D. Norrholm - Thom Hartmann Program - Air Date 8-24-23

THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM: Dr. Norrholm, in this article that you wrote, I read it on *Raw Story*, I'm not sure where it was first published, you argue that, you're talking about the political parties and how we can't compromise anymore, and that basically the GOP has, you know, morphed into a cult. I'm, you don't literally say that, but I think that there's an element of, it seems to me like you're suggesting that. If that's the case, what do we do about that? How do we interact with family members, friends, who have become cult members, who have come under the sway of Donald Trump? Or of the larger, you know, cult, the White supremacist cult, for example? The White nationalism thing.

DR. SETH D. NORRHOLM: Yeah. You know, if you think about cults in general, you know, obviously there are lots been written about, and cult psychology has been studied for decades, and that's a lot to discuss, so I'm just gonna boil it down. If you think about [00:39:00] the cult experience, you're talking about a reality that is driven by the leader of the organization or the cult, and that is perpetuated by the followers, and usually there is some central doctrine to the cult theology, which is, you know, we will follow this leader who will take us to greener pastures. And in cult history, those greener pastures have been a heavenly destination, you know, something in the afterlife they've been. You know, riches and prosperity here on the human plane. And so there's been some promise of a happy ever after by the cult leader, and that's gonna depend on what the cult leader is professing and what the members are subscribing to.

So what we're seeing now is really the evolution of a major political party. So as I mentioned in this article, there was a time not too long ago when the two [00:40:00] major political parties had fundamental differences but could meet in the middle. There were differences over how much the government plays a role in your daily lives and how much the government should support individuals who need help financially and in other ways, and how much should be left to the individual to provide for themselves and to be a self-starter in some way.

So there were areas where a compromise could be reached between these two ideas. But what has happened over the last seven years now is this evolution into a cult-type organization where there's no longer anchors and links to what's happening in the real world. And everything is happening within this cult-like bubble where the narrative is written by the leader and sycophantic followers

that are in his leadership structure so that there is less and less connection to what is really happening.

And so, I describe this in terms of [00:41:00] when somebody is in a cult, you know, for a long time it was thought that cult membership was somehow robotic or automatic, and people were brainwashed and it became in a zombie-like state, and they were in this cult until they could be broken out somehow. But what more recent research has shown is that there is a volunteer aspect to being in a cult, there is more decision making by the person to engage in the cult situation than was previously thought before. And so what you're seeing, whether it's, you know, members of Congress who are Republican or identify as Republican are skewing more towards cult-like thinking and defending the single person, the leader of this organization, and not the objective evidence, the legal evidence, the evidence that's available on video that's really indisputable, but still adhering to the logic and narrative that exists within the cult bubble.

THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM: Right. So we just have a minute left. What, how best do we approach friends and family to pop them out of this cult? [00:42:00]

DR. SETH D. NORRHOLM: I think it really is a matter of driving home the objective facts and showing that the cult narrative is wrong. So I think four indictments back to back to back helps to change that narrative. I think being found civilly liable for rape, you know, these two impeachments. Eventually the evidence becomes so great that the majority of people within the cult have to say, Wait a second, something is not adding up here. So if you can aid in that discussion to help people be more receptive to objective information and to say, I know what you're hearing, but try to listen to it from this perspective.

THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM: That's interesting. It seems sometimes that they're impervious to facts, but maybe if we could remind them of what life was like before the cult, too.

Trickle Down Trumpism Part 3 - Straight White American Jesus - Air Date 8-26-23

DANIEL MILLER - CO-HOST, STRAIGHT WHITE AMERICAN

JESUS: Just a quick couple. One, I can hear the emails I'll get now being like, what about the Lincoln Project? And my answer would be, what about the

Lincoln Project? I think you hit it on the head when you said, not just show me the moderate Republicans, but show me the modern [00:43:00] Republicans who matter at all within contemporary American conservatism. And that's the issue. I guess where I'm going with that is this is not a fringe minor voice. This is the American GOP at this point.

BRADLEY ONISHI - CO-HOST, STRAIGHT WHITE AMERICAN

JESUS: So I understand the Lincoln Project. We've had a lot of success over the last five years battling Trumpism. Now one of us is running for president, and does that person on the debate stage, does someone from the Lincoln Project -- you want to tell who was on the debate stage that represents the moderate Republicans? Chris Christie? Really? Chris Christie, who's really just running for president as revenge? He's not gonna be president and he knows it. He's just out there trying to take shots at Trump. Who is on the debate stage, Dan, that represents the Lincoln Project or any of these other people? No one, no one. Don't talk to me about Nikki Haley. Don't talk to me about Asa Hutchinson or Mike Pence. Anyway, sorry. Go ahead. I apologize. Go ahead.

DANIEL MILLER - CO-HOST, STRAIGHT WHITE AMERICAN

JESUS: Nope. That's the point, right? Is that when we talk about this, I guess what drives me crazy is still this knee-jerk response. I think again, it's because it feels good to think it's true [00:44:00] that somehow or another most Republicans are still some sort of reasonable moderates holding on to classical conservative principles and so forth, and there's some minoritarian fringe out there, and I just don't believe it. And I'll point to the same thing you do and say, just show me, show me where that is, if that's how this is. And how it is that events like this don't follow logically from the mainstream discourse of the American right?

Ticking Bomb Inside GOP's Plan To Defund Trump Prosecution - Thom Hartmann - Air Date 8-31-23

THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM:

Republicans in Georgia now are talking about defunding Fannie Willis. 'cause how dare you hold a corrupt Republican to to account well in, in her case, 19 corrupt Republicans. Isn't it fascinating by the way that, uh, Jack Smith has, I believe it's 82, I could be wrong, 80 some odd. Anyway, uh, known listed witnesses in his case against Donald Trump, and every single one of them is a Republican.

Who are [00:45:00] lining up to testify that Donald Trump committed crimes. Everyone is a Republican. All of the witnesses, to the best of my knowledge that Fannie Willis has are Republicans. You would think that if a political party had a corrupt member, And had other corrupt people within the party who were collaborating with that corrupt member to commit a major felony crime against the United States of America, you know, defrauding the government, stealing an election.

You would think that that political party would welcome a prosecutor who wanted to clean up the party for them, but no. Georgia State, Senator Colton Moore was on Steve Bannon's little podcast the other day, and he said, uh, it's just like Nazi Germany. I mean, they wanna call us the Nazis, but their actions are Nazism.

I mean, first they go after your [00:46:00] enemies. Seriously, this guy is gonna quote Pastor Nie Moler, right? Uh, okay. First they go after your enemies and you don't say anything because they're your enemies. And that's exactly where the governor is right now. I. See, he's accusing Brian Kemp, the governor of Georgia, of being in on this thing because Brian Kemp doesn't like Trump either.

And, and Brian Kemp has been spoken of as a possible candidate to run against Trump in the primaries, although he has not yet stepped up. He says, uh, so you don't say anything 'cause they're your enemies. And that's exactly where the governor is right now. He looks at Donald Trump as an enemy. So he's like, I'm not gonna say anything.

Right. And then they come after your friends. I got a friend who's being indicted. Well, hey, if you've got a friend who's being indicted, you might wanna reconsider your friendship. But then this guy goes completely bat guano crazy. He says, you want a civil war? I don't want a civil war. I don't want to have to draw my rifle.

I wanna make this problem go away with my legislative means of doing [00:47:00] so. And the first step to getting that done is defunding Fannie Willis of any Georgia tax dollars. You see, Brian Kemp signed a law back in May that starting on October 1st, a commission which has five members who then have the power.

To do what I was just talking a minute ago about DeSantis doing down in Florida where he fired two of his prosecutors, two elected state prosecutors. Fannie Willis is also an elected district attorney. DeSantis fired, two elected

prosecutors because they were, God forbid Democrats. I. In Georgia, you couldn't do that until the legislature passed this law.

So starting in October, this five person commission can recommend to the governor that any particular district attorney in the state of Georgia be fired. And guess who? The only district attorney in the state of Georgia anybody's talking about firing is right now. You guessed it. [00:48:00] Fannie Wallace. When are the Republicans gonna just clean up their act?

I mean, what, this is a serious question. What do you think it's gonna take for the G O P to say, you know, enough? I, I, I realize probably most people listening to this program are not old enough to remember Dwight Eisenhower. I am, and I do remember Dwight Eisenhower. I remember very well. He was the president throughout most of my childhood.

And he was a good man in many regards. I mean, and you know, obviously he wasn't, you know, Joe Progressive, but can you imagine Dwight Eisenhower saying, yeah, yeah. We we're all in support of a president who tried to overturn an election, who lied to the American people about having lost an election? Who conspired to, to, to flip an election?

I can't imagine it. I can imagine Richard Nixon [00:49:00] going along with it in the background quietly, or Ronald Reagan or even George W. Bush maybe, but I can't imagine My dad's Republican party. My dad called himself an Eisenhower Republican. I can't imagine my dad's Republican party doing that.

An Argument at the Kids' Table John Nichols on First GOP Debate Held Without Trump Part 2 - Democracy Now! - Air Date 8-24-23

AMY GOODMAN: You've written extensively about the 14th Amendment. Again, increasingly, conservative legal scholars are also writing about this. Explain.

JOHN NICHOLS: Sure. The 14th Amendment, Section 3, which is a post-Civil War section, a post-Civil War amendment, deals with people who foment insurrection, people who swear an oath to the United States and then, in a position of power, take actions that might upend the government, might in some way cause a political crisis of the sort that we saw certainly during the Civil War

and that [00:50:00] many people believe we saw more recently with Trump's efforts to overturn the election — certainly different actions, by any measure, but yet, at the end of the day, a failure to abide by an oath to follow the basic strictures of the Constitution.

And the people who have been talking about 14.3 have generally been on the left. People like John Bonifaz and other constitutional lawyers have brought it up many times. But in recent months, you have seen conservative legal scholars, and even some conservative activists, bring this issue up.

And it is a legitimate issue, a complex one, because the Constitution doesn't really lay out exactly how you enforce this standard. But the standard is that if someone swore an oath to the government, either encouraged or supported insurrection, and then seeks to return to government, that they can't do so, that they can't [00:51:00] continue to hold an office. And there's a lot of interpretation in all sorts of ways on this. But, as Asa Hutchinson pointed out, this is something that has been raised. There's a genuine concern as regards Trump. If he's convicted, it could become an even bigger concern, particularly if he's convicted in the Washington, D.C., case brought at the federal level by Jack Smith or in the Georgia case, both of which talk about attempting to overturn an election.

AMY GOODMAN: And to be clear —

JOHN NICHOLS: So this is a big deal.

AMY GOODMAN: — it would be individual secretaries of state who could say Trump is not going to be on our state ballot?

JOHN NICHOLS: Theoretically, that's one way to do it. And certainly, that's something that several groups, John Bonifaz's group and others, have raised as a possibility. There is also the possibility that Congress itself could take action and, via a resolution, say that it is the determination of the Congress of the United States that Donald Trump is in violation of 14.3. I mean, there's several ways to [00:52:00] go at this. No matter what happens, if it does — if it were to occur, if a secretary of state were to bar Donald Trump from the ballot, you'd have a legal fight. There's very little question of that.

And I think that what's significant with Asa Hutchinson bringing this up in the debate is that it brought this issue more to the forefront, and, I think, opens up, hopefully, a broader discussion about the clear constitutional concerns as regards someone like Donald Trump seeking to return to the presidency.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: Well, although Donald Trump, of course, who's the leading candidate, skipped the debate, he appeared instead in a pretaped interview with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

TUCKER CARLSON: Do you think we're moving toward civil war?

Donald Trump: There's tremendous passion, and there's tremendous love. You know, January 6 was a very interesting day, because they don't report it properly. [00:53:00] I believe it was the largest crowd I've ever spoken before, and you know some of the crowds I've spoken before. And, like, July Fourth on the Mall, I think that had a million people there. But I think that the biggest crowd I've ever spoken before was on January 6th.

And people that were in that crowd, a very, very small group of people — and we said “patriotically and peacefully,” “peacefully and patriotically,” right? Nobody ever says that. “Go peacefully and patriotically.” But people that were in that crowd that day, very small group of people, went down there. And then you — there were a lot of — a lot of scenarios that we can talk about. But people in that crowd said it was the most beautiful day they've ever experienced. There was love in that crowd. There was love and unity. I have never seen such spirit and such passion and such love. And I've also never seen, simultaneously and from [00:54:00] the same people, such hatred of what they've done to our country.

TUCKER CARLSON: So, do you think it's possible that there's open conflict? We seem to be moving toward something.

Donald Trump: I don't know. I don't know, because I don't know what it — you know, I can say this: There's a level of passion that I've never seen, there's a level of hatred that I've never seen, and that's probably a bad combination.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: So, John Nichols, your response to Trump's comments to fired Fox News host Tucker Carlson? Also the fact, what he said, Vivek Ramaswamy mimicked his line, which is, he said America is “in an internal sort of cold cultural civil war,” last night he said.

JOHN NICHOLS: Yeah. Well, I was in Madison, Wisconsin, on January 6th, and so I can't attest to what Donald Trump thinks he saw, but my sense of what occurred on that day is [00:55:00] very, very different than his. And I think that the same goes for committees that have investigated it and others. And so, Trump is clearly putting his spin on this.

But the most troubling thing is that he is suggesting that there is a possibility for additional violence. And that is a deeply unsettling statement by a former president, the front-runner in a presidential race. And it also does, as you suggest, parallel what some of the candidates are saying, especially Ramaswamy, who has — you know, did indeed in the debate suggest a very dark vision of America. In fact, he explicitly rejected Ronald Reagan’s “Morning in America” statement from back in the 1980s, and argued that things are actually pretty awful and potentially could get worse. So, you really do have a split from the Republican Party of the past to a party that is much more, for lack of a [00:56:00] better term, combative.

An Argument at the Kids' Table John Nichols on First GOP Debate Held Without Trump Part 3 - Democracy Now! - Air Date 8-24-23

NERMEEN SHAIKH: Well, Republican candidates were also asked about the war in Ukraine. This is debate moderator Bret Baier of Fox News.

BRET BAIER: Mr. Ramaswamy, you would not support an increase of funding to Ukraine?

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: I would not. And I think that this is disastrous that we are protecting against an invasion across somebody else’s border, when we should use those same military resources to prevent across the invasion of our own southern border here in the United States. We are driving Russia further into China’s hands. The Russia-China alliance is the single greatest threat we face. And I find it offensive that we have professional politicians on the stage that will make a pilgrimage to Kyiv, to their pope, Zelensky, without doing the same thing for people in Maui or the South Side of Chicago —

MIKE PENCE: OK. All right, Bret, I’m in.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: — or Kensington. I think —

BRET BAIER: Hold on.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: — that we have to put the interests —

MIKE PENCE: I’m in.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: — of Americans first —

CHRIS CHRISTIE: Me, too. He was referring to me.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: — secure our own border instead of somebody else's. ...

NIKKI HALEY: A win for Russia is a win for China. We have to know that. Ukraine is the first line [00:57:00] of defense for us. And the problem that Vivek doesn't understand is, he wants to hand Ukraine to Russia. He wants to let China eat Taiwan. He wants to go and stop funding Israel. You don't do —

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: False.

NIKKI HALEY: — that to friends. What you do instead —

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: False.

NIKKI HALEY: — is you have the backs of your friends. Ukraine is the frontline of defense. Putin has said, if Russia — once Russia takes Ukraine, Poland and the Baltics are next. That's a world war. We're trying to prevent war. Look at what Putin did today. He killed Prigozhin. When I was at the U.N., the Russian ambassador suddenly died. This guy is a murderer. And you are choosing a murderer over a pro-American country.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: I have to address that.

BRET BAIER: First of all —

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: First of all —

BRET BAIER: First of all, Mr. Ramaswamy, you have 30 seconds. Mr. DeSantis, Governor DeSantis, you're next.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: You know, Nikki, I wish you well in your future career on the boards of Lockheed and Raytheon.

NIKKI HALEY: You know, I'm not on the boards of Lockheed and Raytheon.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: But the fact of the matter —

NIKKI HALEY: And, you know, you have put down —

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: Boeing came off of it, but you've been pushing this lie.

NIKKI HALEY: — everybody on this stage.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: You've been pushing this lie all week, Nikki.

NIKKI HALEY: But do you know what? [00:58:00] You want to go and defund Israel.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: Yes. OK, let me address that.

NIKKI HALEY: You want to give Taiwan to China.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: I'm glad you brought that up.

NIKKI HALEY: You want to go and give Ukraine to Russia.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: I'm going to address each of those right now. This is —

NIKKI HALEY: You will make our —

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: — the false lies of a professional politician.

NIKKI HALEY: He will make America less safe.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: There you have it.

NIKKI HALEY: Under your watch, you will make America less safe.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: So, the reality is —

NIKKI HALEY: You have no foreign policy —

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: Let me —

NIKKI HALEY: — experience, and it shows. It shows.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY: And you know what? There's a foreign policy experience that you all have...

BRET BAIER: Governor DeSantis, you were mentioned in the territorial dispute. Not only —

NIKKI HALEY: No, it's not a territorial dispute, either.

GOV. RON DESANTIS: So, as president of the United States, your first obligation is to defend our country and its people. And that means you're sending all this money, but you're not doing what we need to do to secure our own border. We have tens of thousands of people —

NIKKI HALEY: We can do both at the same time.

GOV. RON DESANTIS: — who are being killed because — well, we're not handling both.

NIKKI HALEY: And we can do both at the same time.

GOV. RON DESANTIS: And so, I am going to declare it a national emergency. I'm not going to send troops to Ukraine, but I am going to send them to our southern border. When these drug pushers are bringing fentanyl across the border, that's going to be the last thing they do. We're going to use force, and we're going to leave them [00:59:00] stone cold dead.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: So, that was Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. Before that, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley and also Vivek Ramaswamy. John Nichols, your response?

JOHN NICHOLS: It was a remarkable exchange. You could write books about that, just those few minutes there, and, in doing so, get a pretty good insight to where the Republican Party is. You clearly saw the "America First" position that Donald Trump obviously articulated in many cases as president, but even taken to greater extremes by Ramaswamy and, to a lesser extent, by DeSantis.

But what was fascinating in that exchange was the extent to which Nikki Haley really emerged as, I think, one of the most effective communicators on the stage, and one of the most aggressive communicators. She is nowhere near the others in the polls. She has got a long way to go. But she's clearly doing a better job, frankly, than some of the other candidates who are attempting to distinguish

themselves, [01:00:00] in putting herself out there. And you saw the crowd's reaction to her.

But what was fascinating was the extent to which Ramaswamy refused to back down. In fact, he actually, as you noted in that clip, suggested that Haley was really trying out for a place on the board of some defense contractor. It was a very aggressive hit, and one that I think was notable, because it gets to, I think, a lot of the deep divisions within the Republican Party about foreign policy. I wish that the moderators had really played this out a little more and given more time to a deeper investigation of this. And I think it's especially notable that DeSantis was desperately trying to get into the discussion, but came in not with particularly deep insights, but just a repetition of talking points about the border.

Final comments on the need to ban Trump from office in the right way

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: We've just heard clips today starting with *In The Thick* explaining the mechanisms of White supremacy in government power. *Straight White American Jesus* looked at [01:01:00] the GOP debate without Trump or criticisms of him. *Democracy Now!* focused on the question about climate change at the debate. *Today, Explained* looked at the rhetoric around militarizing the US-Mexico border. *Straight White American Jesus* looked at the factors pushing the GOP towards extremism. *In The Thick* looked at the GOP pivot against the institution of the FBI as part of their turn towards authoritarianism. *Thom Hartmann* discussed the GOP through the lens of cult dynamics. *Straight White American Jesus* looked at how sidelined moderate Republicans like the Lincoln Project have been. And *Thom Hartmann* discussed the GOP resistance to cleaning up the corruption and criminality in their party.

That's what everybody heard, but members also heard two additional bonus clips from *Democracy Now!* discussing, first, the 14th Amendment option to ban Trump from office, and another diving deeper on the GOP debate discussing the war in Ukraine. To hear that, and have all of our bonus [01:02:00] content delivered seamlessly to the 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.

Now, to wrap up... I just have a couple of thoughts on that 14th Amendment option to ban Trump from office. First of all, obviously, I think that restriction

should apply to him, and there's not really any question of that to me. Just today, I saw that a lawsuit was filed from CREW - Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. I think it's starting in Colorado, and that is absolutely how it should be done. I'd also heard talk about simply pressuring secretaries of state to make the decision, like, individually to remove Trump from ballots in their states, which is a terrible idea.

The only way to approach this is through the legal process and the Supreme Court would [01:03:00] absolutely have to weigh in. Any kind of scattershot disqualification in some states but not others would be political disaster that would bleed over into disaster beyond politics. This idea is already getting enough traction that Trump and his followers are responding to it. There was another story today that was highlighting just, you know, people on social media saying they would write in Trump even if he were taken off the ballot in their state, because of course they would.

And... I'm not saying that's like a flaw in the plan to ban him. The point is that we're trying to restore the legitimacy of the election process and get the vast majority of people in the country to once again accept the outcome of elections so that we can stave off politically motivated violence.

Partially disqualifying Trump, though maybe technically correct, would work directly at odds with the goal of establishing legitimate elections and saving our democracy. [01:04:00] Maybe if the Supreme Court weighed in, probably only after some of his convictions had come down, and they voted to say that, yes, the 14th Amendment does apply to Trump, and he should be banned from holding office again, then maybe there wouldn't be an immediate, deafening call for civil war from right wing media, followed by waves of terrible violence. Maybe.

But if Trump loses the election, in part, either actually or just by perception, because he's not on the ballot in some states, and those states are probably going to be run by Democrats, if anyone's just going to unilaterally choose to keep them off the ballot, the reaction would be truly awful, and our goal of re-establishing a functioning democracy would be farther away than before.

So, as you hear conversations about that option, just stretch beyond the... sheer facts [01:05:00] that obviously, yes, it should apply to him and even the possibility of, you know, Could we make it work? Could we get people to keep him off the ballot? Stretch beyond that and think about the actual ramifications and the actual underpinning of democracy. Like, what actually makes democracy work? It is only through the perceived legitimacy of the government that something like a democratic system held together with the minimum of

force is possible. And we're, like, already teetering on the edge of enough people thinking the government and our election systems are illegitimate to be incredibly dangerous. So any actions that push further in that direction should be seen and understood to be incredibly dangerous. So, just something to keep in mind.

That is going to be it for today. As always, keep the comments coming in. I would love to hear your thoughts or questions about this or anything else. You can leave us a [01:06:00] voicemail or send us a text to 202-999-3991, or simply email 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 our Transcriptionist Trio, Ken, Brian, and LaWendy 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, webmastering, and bonus show co-hosting. And thanks to those who already support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at bestoftheleft.com/support. You can join them by signing up today. It would be greatly appreciated. You'll find that link in the show notes, as well as a link to our Discord community, where you can continue the discussion.

So, coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC, my name is Jay and this has been the *Best of the Left* podcast, coming to you twice weekly, thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show, from [01:07:00] bestoftheleft.com.