#1582 Maui Fire Sale: Hawaiian Colonization, Disaster Capitalism, and the Climate Crisis Fueling Wildfires and Housing Insecurity in Native Hawaiian Communities on Maui and Beyond

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 complex web of colonialism, disaster capitalism, and climate change, and how it's ravaging Native Hawaiian communities. We explore how corporations and privatization, going back to annexation, have exacerbated wildfires Water Scarcity and Housing Issues, and discuss the role of tourism and its impact on local culture and resources.

But we also look at community led mutual aid efforts that are offering a glimmer of hope for the unhoused in Hawaii and those struggling to reclaim their ancestral lands. Sources today include Democracy Now!, Today Explained, Reed Choi on TikTok, Native America Calling. CounterSpin, and This Is Democracy with additional members only clips from The Amanda Seals Show and Bianca Grolo.

Plantation Disaster Capitalism: Native Hawaiians Organize to Stop Land & Water Grabs After Maui Fire - Democracy Now! - Air Date 8-18-23

KAPUAALA SPROAT: Things are pretty brutal right now in Maui Komohana, or in West Maui. People are still trying desperately to find ways [00:01:00] forward from this disaster of untold proportions. And I'm not on Maui; I'm actually on the island of Kauai, so a couple islands over. And I have not been there since the fire, but that's also absolutely appropriate, because people who don't need to be there should stay away but send support from afar, regardless of what that looks like, whether that means making and sending poi or writing

opinion pieces or sending money. Whatever's the best way people can support from where they are, I think, is really important.

But the word from our network of folks on the ground is that people are really struggling. I mean, our community has rallied in amazing ways, and I think that that's part of the message that we want to get out, you know, that "Lahaina Strong" and "Maui Strong," that those are more than sayings. Our people are incredibly resilient. People aren't waiting on FEMA or even on the state or county. Relief organizations are springing up in people's homes, in their garages, and supplies are coming in by boat, by plane, by vehicle when the roads are open.

But there are also a lot of uncertainties, [00:02:00] and people are concerned, because what's galling for me is I see in the midst of, you know, all of this attention and focus on resources being streamed towards Maui, that really there's a naked power grab, and really a land and water grab, that's also underway. There's been talk already about folks getting offers on their homes. And I know from friends that that's happening. But as I mentioned, there's also water grab in the works. And the discussion around this really makes me fear for the future of Lahaina and whether or not it will be one that includes Native Hawaiians and other local people, or whether the build back will focus on outsiders.

AMY GOODMAN: Let's talk about each issue, first the land grab. What exactly does that mean?

KAPUAALA SPROAT: So, to be clear, again, I am not on the ground on Maui. But what I understand from people who are there is that there are realtors and there are others who are making offers to people in their most desperate time of need, when people are, you know, desperate for [00:03:00] funding and other resources to try to build back their lives. People are getting offers on their ancestral homes, lands that — here in Hawaii, when we talk about ancestral lands and our connection to place, we talk in generations and in hundreds of years. And so, our Native Hawaiian Rights Clinic has been on the ground in Maui Komohana working with community members for several years now, and many of our community members have long-standing relationships to place. And it's some of these community members who are getting offers on their homes at this most difficult time, which, in my opinion, of course, is completely inappropriate.

AMY GOODMAN: You talk about plantation disaster capitalism. Explain.

KAPUAALA SPROAT: Plantation disaster capitalism, I think, is, unfortunately, the perfect term for what's going on in Maui Komohana, or in West Maui, right now. The plantations, the large landed interests that have had control over not just the land, but really much of Hawaii's and Maui [00:04:00] Komohana's resources for the last several centuries, are using this opportunity, are using this time of tremendous trauma for the people of Maui, to swoop in and to get past the law, basically. They're using the emergency proclamation that the governor put into place the day after the fires, you know, ravaged Lahaina, and they're using this as an opportunity to try to get their way, especially with respect to water resources, something they could not achieve when the law and Hawaii's water code, in particular, were in place.

AMY GOODMAN: Talk more about the water grab.

KAPUAALA SPROAT: So, in Hawaii, Ola i ka wai, water is life. It's one of our most important resources. In fact, there are many people who would say freshwater is our most important resource. And it's what enabled our people to be able to not just survive, but really thrive in Hawaii for more than a millennia. And in Lahaina, in particular, this area, sure, it's special for people who come on vacation and [00:05:00] people who know Front Street, but for the people of this community, Lahaina was really the seat of the Hawaiian Kingdom. It was the capital before the island of — before Oahu. And part of the reason that that was so, that Lahaina was such an important place, was because of the abundance of resources, and the abundance of water resources, in particular.

Before the arrival of Europeans in Hawaii, Lahaina was actually known as the Venice of the Pacific, which for folks who have been there recently might seem extraordinary. Right now Lahaina has been desiccated and is almost like a dry desert area. But when it was managed by Kanaka Maoli, by Native Hawaiians, it was abundant with water and other resources. So, what happened was that with the arrival of plantation interests, those water — and especially after the capital was moved to Oahu -- those resources were grabbed up by landed plantation interests, so for sugar plantations and pineapple plantations, and later those [00:06:00] resources were diverted to support other kinds of development, including luxury residential development, and even to support hotels in some instances. And so, what happened is that the wai wai, as we call it, the wealth of Lahaina, was actually taken by these corporations.

And so, what we also know, at least the people from Hawaii, is that part of the reason for this extraordinary tragedy in Maui Komohana, or in West Maui, is also because there has been more than a century of plantation water mismanagement in this area. It's because of extractive water policies, where water hasn't remained on the land, invasive grasses have come up. That's what

created the tinderbox and this unfortunate situation of the tragic fire that took place earlier this month.

Why Maui burned - Today, Explained - Air Date 8-15-23

NOEL KING - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED: Abby, how did the fires in Maui get so bad?

ABBY FRAZIER: The fires in Maui are due to several different factors. The number one factor that let these fires be so [00:07:00] severe is the presence of large areas of very flammable non-native grasses. That was combined with very high winds due to a hurricane passing to the south, and a high pressure system to the north. So we had very high downslope winds that fueled the fire and caused it to spread quickly. And the other factor here is that they had actually been in drought for the last month or so, and that helped dry out all of those grasses and create the fuels needed for this massive fire that we saw.

NOEL KING - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED: Let's go in reverse order there. So conditions were dry. Is Maui in the middle of a drought?

ABBY FRAZIER: The entire island of Maui is in abnormally dry or worse conditions, and there's a pretty large part of the island that's actually in severe drought. Drought is actually a pretty normal natural phenomenon that occurs in Hawaii. We have a pretty pronounced dry season from about May to October. So having a [00:08:00] drought by itself is not abnormal. But we have found that over the last century, droughts have been getting worse, they've been getting more severe and they've been lasting longer.

JENN BONEZA REPORTER: Brown mountains, cracked dry land; Hawaii is once again experiencing drought conditions. Portions of each of the Hawaiian Islands are impacted, but Maui's being hit the hardest.

NOEL KING - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED: And then the next factor you talked about was high winds caused by a hurricane. I think you're saying a hurricane didn't hit Maui, but it what was it, getting the tail end of something?

ABBY FRAZIER: Hurricane Dora passed well south of the island. So there was no direct hit. But hurricanes are these deep centers of low pressure. And to the north of the islands, we have a pretty pronounced high pressure system. And you get a gradient where the wind is moving from high to low. And a really

strong Category 4 hurricane means that you have this very strong gradient. So winds were moving very [00:09:00] quickly and we had pretty incredible wind gusts.

HAWAII LIEUTENANT GOV. SYLVIA LUKE: Never anticipated in this state that hurricane, which did not make impact on our islands will cause this type of wildfires.

NOEL KING - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED: Okay. So the wind blows the fire. And you said the third reason, large areas of non-native grass. What does that mean? How does that contribute to a really bad fire?

ABBY FRAZIER: About 25% of Hawaii's land area is covered in non-native grasses and shrubs. Many of them are species from African savannas and they are extremely flammable. They have essentially taken over the fallow plantation lands across Maui, and those lands are not being managed the same way as when they were active agricultural plantations. So now you just have these large, large areas of very flammable grasses, and sometimes those areas are very close to [00:10:00] communities. So to have a wildfire you need climate, you need an ignition, and you need fuels. In this case, with the Maui fires, we had the perfect weather conditions to support that fire. Likely it was the strong winds knocking over power lines that may have contributed to the ignition part. And then what you need is fuel. And these grasses supply the fuels for these fires.

NOEL KING - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED: So Hawaii presumably is prepared for certain kinds of disasters. Why does it seem that Maui was so unprepared for fires?

ABBY FRAZIER: Wildfires have been more common in Hawaii in the last few decades, and we've seen some really massive fires that have affected especially Maui, but also the other islands as well. We have some amazing groups on the ground who have been working to try to reduce fire risk across [00:11:00] the landscape.

There are groups that are working to build fire fuel breaks to help slow down or stop fires.

LISA KUBOTA: The nonprofit group Team Rubicon brought in military veteran volunteers and equipment to create a firebreak that's 545 yards long. They're clearing trees, grass and debris that could serve as fuel for a fire.

ABBY FRAZIER: A fuel break is essentially an area where you have essentially a gap in vegetation, let's say, a road, and in theory, the lack of more fuels, more grasses for that fire to continue, it could hopefully stop the fire.

LISA KUBOTA: Last year, volunteers put in a fire break behind the nurseries in the valley. Now a second one is going in behind the homes of Mariner's Cove.

ABBY FRAZIER: You have some folks that are using livestock to help graze and bring down those fire fuels, but it's happening without very many [00:12:00] resources. And one thing that's really changed in recent years is the closure of these plantations.

KHON2 CLIP: It's the end of an era for Hawaii's sugar industry, as the final sugar harvest in our state took place on Maui.

ABBY FRAZIER: When the plantations were active, if a fire occurred on the landscape, it probably wasn't going to be as bad because you were irrigating a lot of the land, but you also had staff on site who could open the gates and let the firefighters in. They knew where the roads were. Now everything is overgrown and covering just these vast areas. And so it's really, really hard to keep these fires under control.

We are concerned for you. - Read Choi - Air Date 8-4-23

ELITE: Oh my God! I heard what happened in Maui!

NATIVE HAWAIIAN: Yeah, it's really bad.

ELITE: Is my property okay?

NATIVE HAWAIIAN: What? I don't know. Let me check.

ELITE: I'm just so concerned about the island and its people, my employees.

NATIVE HAWAIIAN: Right. Um, huh. It doesn't look like it was affected at all.

ELITE: Oh, uh, that's [00:13:00] yay! That's -- what a miracle.

NATIVE HAWAIIAN: Yeah. Now that you mention it, it doesn't look like any elite houses were affected.

ELITE: Don't worry, I'm still concerned. That's why I started that fund to help allocate your donations for you on your behalf.

NATIVE HAWAIIAN: Yeah, and you're getting a lot of hate for that. I wond-- Why do you not care? Did you expect this? Careful, once you open the store, you can never close it. What have you done to us?

ELITE: *Done* to you? No, no, no, no, no. What have we done *for* you? We let you keep this land amongst yourselves and you couldn't deal with a fire, when you're surrounded by water? And then you come crying to us, the elites, begging for our resources because deep down inside, you know that we are better than you. You crave a master. Deep down inside, you know this to be true. And this fire, if that has [00:14:00] illuminated anything, it is that we will take this responsibility upon our shoulders.

NATIVE HAWAIIAN: If fire reduced the property prices, you're gonna buy all our land. Did you... start the fire?

ELITE: Does it matter? You'll get what you want. Money poured back into the island and you'll be able to live on it again, at a price that we deem... fair on both parties.

Disasters at every turn - Native America Calling - Air Date 8-28-23

SHAWN SPRUCE - HOST, NATIVE AMERICA CALLING: I think a lot of folks are concerned about what's gonna happen to some of these residents who've lost their homes, and will they be able to afford rebuilding their homes or will they have to relocate? What's your thought on that? 'cause that that's a whole 'nother layer to this tragedy.

KU'UWEHI HIRAISHI: Right, you know, for Native Hawaiians, specifically the threat of outsiders coming in and taking our land and control of our natural resources is nothing new. But in the aftermath of the [00:15:00] wildfires, residents were receiving solicitations from off island real estate investors to kind of scoop up their land. The state has issued two separate warnings about predatory real estate pitches targeting local residents, and there are lawyers, uh, folks from our University of Hawai'i Law School there on the ground helping

those who are receiving those pitches. The governor, Josh Green, has also mentioned that the Attorney General's Office is looking into imposing a moratorium on land sales at this time. So we are, I believe, the government, at least, is taking action where it can, hopefully for the people on the ground, you know, the financial, that living in limbo aspect of things. Once that calms down, then they can really clearly think through when they receive these.

SHAWN SPRUCE - HOST, NATIVE AMERICA CALLING: Ku'uwehi, being from Hawai'i there, and of course you know anybody who's ever been to Hawai'i, I've been there a couple of times, and it's very obvious that there is a gentrification issue [00:16:00] there and there's a lot of money there. There's multimillion dollar homes and that have sprung up in the recent decades. But did you ever anticipate that it would just get to this point that people have lost their homes and there are speculators coming, and just that quickly, I mean, here the fires are still, they're still burning. I mean, there's still a little bit, there's burning, there's still smoke, and if there's already people coming in and trying to take advantage, carpet bag, right?, just buy up property and, uh, with no regard to the people that who've always lived there, did you ever imagine this happening like this?

KU'UWEHI HIRAISHI: No, I honestly did not. But I think, you know, the level of devastation brought to Lahaina at this point is really going to, in the rebuilding process, spark those conversations about, you know, how much dependence do we want to put on the tourism industry. How much protection should we perhaps have for a Native Hawaiians being able to hold on to some of that land? And Maui [00:17:00] County has been a leader in that aspect. In recent years, they've passed legislation to allow folks who have been on the land for upwards, I think it was 80 years back, if you had title to land that far back, you have a sort of a property tax waiver, or you get to pay the minimum property tax. So there is an awareness, especially on Maui, of the need to keep folks, um, allow them to maintain their ancestral land and access to their ancestral lands. But after this devastation, I think those conversations are definitely going to be heightened.

SHAWN SPRUCE - HOST, NATIVE AMERICA CALLING: And the fire has also created issues around water rights. Can you explain the issue of water in Maui and how the fires drew into that and created more challenges?

KU'UWEHI HIRAISHI: A great question. Yes. Lahaina, for those who might not know, is formally the Venice of the Pacific. That was an area, you can't tell from it now, but an area [00:18:00] famed for lush environment and it's abundant water resources. So right in downtown, it's been filled in, you know, for the last a 100-120 or so years. But it was once a sprawling sort of, you know,

fish ponds and taro patches. And so the idea of maintaining water rights for Native Hawaiians specifically is something that was encoded into the state water code in the late 80s. So there is a precedent there for folks, but, the reality is that once all our sugar and pineapple plantations pulled out in the late 90s, folks had swooped in, same idea, bought up that same land and the control of the irrigation system that actually hauls water from the mountains to the county system to the hotels, and the ownership of that water on that side, at least in Lahaina and West Maui, is about 75% private and 25% government. And [00:19:00] so there is worry, at least in the immediate aftermath of the fire, that in one particular area called Kaua'ula Valley, there is only one stream that feeds about 70 individuals, mostly Native\ Hawaiians and there was a request from a private landowner to divert that water for fire suppression elsewhere outside of Kaua'ula Valley. And so there was this sort of push and pull to make sure that those in the valley have that access to that water for the approaching fire at the time. And this is really, I think, set off a lot of conversations in Hawai'i at the highest levels over what we do in these disaster situations when it comes to those water rights.

“We’re Living the Climate Emergency”: Native Hawaiian Kaniela Ing on Fires, Colonialism & Banyan - Democracy Now! - Air Date 8-11-23

KANIELA ING: I think there’s a certain perception of Native Hawaiians who are unsheltered that’s not — that does not fit with reality. Some of the unsheltered Hawaiian communities that continue today were [00:20:00] occupations of land that was getting seized. And they were like, “Look, we don’t want to cooperate with this new extractive economy that y’all created, so we’re going to live on it by ourselves in our own community on this beach. We’re going to govern ourselves.” And they’re quite organized, and they’re living in a way that’s subsistent and in harmony with nature. Now, it’s not to be glamorized. A lot of these folks face some really dire conditions not being a part of this capitalist system. But a lot of them are doing it based on really strong and sensible beliefs.

Now, when a climate crisis hits, when a disaster hits, it’s going to impact these people first and worst, no doubt. And we need to make sure that both relief and recovery efforts, in the longer term, are prioritizing the low-income and Indigenous people that are some — some are still unaccounted for. Some [00:21:00] don’t even have IDs. And, you know, they need to be front of mind

with everything we do, from, you know, day zero, when the disaster breaks, to years out, when we're recovering.

AMY GOODMAN: The wildfires occurred on the same day that President Biden said in an interview that he had "practically" declared a climate emergency, but he has not actually formally done that. What would that mean?

KANIELA ING: Yeah. I've just been frantically trying to make sure that my loved ones are OK. But I also work on climate. This is my job. And as soon as I start thinking about that statement from President Biden, I just get so incensed. This is a climate emergency. There's no practical — [00:22:00] "practically" declared it. You either believe it or not. And I think as bad as Republicans have been by denying climate, Democrats are just as culpable by not doing enough. Scientists say that we need to be investing at least $1 trillion a year in the clean energy transition. We need to end and phase out, deny, all new fossil fuel permits, and really empower the communities that build back ourselves democratically. That's the solution for it.

And President Biden announced his second term, but he hasn't told us how he's going to finish the job. He needs to lay out that vision, what we've been demanding from a Green New Deal, if he wants communities that got him elected to come out, that base of climate voters, that happen to be predominantly Black, Indigenous, and low-income people. But we need something [00:23:00] forward-looking to come out, because right now, like, I'm not even thinking about voting, right? Like, nobody in Lahaina is thinking about whether or not they support Biden. Like, give us something. You know, at least let us be seen.

So, you know, I think that sense of urgency, even me, who is in this climate work full time and see these events unfold elsewhere, until it hits you at home and it's people you know, grocery stores you shop at, schools your kids go to, your church actually being burned down, you're not going to understand the urgency. Like, it is shocking. And we're not talking 10 years from now. We're having — these things are happening right now. It could happen to your home tomorrow. That's the urgency we're dealing with, and we need to act accordingly. So, no "practically" speaking. Like, we need to move now and do [00:24:00] everything we can.

AMY GOODMAN: And can you tell us more about the importance of Indigenous wisdom and practices in addressing the climate catastrophe?

KANIELA ING: Sure, yeah. So, going into Lahaina, the people that actually lived there for generations are the keepers of some of the most profound Indigenous knowledge that I have ever met. They understood subsistence fishery, how native plants were buffers against, like, you know, disasters, how to create regenerative agricultural practices. And it's that view of the world where, you know, our success isn't determined by how much we hoard, but rather how much we produce for others and share, and where, like, our economy is not based on how well the rich are [00:25:00] doing, but how many people, how many of us, can actually thrive. Like, it's that — it's not just Indigenous knowledge, but it's that value system that really needs to be reestablished.

So, you know, I think over the years, especially in my line of work, there's been more resources for Indigenous folks to lead frontline fights against bad projects. But the intervention that really needs to happen is Indigenous leaders also need to be resourced to build the good. They need to be the purveyors of and architects of the new green and, like, community-rooted world that's still possible, even in these dire times.

AMY GOODMAN: Finally, would you like to leave us with some images that you have been living through over these last few days, like the banyan tree, where you show us — when you put out on social media the [00:26:00] before and after the wildfires, but other images or stories of people's bravery in trying to preserve what you have known for so long?

KANIELA ING: Yeah, I mean, as we're speaking, there's people that still haven't found their loved ones. A lot of the friends I grew up with — like, I come from a lower-income neighborhood — they're firefighters. I ran into one on the way here, and I'm just like, "Hey, y'all are doing a great job." And he was just sweating and, like, started crying and, you know, barely — looked like he hasn't slept in days. Hotels are letting residents in, without cost, to sleep. Multiple businesses are just letting people drop off goods, and they're shipping it three to four times a day. They're leaving their doors open 24 hours. So, there is that sense of, you know, this is an island; we're all in this together. [00:27:00] And that sense of mutual aid and solidarity is really carrying us through, and it's been quite remarkable to witness. But, you know, don't want to leave you with some toxic positivity either. Like, these are hard times, and unless we take urgent action now, it'll only get worse.

As Fires Destroy Native Hawaiian Archive in Maui, Mutual Aid Efforts Are Launched

to Help Lahaina - Democracy Now! - Air Date 8-11-23

NOELANI AHIA: Nā 'Aikāne o Maui Cultural Center was founded about 20 years ago in historic Lahaina Town, and it happens to sit adjacent to a very sacred area of Maui called Moku‘ula and Mokuhinia. And this is a traditional place, what we would call a wahi pana, or a sacred place, dating back to the 1500s, where one of our former kings, who presided over the islands with peace, lived and his sacred family was birthed there. And we have stories that carry us down today that connect us back to that place, [00:28:00] that reroot us.

And this island, Moku’ula, was in the middle of a wetland. It was lush and beautiful and green. Because of settler colonialism and because of the impositions of the settler government, it was covered over a long time ago, and there’s baseball fields now on it and tennis courts. And the Nā 'Aikāne o Maui Cultural Center has been working to get the access in order to restore Moku'ula and to clean it up and make sure it’s a place of reverence again. And the folks at Nā 'Aikāne have been working for decades on all kinds of issues: protecting burials, protecting land right issues, and just generally being there for the community to provide classes and workshops and cultural practice and cultural protocol.

And that building also housed a collection of artifacts, as well as historical documents, [00:29:00] old maps — just priceless things that are all lost in the blink of an eye. It was burned to the ground, and all of those things are lost. It also had a collection from an esteemed kūpuna, esteemed elder, named Sam Ka’ai, whose collection was being housed there. And for this kūpuna, this elder, this was his life’s work. He’s 85 now, and this was 50 years’ worth of carvings that he himself did, of collecting items from all over the South Pacific when he traveled on the Hōkūle‘a, a double-hulled canoe voyaging project back in the '80s. And I had the burden, you could say, of telling him yesterday that his collection was gone. And it was devastating. It was devastating. This is this man's life work. And he created all of these things not for himself, but for future [00:30:00] generations to understand how brilliant our Kānaka Maoli people are and how ingenious we were, because so much of that history and that culture was lost to us after the overthrow and with the new government and the wave of people that came in and took over lands. Particularly, we’re talking about, you know, the plantations and the oligarchy that Kaniela was talking about. So many Hawaiians were dispossessed from their land, and we lost so much of our culture, including our language. And so, when a kūpuna, when an elder, like this dedicates his life to retrieving and retracing and remembering those pieces of ourselves that allowed us to live here on this isolated island — how to make

tools, how to make rope, how to make the instruments that feed us — all of these things that allowed us to have life and [00:31:00] survive here, all of those things that he dedicated his life to are now a memory.

But I will say, he told me yesterday morning that he woke up having a dream about seeds. And what he said was he saw us planting seeds back in the ash. He saw us putting back our traditional — our traditional plants, our traditional medicines, our kalo plant, our taro, which is very sacred to us. We're ancestrally connected to the kalo. He saw us putting those things back in the ground so that new life can come again. And for somebody of his age, who's closer to moving into the next realm than many of us, for him to still be thinking about the next generation and still be thinking about what the future could be in Lahaina, for me, is the measure of what it means to be [00:32:00] Indigenous and what it means to be genealogically connected to this land.

AMY GOODMAN: Noelani Ahia, it is so painful to talk to you right now at this moment with the destruction that your island has undergone. If you could talk about the mutual aid efforts? You know, first of all, in the rest of the corporate media, we hear almost no Native voices, no Native Hawaiians, and why it's so important to hear your voices. And then, what is happening on the ground? You know, there's a big debate now: Like, why weren't people alerted earlier? Where was the early alert system? Why were people just looking out the window or smelling the smoke and seeing the fire right in front of them? And how important that is. But also, it's just described, Lahaina, as a great tourist destination. How tourism has affected the [00:33:00] whole environment, if you could speak about that, as well?

NOELANI AHIA: Absolutely. Thank you so much. You know, it's very disturbing for us, as Kānaka Maoli, to see the headlines and talk about — you know, see Lahaina as this tourist town, as if that's all it is, because, for us, it's so much more. And the tourism is part of the commodification of our culture. It's part of the erasure of our culture. That narrative literally just takes us out of the picture. And, you know, without Hawaiians, there would be no Hawai'i. Everybody loves aloha, but they forget about the people that breathe aloha into the world, the root and the source of aloha, and that's the Kānaka Maoli people.

The overtourism, the overdevelopment, the dispossession of Kānaka Maoli from our lands, the monocropping, as [00:34:00] Kaniela Ing was talking about, those are all things that contributed to the conditions that created this. And, you know, as we live on an island, there's only so much space, and there's only so much room, and there's only so much resources. And for over 130 years, our water has been diverted to go to those sugar plantations and pineapple fields.

So, what used to be a lush, verdant Lahaina — in fact, I'll tell you a little something, that the Lahaina is not an old name. One of the older names for Lahaina is Malu'ulu o Lele, and it means "land of the flying breadfruit," because Lahaina used to be covered in breadfruit, which is a staple for the Hawaiian diet. It's incredibly nutritious. It's being studied the world over to help with food sovereignty in underprivileged areas. It's just an amazing, rich, rich, historical plant for us. And Lahaina was covered with ulu until the sugar plantations came in and chopped it all down. [00:35:00] And they permanently changed our ecosystem, that one act, that on top of the diversion of water for the plantations.

What's happening now that the plantations have shut down is unscrupulous developers are diverting the water and banking it for real estate. And it's not real estate for the Kānaka Maoli or the local people. It's for foreign investors. It's for gentlemen's estate farms that have giant swimming pools. It's for — excuse me — really inappropriate use of one of our most sacred resources. In fact, the name for water in Hawai'i is "wai", and the name for wealth in Hawaii is "wai wai", which means if you have water, you have life. But our water has been taken away from us. And it's left us in this dry, barren, almost unrecognizable — it would be unrecognizable to our ancestors, this condition that we're currently living under, the settler [00:36:00] government.

So, you combine the dispossession with the overtourism, with the overdevelopment, and you have this trifecta for disaster. And that's what we're seeing today.

Kehsi Iman Wilson on Americans with Disabilities Act - CounterSpin - Air Date 8-25-23

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: The devastating wildfires that tour across Maui and early August were covered dramatically, especially visually by US. News media. Words like war zone and apocalyptic were used. But as Robin Anderson notes for an upcoming piece for fair.org, less heard were words like climate disruption and even much less.

Fossil fuels instead, reports like one in the Washington Post forthrightly cited risk factors like quote, months of drought, low humidity, and high winds without [00:37:00] pursuing questions about those phenomena to their. Answerable and actionable roots. A New York Times piece stepped on the

accountability question telling readers quote, it's difficult to attribute any single hurricane to climate change.

It can be hard to fault corporate media for ignoring the climate crisis. There is after all reporting that says weird, devastating weather is happening. And there's reporting that says continued fossil fuel driven climate disruption is having predicted impacts on global temperatures. There is also even reporting about politicians' reliance on funding from fossil fuel companies.

What there is is a resistance unto refusal to connecting those dots. Right now the levers, Rebecca Burns, is reporting that oil and industry lobbying [00:38:00] groups in California are working fervently but secretly to block important legislation about carbon emissions and, and here's where the reporting would come in.

It's about blocking regulation by blocking public knowledge. The bill is just one of simple transparency, letting the public know what is being done in our name, a phrase that never seems to capture elite media, but also what's being done in our money. Which seems to interest them all the time. The legislation would require thousands of large companies doing business in California to fully disclose their carbon emissions, including all of those companies who have built PR campaigns around the idea of net zero.

So far this year, industry opponents acknowledge spending some $7 million on state lobbying on this climate disclosure bill. And it's not [00:39:00] just the oil and gas companies that you might expect. And then again, here is where informative reporting would come in because it's also cement and asphalt companies whose processes burns reports account for more global emissions than airline travel.

And then it's Blue Diamond Almond Growers and Coca-Cola and Costco and In-N-Out Burger, Pepsi, Rite Aid, and on and on entities that if this bill would go through, would have to actually acknowledge, no matter the aspirations that they put on their PR page, the actual carbon emissions across their whole production chain.

Wildfires - This is Democracy - Air Date 9-5-23

RANDY DENZER: When you're responding to these fires is that, you know, we, we have this kind of perception in our mind that it's like it is on TV where

you can actually see the fire and the smoke and it, and it's very you know, it's very clear air, what I would call clear air and.[00:40:00]

And everything. And that's not the way it is. Uh, the, the folks in Maui, you know, uh, rest their souls, you know, and know and, and, uh, hope, hope everybody's, you know, recovering as much as they can. But they didn't have, you know, a clear view of this thing when you're in front of one of these big wildfires. Uh, it's basically like being in a fog with embers flying everywhere.

Uh, it's very different than I think what people perceive. And that sticks, that stuck out with me in a poem. And then, uh, It is, it is very intrusive right now. We've, uh, we've put ourselves in that position. I'll talk about that a little bit later on. But I think we've, we've kind of, uh, expanded ourselves into a situation that, uh, that I hope, you know, that people, you know, can figure out that we really do need to manage.

JEREMI SURI - HOST, THIS IS DEMOCRACY: And, and, and we have to be preparing well in advance, right?

Because as you say, it's not obvious when, when the wildfire is approaching us. Right?

RANDY DENZER: Yeah. And, and I've operated in a [00:41:00] whole bunch of different facets and different, uh, uh, things like, uh, aircraft rescue, firefighting and, and operations. Firefighting wildfire by far has the most politics in it I've ever seen.

And the reason, the reason Wildfire has politics in it, 'cause there's so many different people that are involved when you start talking about managing the risk, you know you're gonna have the biologists, you're gonna have different groups of people who, you know, don't want their land clear cut. I don't either, by the way.

You know, they don't wanna build fire brakes for one reason or another. But I think we're getting to the point, you know, all across the United States and, and and Canada where this, we really have to start doing something. And it's a very difficult situ, very difficult topic, cause the answers are all expensive, you know, to undo some of the risk.

But one thing I, I would really like to point out is, you know, Uh, me and Allison have worked [00:42:00] together on a lot of these issues in Austin, um, and I think she heard me years back. I've been saying for a long time in West

Austin alone that we have an incredible issue there. We're gonna, we are have an incredible risk and we kind of gotta do something.

Um, the Maui fires, what I found most interesting about him, Over the past, you know, couple weeks since they happened was that I, uh, read a, a, uh, article about a group of people who were warning that this was gonna happen. So the risk was there, it was identified and, uh, I don't know whether it was private or government land ownership, but somebody didn't take care of the issue.

And, uh, there were people who were really trying to, to, to get some stuff done to, to reduce the fuel loading, at least near the city there. And it never happened. So, so I think we recognize there's, there's risk. We recognize there's an issue. We need to start acting on it. And that's, that's the hard part.

That's where the politics comes in.

ALISON ALTER: So, Randy, you and I have been [00:43:00] working on this for, for quite some time, and I think that here in Austin, we do recognize the risk. I think we have an opportunity now that folks are seeing what these fires. Can do and how they've played out so catastrophically in so many other communities that people are paying attention and people are acting.

The kind of responses we're now getting for education that we've done about being ready, um, to be part of our war in central Texas to. Really focus on hardening your home are important and they are steps forward. The challenge we have is that the risk is enormous. Um, and in any scenario we were never going to be able to a hundred percent mitigate because fire is a natural phenomenon.

JEREMI SURI - HOST, THIS IS DEMOCRACY: Allison, as you look at this as, uh, someone, uh, in the belly of the beast, uh, dealing with these really difficult politics, as Randy said, and it really sticks with me. Randy, you said that these are the most difficult politics you've seen that's saying a lot. How do you, Allison understand and how do you convey to [00:44:00] people.

Why wildfire is more of a risk today than it's been in the past.

ALISON ALTER: So wildfire is more of a risk today because of climate change and because of how we've chosen to build out our communities. Um, there's a place that we call the wildland urban interface, which is where the wildlands come together with the urban area.

Um, and it's in that interface where you have the most risk from wildfires to life and to structures. Um, and the more you build. In the wildlands, the more wildland urban interface you get, and if you build in those areas and you don't take certain steps, which we now know matter, like hardening your home.

So there's things that you can do when you make choices about your roof, how you deal with your vents, how you build out your vegetation around your home. If you fail to harden your homes in those ways, you're putting more and more people in harm's way. If you do that and you don't have exits and you don't have, um, multiple ways out, you increase the risk of the [00:45:00] impact of the wildfire.

The other thing, which, which Randy alluded to is we have. Forgotten that fire is a natural phenomenon and it is part of the lifecycle. And as we've had more and more people move into these areas, we have, um, prevented that natural phenomenon from playing out. And so I think that's also a problem with climate change.

We have dryer conditions. Um, you have to have the right conditions to have wildfire. Here in Austin, we've been very fortunate because we have had. The dryness and we've had, um, the prolonged heat, um, but we haven't always had the wind conditions, right? One of the things we know is with climate change, our wind conditions are gonna change, and so it's gonna be even that much more likely that we'll have wildfire.

Relationships, Money, and Maui Tourism | EP 172 - The Amanda Seales Show - Air Date 8-18-23

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: Of course we know the wildfires in Maui have been devastating. Mm-hmm. There have been over a hundred deaths. I mean, it really is a tragedy. Yep. But this is not the beginning of the Hawaii conversation. Mm-hmm. Like people have been saying [00:46:00] that the tourism, uh, industry in the, in the island is a problem.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": Mm-hmm.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: And that, you know, we really, they've been saying like the natives of of Hava Hawaii have been saying like, please don't come here.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": Right.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: Now I fell into a trap because I thought I was being helpful. And I was like, y'all, they said don't go there, Don. Don't go there. So instead, go to Puerto Rico or go to the US Virgin Islands and the, then the Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands was like, pop the breaks.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": Don't come here either.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: Don't come here either. And the reason they were saying don't come either, don't come here either, is because they have been colonized as well by America.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: Why is it so hard for people then to respect that these people are saying, do not come to our island. Not because we don't want you here as Americans, but because you are fueling an industry that is eating us alive.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": I think when it comes to black people specifically, 'cause we are black, she talking to black people, Hey, everybody else. But you know, yeah. We keeping it here. I think this is where we show our Americanism, the intersectionality of being black and American. Because [00:47:00] Americanism is all about being exceptional.

It's about taking, if that makes sense.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: Mm-hmm.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": It's very individualistic.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: Yes.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": That we can't even conceptualize. Like, what do you mean you don't want, say, kinda spend our money, we helping you out. We doing you a favor. That part right there is, and it like, it's like, it, it's like a conundrum. 'cause in in that, like that American side come out, kicking in the, kicking it up, waving a four fo like I'm trying to, I think especially with black people, I'm trying to help you.

I'm doing something for you. How dare you say you don't want my help? And it's like, well, I don't need your help. Actually, the help thing.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: And expressly saying that the version of help that I need from you is not that.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": And, and it is also, we talked about it earlier in the show, especially as black people being a, a community that's often extorted.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: That's what I was gonna say. My thing was gonna be like, I think a lot of us feel like, well, I thought y'all talking about them. Mm-hmm. Yeah. But we can still come, can we still come because we're us. We didn't, we we definitely didn't colonize y'all.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": Right. And we, and the, and what it's what it's worth. We're not profiting either in the same way.

As these larger corporations and entities.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: No, but we are feeding their profits.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": Yeah. Well, I think that's our thought. Like, we're not profiting off this. It's the white people profiting off this, so we should still be in the clear. [00:48:00] And it's like, no, you're enabling.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: You're fueling, you're fueling.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": Because even me as someone, like when I first heard about this, I'm like, what's wrong with the whole thing?

So I did my research, you know? Mm-hmm. To truly just understand like, oh, what's the chasm between the tourism and just the natives I had saw this, um, like mini doc about this and they were talking about how people are getting priced out. Yes. 'cause of the, uh, tourism industry.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: Yes.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": People living outside.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: Homelessness is crazy on the islands.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": Because it's getting so expensive. Um, and there's like, even, there was a, there was a story about a family that they lived on this certain section of, um, the country that was just, um, they dated for like natives.

Okay. But the waiting list was so long that the people are like, I can't even go on the list. I've on the list since I was, since like 1995. And it, this was done like maybe pre pandemic era or like right after the pandemic. So it was let say 2021 Uhhuh. That's a long time. Been a waiting list for housing as a native person.

When they building up these hotels and these motels and these water parks and you're like, I'm homeless. I can't even live on a land that's designated for me [00:49:00] as an indigenous person to this land. But y'all love over there eating, drinking out my eyes.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: Don't do it. Leave it alone. And I think as with the cisgender thing, it's like once you see the facts, that should be enough.

JEREMIAH "LIKE THE BIBLE": Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

AMANDA SEALES - THE AMANDA SEALES SHOW: Stop arguing the facts. Mm-hmm. Stop trying to make it rational. Stop trying to, you know, put the pieces together of the puzzle and be like, oh, you know what, but let me put in my 2 cents. You're not that smart. None of us are. Right. Like, the facts are what they are. You are not gonna come and like philosophize your way out of the reality.

Right. Which is, the tourism industry is a byproduct of the colonization of Hawaii. Mm-hmm. And continues to disenfranchise the native people and indigenous people of Hawaii. If you consider yourself a good person, do not help them in that process. Right.

How Native Hawaiians have been pushed out of Hawai'i - Bianca Graulau - Air Date 2-7-23

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: The beauty of Hawaii's beaches is unreal. I had never seen water that shade of blue. So it makes sense that Oahu alone gets more than 4 million tourists a year. But all those tourists have to do is turn around to see the harsh reality of life in Hawaii. People living on the [00:50:00] street, many of them Kanaka Maoli, or Native Hawaiian.

The irony is that they can't afford to live on the land that was once stolen from their ancestors.

ABC NEWS CLIP: At the White House yesterday, President Clinton signed a formal letter of apology to the people of Hawaii.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: With the Apology Bill of 1993, the United States admitted to illegally overthrowing the government of Hawaii a hundred years earlier.

Because until the end of the 1800s, Hawaii was an independent nation with its own kingdom, led by Queen Liliuokalani. But that was about to change, thanks to missionaries that had come from the United States seven decades earlier to preach about Jesus. By the 1890s, the descendants of those missionaries had become powerful sugar businessmen who wanted to make more money.

They thought they could do so if only they were in charge. So they decided to take down Hawaii's government. And the United States helped them. They sent a military ship, and in 1893, they removed the queen. And made Sanford B. Dole the new leader. Now if the name Dole sounds familiar to you, it's Because you've probably seen the [00:51:00] brand before.

For a few years after the overthrow, the US struggled with what to do with Hawaii. One president called the overthrow an act of war, but then came 1898 and the US won on a power trip with land hungry leaders who were now going for Puerto Rico, ua, Guam, and the Philippines too. That same year, the US annexed Hawaii.

KAMANAMAIKALANI BEAMER: The United States did not bring Hawaii out of poverty. It did not. Bring Hawaii into enlightenment. If anything, it crushed one of the most amazing progressive places and Indigenous led Nations, on the planet.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: The new government effectively banned Hawaiian language in schools. Students were punished for speaking it.

And they attempted to erase Native Hawaiian culture, turning it into something to be marketed to tourists.

KAMANAMAIKALANI BEAMER: What we've experienced is... The loss of our land, the decimation of our language and our culture, being [00:52:00] overwhelmed and becoming more and more of a minority in our own ancestral homelands.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: By the time Hawai'i voted in favor of statehood in 1959, the Kanaka Maoli were already a minority.

Another thing that changed after the overthrow was the use of the land. The new territorial government had other plans for the places that were being used for agriculture.

KAMANAMAIKALANI BEAMER: We had fish ponds and these taro patches and our people farmed and I think someone got the idea that they could develop it and create hotels.

And so they actually condemned our lands, they kicked Hawaiian people off the lands and they built up Waikiki and they dredged a huge area called the Alawai Canal.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: Today Waikiki looks like this. For some, it's an image of progress, but poverty among Native Hawaiians is higher than the state average.

KAMANAMAIKALANI BEAMER: If I had a time machine, I wouldn't choose statehood for our people. I'll tell you that. [00:53:00]

MAILA GIBSON: I believe statehood was a good thing. Two bedrooms, two bathrooms, two parking. It's going for 799,000.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: Myah Gibson is a realtor in Oh wow.

MAILA GIBSON: Business is great. I mean, of course it's, it's like a catch 22 for me because I am native Hawaiian, and so on one hand I'm thankful that I get

to make a living in the place that I love so much. But at the same time, my heart breaks for people who aren't so lucky.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: The median price for a single family home in Oahu is over $1 million.

That's how much this house was selling for in a neighborhood next to Waikiki. It was one of Myla's listings.

MAILA GIBSON: Gentrification, to me, isn't such a terrible thing. Um, there's a neighborhood here called Kaka'ako, and it was all just warehouse space, and a lot of people sleeping on the street, and a lot of illegal activity.

So now, you've got Howard Hughes that's gentrifying the neighborhood.

Great amenities, walkable, with easy access to a hundred acre beach park. And of course, you've got [00:54:00] delicious restaurants there, and you've got lifestyle, and you've got community. So to me... That's very positive. What I want to see, though, in addition to the gentrification, is something for Native Hawaiians, something for people that are, you know, of a lower income bracket.

We have to do something. Otherwise, we're going to see more people on the streets.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: About 30 miles from the luxury high rises, we found a long line of people waiting to get food.

Where's your home?

CINDY UMIAMAKA: You're looking at it.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: Cindy Yumiya Maka's husband is Native Hawaiian.

CINDY UMIAMAKA: I never thought I would end up here. We got to the point where we couldn't afford to pay the rent any longer because they kept adding and adding and adding and, and it just, there was no place for us to go.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: Hawaii is currently the most expensive state to live in the U.

S. Some Native Hawaiians have opted for moving away in search of a more affordable [00:55:00] life. Today, there are more Native Hawaiians living in the continental U. S. than in Hawaii.

NATIVE HAWAIIAN 1: I have a lot of my family moved to the mainland already. And I don't want to go there. I want to stay here. This is my home.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: For some of those who stay, food drives like this one can be life saving.

NATIVE HAWAIIAN 1: It helps a lot. If not, you'll never see vegetables on their table or fruit.

PU'UHOUNA DENNIS "BUMPY": This is the lifeline, and that lifeline was broken, broken in the name of development and all that.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: 100 years after taro patches like the ones in Waikiki were destroyed, Hawaii now imports more than 80 percent of its food. That's why those Still fighting for independence or prioritizing farming again.

The nation of Hawai‘i has its own flag, its own constitution, and rights to this 45 acre piece of land in Waimanalo. We always say that we exit America here and we enter Hawai‘i there. [00:56:00] The story of this land goes back to the 90s, after the U. S. signed the Apology Bill.

PU'UHOUNA DENNIS "BUMPY": Wanted independence, yeah, not just soveriegnty but independence.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: A group of Kanaka Maoli occupied this beach park, demanding freedom from the U. S.

PU'UHOUNA DENNIS "BUMPY": They admit. And confess to overthrowing our country, right? You confess to that, and we still gotta go through some process that you think is right for us.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: After 15 months, the governor negotiated with them and offered them a lease to this land in exchange for ending the occupation.

PU'UHOUNA DENNIS "BUMPY": This is the beginning of establishing that it's like a dot in what belongs to us.

Instead of... Expanding the land base. How about bringing all of our people back into this land base and seeing? Oh, here's our country. It's getting bigger.

BIANCA GRAULAU - HOST, BIANCA GRAULAU: They're growing food, they produce their own energy, and they're creating their own banking system.

NATIVE HAWAIIAN 2: If we break our dependencies and, and we develop independent solutions, we don't need anybody to tell us we're independent. We will be independent.

Final comments on the need for better systems to respond to predictable disasters

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: We've just [00:57:00] heard clips today starting with *Democracy Now!* explaining the management of water resources. *Today, Explained* looked at the impact of non-native grasses on the Maui Fire. *Read Choi* performed the skit of the concerned billionaire. *Native America Calling* discussed the fear of land grabs and water theft. *Democracy Now!* looked at local mutual aid programs in the wake of the fire, and in another clip, discussed the fire as just the latest in a long history of Hawaiian cultural destruction. *CounterSpin* criticized the media for not connecting the dots on climate disasters. And *This Is Democracy* discussed the politics of managing and mitigating wildfires.

That's what everybody heard, but members also heard two additional bonus clips from *The Amanda Seales Show* explaining the destructive nature of the tourism industry on overstretched islands. And Bianca Graulau's mini-documentary about the legacy of colonialism in Hawaii and the Land Back movement. To hear that, and have [00:58:00] all of our bonus 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.

And additional episodes of *Best of the Left* you may want to check out to dive deeper on these topics include number 1401, from February 2021, which discussed the climate fueled disaster in Texas, including everything from the strictly scientific to the purely political, and all of the disaster capitalism in between; and 1546, from March 2023, in which I describe the mechanisms of colonialism, dispossession, and cultural renaissance, including in Hawaii, as a

lens through which to understand alienation, a primary condition of modernity. Those episodes again were 1401 and 1546. [00:59:00]

Now to wrap up, just a couple more thoughts on predictable cyclical destruction. That episode I just described, 1546, was a huge undertaking and was the result of years of thought, gaining new insights, connecting more dots, and then finally putting it all together into a coherent narrative. In fact, I got a great compliment about that episode recently when a friend of mine started telling me about an episode of *This American Life* that he had heard, and then about halfway through the story he was like, oh no, wait, that was your episode, wasn't it? So anyway, you should definitely check that out if you haven't already.

The point of that episode and this story is that by understanding patterns of things like colonial dispossession, disaster capitalism, and climate disasters, we should be able to build better systems to prepare for them. For instance, putting a moratorium on land sales on Maui right now is a great idea the government is trying to stick to; we'll see how [01:00:00] that goes in the long run. But more generally, climate disasters are starting to remind me of the cyclical economic crashes that we're so used to because they are endemic to capitalism. After the recent recessions and during COVID, there were discussions about why government support mechanisms should be put on autopilot for emergency situations so that things like unemployment benefits and other mitigations would kick in automatically rather than depend on the whims of the current Congress to be able to get its act together and pass new measures in the middle of a crisis. Seems like a bad idea to depend on that.

I have also heard similar discussions around preparing for natural disasters. The way our emergency management agencies and the funding of those are structured are from a bygone era. Emergencies at the time were thought of as rare and totally unpredictable, and so we'll authorize [01:01:00] funding when it's necessary. But, it probably won't be. But in our current age of climate chaos, these kinds of disasters are utterly predictable and terrifyingly frequent, so we need our laws to catch up with the times.

In fact, I just did a quick search, like, right now, as I was writing these notes, and realized that there's a new article in the Washington Post from a day ago making this exact same argument. It's titled "FEMA isn't ready for our new age of climate disasters." And one piece in it that stuck out to me was the fact that FEMA used to be a cabinet-level organization in the Executive Branch, but was shuffled under the umbrella of the Department of Homeland Security in the wake of 9/11 in the year 2003.

And I remember that the shameful response to Hurricane Katrina just a couple years later made some people -- I mean at least people like me and the people I was listening to at the time -- [01:02:00] question that move, and recognize that emergency management needs to have a seat at the top table, right? Not just be under someone else's umbrella. And so all these years have gone by and we still haven't corrected that error. But it'd be a good place to start now. But seriously, just a place to start. We need a structural overhaul.

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 voicemail or send us a text message 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 [01:03:00] 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, along with a link to join 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 BestOfTheLeft.com.