

# #1596 Building a positive future by first envisioning it and then designing it

**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 will look to some positive visions for the future to get away from the doom cycle of complaining about what's going wrong all the time. Some positive visions include rethinking human nature, re-imagining our relationship with consumerism, reconsidering how design can work with nature instead of against it, and understanding how cooperation is actually better than individualistic competition from an evolutionary point of view. Sources today include *Andrewism*, *Against the Grain*, *The Human Restoration Project*, *The New Humanitarian*, *The New Abnormal*, and *Our Changing Climate*, with an additional members only clip from *Your Undivided Attention*.

## What We Get Wrong About Human Nature - Andrewism - Air Date 1-11-23

**ANDREW SAGE - HOST, ANDREWISM:** Who are you? Who am I? What is the essence of humankind? What does it mean to be human? Human nature refers to the fundamental traits of humanity, [00:01:00] our most basic and natural ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. Human nature is supposed to be this universal concept that, regardless of nurture, regardless of our environmental, social, political, and psychological conditions, we cannot truly transcend.

I disagree. There are certain instincts we possess that I might consider universal to humanity, for instance fear as a means of basic survival, or disgust as a means of self preservation from disease. Yet not everyone experiences fear or disgust, and what we fear or disgust varies considerably from person to person, place to place, culture to culture.

Some people fear the depths of the ocean. Others fear the peaks of the mountains. Some people are disgusted by even the IDEA of eating crickets. For others, it's a healthy treat.

The balance of our hormones may also play a role in determining how we behave. But we are not slaves to our [00:02:00] hormones. We can and do override our base impulses when the situation calls for it.

We also, obviously, have certain shared needs: things like air, water, food, sleep, and shelter. We want safety, respect, and connection. We seek pleasure. But how we meet those needs vary also, according to culture, climate, and identity.

If human nature is just what humans do, then it is a concept of contradiction. Humans hate and humans love. Humans are violent and humans are peaceful. Humans destroy and humans create. Humans form hierarchies and humans tear them down.

But when people bring up human nature, particularly in arguments about the viability of liberation from systems of oppression such as capitalism, patriarchy, and the state, they never seem to highlight our noblest features, only our most despicable. Humanity is defamed by humans themselves. To [00:03:00] the misanthropes and their ilk, we are all just agents of chaos and wanton environmental destruction. They sweep aside the vast antagonisms of class, gender, and race. They dismiss the distinctions between authoritarian empires and stateless societies, assign an all equal accusation.

Capital H U M A N I T Y overrides the examination of the social relationships and institutions that have forged our present outcomes.

So the question persists. Our journey begins, to discover what exactly constitutes human nature.

Another first person to explore the idea of human nature -- across history and throughout the world -- theorists and philosophers have posited different interpretations of the concept. Socrates believed that the life most suited to human nature involved reasoning. His student Plato, and [00:04:00] Plato's student Aristotle, developed a notion of the human soul in the fourth and fifth century BCE that consisted of two parts: one, home to instinct, passion, and desire; the other, home to logic and reason. Aristotle, in particular, also recognized man as political, meaning able to develop complex communities and systems, and mimetic, meaning able to use his imagination to create artwork. I say man, not humanity, because Aristotle saw women as subject to men. Of course.

Elsewhere, Mencius, a Confucian philosopher in the 4th century BCE, argued that human nature was good, with an innate tendency to an ideal state formed

under the right conditions. To him, the four beginnings of human nature's morality were a sense of compassion that develops into benevolence, a sense of shame and disdain that develops into righteousness, a sense of respect and courtesy that develops into propriety, and a sense of right and [00:05:00] wrong that develops into wisdom. He believed that the development of virtues came from reflection, and if one didn't reflect, they wouldn't develop their moral constitution. According to Mencius, evil came from a lack of reflection and self development in one's natural direction.

However, another Confucian philosopher in the 3rd century BCE disagreed. Junzi believed human nature was essentially bad, and that learning was the only cure for the destructive and competitive natural ways of humanity. Later on, the legalist framework of human nature would embrace the notion of it being inherently evil. However, unlike Junzi, they didn't think even education or self cultivation could eliminate or alter one's fundamentally sick nature.

Echoing many of today's proponents of capitalism, third century BCE legalist philosopher Han Fei argued that everyone is motivated by their unchanging selfish core to take [00:06:00] advantage of whoever they can, especially when they know they can get away with it. Similarly, Emile Durkheim believed humanity to be naturally egoistic, and David Hume assumed humans were driven by selfishness and emotions and needed society to make them more reasonable.

However, Hume also recognized that humans had an innate sense of honor, beauty, and nobility. In contrast, according to Akan philosophy, what it means to be a person is to selflessly contribute to one's family and community -- of course, adjusted for one's level of opportunity. The size or type of contribution matters far less than the practice itself.

Further east, along the West African coast, the Yoruba held similar beliefs. To be a person is to be substantially dependent on others. The community is the basis for the actualization of one's values and personality. This position can also be found in the Pan African philosophy [00:07:00] of Ubuntu, a form of African humanism developed in the 1950s that sees humanity as a quality we owe to each other. It can be neatly summarized by its particularly iconic phrase, "I am because we are." The Yoruba philosophy also recognizes that while humanity retains certain activities and needs, the way those activities are carried out and those needs are met are subject to change according to ever evolving material conditions.

Karl Marx's concept of species being was similarly informed by materialist analysis. He argued against traditional concepts of human nature as incarnating

in individuals, in favor of human nature forming within social relations. To Marx, human nature wasn't permanent or universal, but rather always determined in a specific social and historical formation. Humans change their environments, and their environments, in turn, change them. The Rarámuri [00:08:00] tribe in the Sierra Madres region of what is now Mexico have traditionally believed in *iwigara*, the idea that all lifeforms are interconnected and share the same breath. Even the land itself and the winds that blow through it share kin.

Obviously, the sheer variety of the philosophies of indigenous cultures cannot be painted with one broad brush. But we can identify certain similarities. Many indigenous philosophies have recognized that we cannot be divorced from our environment. There is no neat separation between human and nature. We are part of the same family. Life can only be viable when humans view nature as kin, all part of the same ecosystem, enhancing and preserving, giving and taking. Anthropologists refer to this way of seeing the world as animism. Because animists believe all beings are related, they heavily regulate their interaction with living systems. For the most part -- and asterisks do indeed apply -- that means that while they may fish, hunt, gather, and [00:09:00] farm, they do so while remaining cognizant of the sustainability of those systems. They do so in the spirit of reciprocity, not extraction. They live by the principles of what today's ecological economists would call a "steady state" economy: never extract more than ecosystems can generate, and never waste or pollute more than ecosystems can safely absorb.

The decline of animist ontology has coincided with the rise of capitalism, which has continued to sever our bond with nature, leading to many people embracing the view that human nature is fundamentally destructive. Human presence has come to be seen as a threatening corruption of the natural world. We've become estranged from our role as a species of stewards.

## **Gabor Maté on Illness, Human Nature, Capitalism, and Socialism - Against the Grain - Air Date 5-30-2**

**SASHA LILLEY - AGAINST THE GRAIN:** One thing that I think has been striking about the ways that the status quo has been justified and the system of capitalism has been framed as permanent and inevitable [00:10:00] and no way to transcend it or get beyond it is an evocation of human nature, that human nature is, at its root, based on a kind of individualistic selfishness, and we'd

have to do great harm to each other if we were ever going to live in a more collective way, and hence, the gulag is evoked.

You write about the uses that a notion of human nature can be put to. Can you say what you think about human nature and what it does or doesn't constrain in terms of our possibilities?

**GABOR MATE:** Sure. Well, to quote two people I've already mentioned, one is Robert Sapolsky, who said that human nature is not to be constrained by our nature. And Noam Chomsky said that, and I quote both of them in my chapter on this, is that -- I say my chapter, by the way, I need to acknowledge my son, Daniel, with whom I wrote this book, so -- our chapter, our chapter on this -- is, there's no defined human [00:11:00] nature, that if Jesus was a human being and if Buddha was a human being and Hitler was a human being and Stalin was a human being, if Martin Luther King is a human being and Donald Trump is a human being then what is a human being? Then what is human nature?

So what is human beings? And human nature? And by the way, in this society, it's very common to say, when somebody does something selfish or manipulative or greedy, we say, oh, that's just human nature. But what about when people are kind or giving? Do we say, oh, that's just human nature? Why not? The kindness is very common. And all of us, when we're kind and open-hearted, we feel much better in our bodies. So why do we identify selfishness with human nature?

We evolved as communal creatures for millions of years, hundreds of thousands of years, including if even the existence of our species, *Homo sapien sapien*, can be encapsulated in 60 minutes on a clock, then until [00:12:00] five minutes ago, we lived in small band hunter-gather groups where the communal need determined individual behavior, individual thinking and individual feeling. So giving, receiving, supporting, collaborating, that's what we did. We would not have survived as individualistic hostile creatures. We would not have survived. We could not have lived that way. Monkeys couldn't. Wolves couldn't. No mammals could.

So, what we tend to do is to identify behaviors in a certain society with some kind of global human nature. It doesn't exist. What we know does exist are human needs. And, what I can tell you is human children have certain needs of warm attachment relationships where they're accepted for exactly who they are; where their emotions are accepted and welcome; where they don't have to work to make their relationship work with the parents; where there's free play -- free, genuine, authentic, [00:13:00] spontaneous play out there in nature that helps the brain develop properly, which is essential for brain development.

If you meet those conditions, you're gonna get human beings that are compassionate, for the most part collaborative, and they don't think in terms of individual greed as the way to satisfy their needs.

This society, we don't bring up people like that. You see a prevalence of behaviors that are selfish, and not only are they prevalent, they're even celebrated. But it's a cultural construct.

So you can't extrapolate from the way people are in a certain culture to some general idea of human nature. I don't think there's a human nature that dictates how we are. We have human needs, and we have certain conditions that will promote the healthy development of human beings, other conditions that will undermine it.

So that's how I understand human nature.

## **Imagining a Solarpunk Education - Human Restoration Project - Air Date 5-11-23**

**NICK COVINGTON - HOST, HUMAN RESTORATION PROJECT:** In July 2022, Dr. Henry Giroux presented a keynote at the inaugural Conference to Restore Humanity, where he spoke on the topic of critical pedagogy in a time of [00:14:00] fascist tyranny. In this keynote, he connects our fading visions of the future to the lack of hope that we can ever actually imagine something radically different from the present.

**DR. HENRY GIROUX:** The commanding visions of democracy are in exile at all levels of education. Critical thought and the imagining of a better world present a direct threat not only to white supremacists, but also to those ideologues who narrowly embrace a corporate vision of the world, in which the future always replicates the present in an endless circle, in which capital and the identities that it legitimates merge with each other into what might be called a "dead zone of the imagination" and "pedagogies of repression."

**NICK COVINGTON - HOST, HUMAN RESTORATION PROJECT:** And, more simply evoked by theorist Mark Fisher, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. And that's a well we have absolutely run dry in our desire for dystopia. We've imagined the world destroyed by AI, by climatological disaster, even by zombies. Judging by pop [00:15:00] culture, you could assume we have a preference for annihilation.

Stuck in this doom loop, we've created an entire media apparatus that not only imagines ever-worsening and horrific futures, but nostalgizes the past to keep us trapped in existing banal dystopias. In an era of increasingly rehashed ideas, corporations now openly flaunt reboot culture, negating any ability to imagine something new. "Nothing comforts anxiety like a little nostalgia," haunts the *Matrix Resurrections*, as a 2021 sequel to the nearly 20-year-old trilogy.

Escaping the drudgery of futures imagined for us is no small feat. Philosopher Jean Baudrillard believed that our world had become so engrossed in the hyper-real that we are no longer able to distinguish between what is real and what is imagined. Or, as he wrote on Disneyland,

**NARRATOR:** It's meant to be an infantile world, in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere in the real world, and to conceal the fact that [00:16:00] real childishness is everywhere. Particularly among those adults who go there to act the child in order to foster illusions of their real childishness.

#### **NICK COVINGTON - HOST, HUMAN RESTORATION PROJECT:**

Teaching is the most stressful job in America. 86 percent of teachers report being stressed. 73 percent struggle with anxiety and 67 percent with ongoing depression. And even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, these shocking statistics dwarf healthcare workers and other highly stressful positions. So it isn't surprising that so many educators have become jaded and nihilistic about the state of education.

Stressed, depressed, and demoralized teachers, who are looking for an exit or believe that their classrooms have become a lost cause, are less likely to be able to create spaces of joy, wonder, and curiosity for students because, at the end of the day, why does any of it matter?

The Doom Loop connects a dismal view of the future to lived realities within classrooms everywhere. Underfunded, risk-averse schools are [00:17:00] pressured to adopt an empty or scripted pedagogy, a standardized system, where the same thing is taught the same way to every student. In this way, the ends justify the means. Sold as a back to basics way to alleviate teacher stress and improve outcomes by simplifying instruction and assessment, standardizing classroom management, and securing higher scores by aligning curriculum with the demands of state tests.

With the best intentions, empty pedagogy means to make it easier to produce similar outcomes for all students. But the reality is that it's easier to sell scripted curriculum to a de-professionalized workforce that lacks the collective power to

make pedagogical decisions, or even the collective understanding that there could be other educative outcomes worth pursuing.

An empty pedagogy eliminates the need for advanced degrees, certifications, and the deep pedagogical understanding that comes from years of experience, [00:18:00] opting instead to treat educators like easily replaceable, low skill, low wage employees at the bottom of a technocratic hierarchy. Of course, it also removes the artistry and personal connection that draws virtually all teachers to the profession, replacing purpose driven professionals with trained technicians, thus perpetuating the doom loop as educators burn out in a profession void of personal identity and the capacity for meaningful action.

As teachers burn out, it can be tempting to embrace scripted techniques to make the job easier, but this can be dangerous at the level of the system itself. The more schools come to value an empty pedagogy, the more sterile the classroom becomes. And the more sterile the classroom becomes, the more classrooms become isolated from society, unable to address the problems of today, let alone the future; content to batch process students with standards and objectives, but rarely in a direction or [00:19:00] with a purpose.

Of course, young people can find this on their own, but systems that embrace the back-to-basics standardization of classroom curriculum lead young people to have to fight back against the demeaning and soul-sucking nature of school. In this way, schools become a vector of the doom loop itself.

The majority of young people also find themselves bored, stressed, or tired in high school. Horrifically, the suicide rate of students increases between 30 to 43 percent during the school year. And as chronicled in Huck Magazine, young people are embracing nihilism. One young person states, "We are all just little grains of sand on a seemingly infinite beach." And numerous accounts show people not bothering to fight for just causes, such as environmentalism or social justice, because, after all, what's the point if the apocalypse is right on the horizon?

The promise of a college-to-career pathway with a livable wage, stable job prospects and a decently sized home, nuclear family, and [00:20:00] other elements of the American dream have become structurally unattainable.

But the article also outlines the growing movement of positive or sunny nihilism. Australian writer Wendy Seyfried says that nihilism can be a gateway to a radical decentralization of the self, saying, "If you have been forced to recognize that the things you thought were going to promise you a good life

aren't available anymore, you look beyond yourself to protect something bigger." she believes that when you embrace nihilism, you can start to recognize what the philosopher Nietzsche said about rules, laws, and morals: they're all social constructs. You can begin to reimagine yourself and the world around you in entirely different ways. And it becomes liberating to change the world because you recognize that all of it is, well, made up.

As one young person puts it:

**NARRATOR:** It doesn't matter to me that it will all return to nothingness eventually. It exists, simultaneously with my [00:21:00] existence, and I get to climb trees, run about, and swim, all thanks to the earth. Human existence is beautiful, even if it's all for nothing.

## **What science fiction teaches us about imagining a better world - The New Humanitarian - Air Date 1-11-23**

**KIM STANLEY ROBINSON:** I think what I did by accident was fill a hunger people had for a vision of things going well, despite the awful situation that we're in. There aren't that many books like it, and actually, Malka's is one of them. But basically, it's an empty ecological niche in our cultural imagination. You say, 'Oh, I want to read about things going well in the year 2050. I'll go to that shelf in the bookstore'. It is empty, that shelf is empty. And so people, when they find it, they begin to share it.

**HEBA ALY - HOST, THE NEW HUMANITARIAN:** 'The shelf is empty', that's interesting. But also, the few books that are on the shelf, the wider science fiction shelf, are often written by a very specific slice of the population. So if we talk about the politics of science fiction, and whose vision of the future is most [00:22:00] valued, science fiction is often dominated by White men – sorry, Stan – but with no particular social justice agenda, which is not your case. And the voices that are a bit more marginalised, don't often have the ear, when it comes to science fiction fans, that they might hope for, despite the a really rich tradition of people from, as I say, more marginalised communities trying to write themselves into the future or reimagining futures that might better serve them. And Afrofuturism, which really centres Black history and culture, is an example of that. So, maybe, Malka, is science fiction any less susceptible to oppressive power structures than any other field?

**MALKA OLDER:** Well, I mean, when we're talking about science fiction here, what we're talking about is publishers, right? Those are the people who decide not what gets written, but what gets to readers. I do think it is changing somewhat, and we're seeing that reflected in what's getting out. There's still a long way to go, obviously. But I think what's even more regressive than what's coming out in print [00:23:00] is what's been made into TVs and movies. And that's unfortunate, because that does actually reach, sadly, way more people and get more way more money funnelled into production. And I think that's, actually, a big part of the problem, because when you're spending a lot of money to make a show, it also means that there's a lot of people who have an interest in saying, Oh, we must make sure this is profitable, and we're gonna guess what's going to be profitable by looking at what was profitable last year. And that doesn't always work very well, and it also leads to very slow change, and sometimes really boring shows. Because those stories, again, affect how people think about the future, what they think is possible, what they're afraid of, what they hope for.

To come back for a second to print, while we're starting to see more marginalised voices being published. The area that I think is really lacking, especially when we think about it from the humanitarian perspective, is translations and people from other countries, other parts of the world, and trying to get more of those voices. As we talk about [00:24:00] global futures, as we talk about global government, we really need to be doing more of that: more translation, more publishing. And it's hard to get that done in the US. That's one big issue that I think we need to keep looking at.

**KIM STANLEY ROBINSON:** Yeah, Octavia Butler is having a moment now. And she's been dead a couple decades. And when she was actually publishing those books, she was quite marginalised. So there's such a desire for those kinds of narratives that there's some backfilling; people go back into the tradition, and I really hope people start reading Joanna Russ, for instance, as an incredibly powerful, hilarious, and angry feminist voice in science fiction and one of the great stars of her time. And Ursula was more famous the longer her career went on, because of a desire for those kinds of narratives. So, science fiction can have everything ideologically, it can go from hard right reactionary QAnon type conspiracy [00:25:00] theory set into the future to communist and far left manifestos of liberation for all humanity. It's just the same as any other form of literature in terms of its ideologies. But if you're looking for positive visions of a mutual aid future for the world, then indeed, science fiction is the right place to look, then you have to kind of go hunting and pecking to get past the same old same old ray guns and lasers and blowing things up and spaceships zipping around, which is typically war stories or stories of feudalism. And a lot of fantasy is of course, straight feudalism: the kings, the servants, the troubadours,

the dragons, it's all straight medievalism taken as a kind of an escapism, or a metaphorical vision of the present, where you wish you could have a magic sword and just chop their heads off. So a lot of escapism in all of literature in all of art. And when you try to have [00:26:00] committed or activist literature, then as Malka said, you run into the business of publishing: Who's gonna buy this? When they're looking for escape, and you write a gritty story of humanitarian work, who's going to buy it? Very few, because people read and watch TV to escape their current trapped reality rather than engage and understand it. So you have to perform some pretty convoluted Judo tricks and Cirque du Soleil-type jumps to make the kinds of things we write about entertaining, and get it through your industry to a readership that enjoys it, even though they're looking for escape. One of the escapes that would be nice is to imagine that things could still work out. So it could be that my novel *Ministry for the Future* is just as much a fantasy as a *Game of Thrones* or *Harry Potter*, because it isn't clear that we're going to be able to run the table and put all of the bricks in place in time to keep from having a [00:27:00] universal crash. But I'm very interested in, say, the refugee camps. So a *Ministry for the Future* has about maybe six or eight plot strands, and one of them is refugees. It's pretty much Syria: a country that's falling apart. They get to Switzerland, and then they're in a refugee camp for 20 or 30 years, and then they get out and they're Swiss citizens on a kind of Nansen passport. It takes up at least 15 to 20 percent of the text in *Ministry for the Future*, and nobody talks about it. Nobody. What can you say? It's an intractable situation. As a life, it's boring. Even though I was intent to write it, because the only solution I can see to the oncoming humanitarian refugee crisis, climate refugees, is a holistic solving of all the problems, at which point you don't have millions of people wandering the earth homeless and without much in the way of an ability to control their fate. [00:28:00] So...

**HEBA ALY - HOST, THE NEW HUMANITARIAN:** But when you say nobody talks about it, you mean in the reviews of the book, that's not a part of the book that is popular.

**KIM STANLEY ROBINSON:** Right. Exactly. Yeah. Not discussed. Let's talk about central banks. Let's talk about the carbon coin. Let's talk about geo-engineering. Let's talk about eco-terrorism. Let's talk about anything except for a life spent in the camps.

**HEBA ALY - HOST, THE NEW HUMANITARIAN:** And so how do you go about popularising a book that is essentially about – it's both a cynical and optimistic book at once, I suppose but – a book that is essentially about the future of human suffering. How do you go about making that something that people want to think about and understand?

**KIM STANLEY ROBINSON:** Well, some people go into survivalist fantasies: ‘oh, if the world fell apart, then my life would suddenly be more exciting’, which is not true. The other thing would be simply to do creative non-fiction and live the life; go in there interview people; and write that story up. And there are some great accounts out there in the non-fiction literature. How do [00:29:00] you find a plot that tells that story? The way I did it was to make sure that that was part of a larger global story that you had to remain interested in like, these are the stakes that are involved in solving climate change. These people will have their Nansen passports, you could imagine ... I'm thinking about your specific issues, the involuntary migrants, the refugees, the climate refugees, could be a workforce to quickly decarbonise the planet, full employment plan, where governments gathered together and said, “Look, we need lots of workers, we have lots of people, could we put them to work in decarbonising fast so that we decrease the climate emergency?” Well, it would be hard, but it wouldn't be impossible. Can we match the solutions to the problems, which is sort of putting people in the right places and giving them agency and giving them expertise. It's a... it's a messy problem, and it's bearing down on us [00:30:00] hard. And when things bear down on us hard people tend to freak out and go back into fantasy land.

**MALKA OLDER:** Yeah, I just, I want to pick up on some of those things, because I think there's a ton of interesting stuff in there. I have a very small and brief refugee subplot in my second book, *Null States*, and basically, there's a war going on, and there's a bunch of refugees, and there's a fair for them, where all the governments from around come by and try to promote their governments as the place where these refugees should go, because in the world I created, population is power, almost as much as information is. So countries – they're not countries but the governments, there's these entities, these political entities – want people to choose them and want people to come to them. So, I would like to think that's imminent. I have hoped for it happening someday, because generally, studies show that refugees, migrants, are good for the host countries they land in, in a variety of different ways from [00:31:00] economic to social. But there's such a powerful narrative against that right now, unfortunately. But I have hoped that might change. And in the meantime, I hope that by writing about it in that way, it might trigger at least a few people to think about how ridiculous the current system is, which turns all this research on its head and says, ‘Oh, this is a huge problem that you have to worry about.’ Having these these visions and presenting them can be really useful for for even if you don't get to that place of like all the countries coming and having a fair where they like, 'look at our wonderful government, come to our city', even if we don't get that far, maybe we can get to a point where it's not: ‘Go away.’ Governments should be working a lot harder for our allegiance.

# Elon Musk Has Become the Very Thing He Hates Most - The New Abnormal - Air Date 11-20-23

**DANIELLE MOODY - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL:** There are so many elements of your writing that is truly extraordinary because it isn't just imagining a post-apocalyptic world. It is imagining also what is possible. One of the elements of your writing [00:32:00] that I find that travels throughout is this intermingling between technology and plants. Between how we are utilizing the topography, our plants, the air, water, all of these things, and infusing that with technology. Your buildings are living. Your homes are living. The ships *[sic]* that Binti travels on is a fish. And so where does that imagination come from? Because it feels like, Oh, this is where our innovation and what it means to be building "green" should be, could be, if we continue to be attached to extraction and violence and mining and things that harm us. So where does that come from?

**NNEDI OKORAFOR:** Yeah, that's really good because that's like the core of my imagining when it comes to the future. Like one of my basic philosophies is that nature is the greatest technology. That's the foundation of everything for me. Nature is the greatest technology. [00:33:00] Therefore... and I've always felt that like human technology, if it went more along with nature, we'd be greater. It's like going with the wind, as opposed to against the wind. We could move faster, we could do more if we went with what nature already was constructing because nature is the greatest technology.

So that's always been the standpoint that I come from. When I think about technology, when I think about what do I want to see, and then also looking at things in a not so dystopic way, you know, I feel like a lot of the ways that humanity looks at technology to begin with, is already dystopic because we view nature as something to control, something to jail. And I think that's where we go wrong. And that's like at the foundation of a lot of the technology that we create, that controlling aspect, that need to be the ones, the God of nature, which is, it just doesn't make sense to me. It doesn't make sense to me. And [00:34:00] so I just feel like, if we kind of addressed that within us, and a lot of it is due to ego, a lot of it is due to... the need to control comes out of fear, the need to control is fear. So it's like, I think that if we address that aspect in us and then kind of took it from there, I think a lot of the technologies that we create would be very different. And so, like, when we talk about Binti taking off, leaving the

planet, in something living, I know exactly where that idea came from. Because when I think about space and space travel, what would I want to be in? I would not want to be in this bulk dead metal thing. I want to be in something that's alive. I feel more. It just, I'd feel more secure and safe in something that's alive.

And so like this idea of space travel and body and moving around in that way, in that fashion, I think that's where all of that comes from. I just feel like nature is the greatest technology. If we come at it from that point, then you get [00:35:00] living ships, you get living buildings, you get homes that are made of plants that are growing and that those plants are not necessarily things that we can control. There are things that we we move with. So if it wants to grow a room over there, then we figure out, Oh, this is how it... yeah, that's really, that's my philosophy.

**DANIELLE MOODY - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL:** I love it because your idea, your vision of space and the future to me is a space that I actually want to be in, right? It is one that there is a coexistence and a co mingling between humanity and nature and technology. And I feel As if it's like, we're at this extraordinary tipping point in our reality where every headline is about artificial intelligence, every headline is about the end of humanity, and there was something that I gravitated to during the height of the pandemic in your stories, where I was just like, I need to get the fuck out of this place that seems impossible and move to a place that seems possible. And, you know, part of what is so [00:36:00] beautiful about your stories, too, is that there is both something that is ancient and futuristic elements about them. The tools that your protagonists are using are things that you yourself have researched and found throughout going and traveling in Nigeria and other parts of the continent. And I want you to talk about this one piece because I am so obsessed with it, when you posted it on your Instagram, which was the astrolab. So can you talk about this magnificent astrolab, which I thought, I'm going to tell you, I thought that you created out of your imagination. And then when you posted it, I like went down a Google rabbit hole.

**NNEDI OKORAFOR:** Yeah, there's so much. Oh my God. It's basically the first GPS. It's the first GPS. It is a tool that helps us to navigate the world. It is an ancient tool. This is not new. And I was obsessed with it [00:37:00] because what I learned about, I learned about it when I was in Sharjah, which is in the United Arab Emirates, they were talking about this device that was perfected by this woman. And then, and first of all, like the idea of, you know, an Arab woman in ancient times perfecting a technological device that reads the stars. I mean, come on. The minute I heard that, I was like, Ohhhh.

There are times where, like, as a writer, when I hear certain things, I learned certain pieces of information, pieces of history, pieces of things that exist, where it's like something starts vibrating in my head. And when I learned about the astrolabe, I'm like, Oh, my God, this is a big one. And so, like, I immediately became obsessed with it. I went down the rabbit hole that you just talked about going down. And I was like, Why do I not know about this? Why? How did I not hear about, you know, how is this just coming into my orbit? And so, yeah, I mean, so then that went directly into the writing and the philosophy [00:38:00] behind Binti, this ancient... basically it was like talked about in a lot of the research that I was reading that it was the first GPS. And I love the idea of the old in the new. I'm obsessed with the old in the new and tools from the old and knowledge from the old in the new, that one is not better than the other and that they can play off of each other and they can commingle to create something greater. Like, I'm not all about leaving the old things behind, but I'm also not all about acting like new things cannot exist and that some of the old things need to be left behind. Like, it keeps coming back to Nigeria. It comes back to... the way I started writing science fiction was like seeing the juxtaposition and the commingling and the interaction between the ancient and the modern and how they are not always directly in conflict. How sometimes they are at play with each other. Sometimes they are married with each other. The astrolabe was just a great example of that once again, and it's like my favorite subject. So when I discovered [00:39:00] it, my head like just blew up.

**DANIELLE MOODY - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL:** I bless you for that discovery because then my mind blew up and I was like, I need to understand it. Now I want one.

So, I also want to talk to you about this idea in your Akata series of the 'in between', the wilderness. This in between of the spirit world and our conscious human world. And what it means to bring also in these African traditional ritual practices intermingling with sci fi, intermingling with this idea of magic, and where this in between, this wilderness, came from for you.

**NNEDI OKORAFOR:** The wilderness... it's like you're bringing up all my themes, cause all of these are connected, all of them. The wilderness is the spirit world, right? But also one of the Igbo tenets, and it's not just Igbo, but I'm Igbo, so that's [00:40:00] where it comes from for me. The mystical and the mundane coexist. So like in a lot of Western ideas, they're separate. So you have to go to these places. They're complete. But the mystical and the mundane coexist at the same time. It's almost like the ancient and the modern idea. They're commingling. And that's, when I talk about African Futurism, that's something I need to be understood because it is a worldview. That is the reality. It is not magic. That is the way a certain part of the world thinks and sees the world.

That the mystical and the mundane coexist. There are mystical things happening all around us. That's normal. So you take that idea, you take that point of view, And apply it to science fiction, so therefore the mystical can appear in a science fiction narrative. That's what African futurism is.

## **How We Can Build A Solarpunk Future Right Now (ft. @Andrewism) - Our Changing Climate - Air Date 4-20-22**

**CHARLIE KILMAN - HOST, OUR CHANGING CLIMATE:** Drive out into the high desert surrounding Taos, New [00:41:00] Mexico, and you'll find beautifully unique houses that look as if they were crafted by the elements. These are Earthships, dwellings that are the brainchild of architect Michael Reynolds, who in the 1970s sought to build a completely off grid house that could withstand the extreme cold and heat of New Mexico.

Earthship design principles focus on core tenets like passive heating and cooling, using recycled and local materials, and fostering self reliance through integrated greenhouse gardens. And all of these methods are implemented in ways that look right out of a solarpunk drawing. The foundation of an Earthship, for example, is built with recycled tires stacked on top of each other with dirt tightly packed into them.

This not only provides structure, but as Earthship dwellers like to say, it acts as a battery. The sheer mass of an Earthship's walls soak in the warmth of sunlight during the day, which the roof is perfectly angled to let in the right amount, [00:42:00] and then the wall slowly emits that collected heat out into the room during the cold of the night.

As a result, some Earthship owners claim to not need any external heating sources. The Earthship is built around living with, and embracing, the natural world. It does so with technologies that are tangible and readily available. It uses other people's trash, like old tires and glass bottles, and the dirt around them to build something that's appealing and comfortable. And it does this in a way that ties people to the land.

But to live in an Earthship is not some Eden. There are drawbacks. For one, recycled tires do eventually break down, releasing toxic gases into the air. Reynolds and Earthship builders claim that plastering the walls around the tires Protects homeowners from this off gassing. But other builders claim that you would have to be constantly sealing up cracks to have peace of mind. And

claims of independence from the water grid through rainwater collection [00:43:00] are dubious in desert climates like Taos. And if you're hoping to heat your house through sunlight in an Earthship in a cloudy area, think again.

While Earthships certainly aren't perfect, they offer up promising ideas of how to integrate nature into everyday living. They are a solarpunk answer to the question, How can we live comfortably with the natural world? They won't work everywhere, but individual pieces of them can be integrated into housing anywhere.

Imagine homes using passive heating and cooling systems so they don't have to run the air conditioning or heating all the time. Imagine building gardens within a house. Imagine incorporating filtered rainwater into our plumbing. And imagine building a house with as many local and recycled materials as possible.

The Earthship shows us that there are already ways to live well and lightly on the land right now. And it does so in a way that melds low tech and [00:44:00] high tech ideas into a beautiful structure. This is solarpunk, finding the appropriate technologies to build aesthetically stimulating and livable dwellings that tie us tightly with the landscape.

Along the Hudson River in New York, Sam Merritt runs a zero carbon shipping company. No, he doesn't run a fleet of electric trucks, nor does he bike. Merritt ships local goods up and down the Hudson River by sailboat. That's right, in the age of massive gas powered cargo ships making globe spanning trips, Merritt has created a fossil fuel free cargo company based on sailing, one that is at the whims of the weather and the seasons, but makes the buyer appreciate the ebbs and flows of the natural world around them. This epitomizes a solarpunk future. Solarpunk envisions a world in which the technologies we use help us to appreciate and tune into the rhythms of the planet, and sailing in the 21st century has the potential of making that [00:45:00] happen.

Merit shows us that it's already feasible to do on a small scale, and when considering that sails and ropes for ships could support a thriving hemp farming operation that sequesters thousands of tons of carbon with each crop, Sailing cargo locally is an appealing possibility, but sailing in the 21st century runs the gamut of low tech rigs like Merritt's schooner to futuristic technologies that are beginning to see their first real world tests.

Right now, engineers and cargo companies are in the midst of wrestling with the polluting reality of international cargo, and are on the hunt for high tech solutions for big shipping. While solarpunk emphasizes the local, it can still

embrace global travel and transport with emerging technologies, like retrofitting cargo ships with column-like sails that reduce fuel use by possibly as much as 30%, or future-thinking cargo ships with retracting rigid sails.

A solarpunk future that involves [00:46:00] international cargo recognizes the need for these high tech sailing solutions because they are appropriate for their high seas context. But what's important is that these high tech cargo ships are not viewed as a silver bullet. In a regional or local setting, hemp sails and schooners are a much more suitable and nature reliant solution.

So while a solarpunk future might envision rigid sail cargo ships traversing the open ocean to facilitate a thriving hemp trade between continents, a smaller canvas sailboat might bring those goods the last mile to markets. But at this point, you might be thinking, wait, wouldn't sailing mean that there'll be delays? Won't everything take a long time to get to me? To that, I would say that solarpunk does not prioritize Amazon Prime-like convenience. That kind of convenience is something people in the imperial core will have to learn to do without. It comes at the cost of the planet, and the people forced to work grueling [00:47:00] conditions and hours to get that package to your front door in one day.

Solarpunk envisions a world wherein we don't have to crush people and the planet in order to find comfort in our lives. So, yes, things might be a bit slower, but I would gladly slow down my life. If it meant that my community and my surroundings thrived.

Although Earthships and sailing cargo do exist in this world, they aren't prevalent. Looking around, I usually see the plumes of smoke rising from cargo ships, not the undulating waves of a sail, and I see concrete buildings instead of earth-packed dwellings. So, what's holding us back? There is no simple answer. There are a huge host of reasons, but when it comes to these beautiful solarpunk worlds that artists around the world have begun to render, I can't help but think about, you guessed it, capitalism.

The profit centered global economy we've built, has driven us to create [00:48:00] technologies that, for the most part, function to expand margins and make more money for the capitalist class. Ideas and inventions that can't compete in the market, regardless of whether they are zero carbon or build community health, are pushed to the margins. Merritt's sailboat cargo company is a novelty because it can't compete with the monopoly of Amazon Prime or industrial shipping companies like Maersk.

Solarpunk dares us to dream of a world outside of capitalism because even though these technologies do exist right now under capitalism, they are not widespread or "successful". The labor required to ram hundreds of tires full of dirt for an Earthship, for example, would bleed someone's bank account dry, while the wind reliant nature of a sailboat means that it can't provide the regimented convenience of one-day shipping.

Combining low and high tech solutions, solarpunk demands a future built not on profit, but instead on [00:49:00] community and a strong relationship with the natural world. So, instead of focusing on technologies that make the most profit, solarpunk urges us to seek out ideas and tools that deepen our interpersonal relationships, as well as our ties to the earth beneath our feet.

## **The Race to Cooperation - Your Undivided Attention - Air Date 2-2-23**

**ASA RASKIN - HOST, YOUR UNDIVIDED ATTENTION:** David, I think you have a story about chickens that might help explain this. Starting with the question, where do the noble traits come from and the conundrum that hit Darwin when he is like, "There's a thing that my theory can't explain." And that seems like a really gripping way to get people into these questions.

**DAVID SLOAN WILSON :** Yeah, I actually used a story in my conversation with His Holiness, the Dalai lama, which was an interesting experience and it bears directly on animal welfare. So I mean, this is a cool example with many implications, but it's also something which is important in its own right. So I mean, let's say that you're an animal breeder and you want to breed a strain of chicken that [00:50:00] lays more eggs. What do you do? So chickens have always lived in groups, nowadays, it's cages, I'm sorry to say, but you have many groups of chickens. You monitor the egg laying of each hen and then you select the most productive hen to breed the next generation of hens. So that seems to make sense except what you've actually selected is the biggest bully within each group. And after five generations, you've bred a strain of hyperaggressive hens that are literally murdering each other, plucking each other's feathers in their incessant attacks. And so, what seems to be like a benign form of competition turns out to be pathological.

So back to the drawing board. Now, let's say you monitor the productivity of whole groups and you select all the hens within the most productive groups to breed the next generation of hens. Now, you get a strain of cooperative hens that don't bully each other.

And so, now in both cases, there's competition. [00:51:00] Competition is not a bad thing. In fact, competition is needed for change, but it's the level of competition in this case that makes all the difference. And that's what Darwin discovered way back when. And it was a gradual process for him because at first, he thought that his great theory could explain everything that had been attributed to a creator. But gradually he realized that traits that involved doing unto others was the one thing he couldn't explain. Because if natural selection is about favoring individuals that survive and reproduce better than other individuals, then it's the pro-social individual that loses that contest. But what Darwin realized was that there is the version of the second chicken experiment that even though selfishness beats altruism within groups, groups of altruists will robustly outcompete groups whose members cannot cohere.

And so, the second part of that statement is altruistic groups feed selfish groups, everything else is commentary. [00:52:00] And so, self-preservation is a good thing. Self-dealing is not. Helping kith and kin a good thing until it becomes nepotism and cronyism. My nation first, a good thing until it leads to international conflict. Strong growing economy is a good thing until it leads to global warming. And so, what you find is almost everything that we see is a problem, everything pathological, is actually a form of cooperation at a lower scale. And so, that is not hard to understand, but it explains so much that what we think we want actually gives us a world that we don't want. And this is why evolution doesn't make everything nice. It's what all creatures, all life forms inflict upon each other unless the levels of selection are configured the right way.

**ASA RASKIN - HOST, YOUR UNDIVIDED ATTENTION:** This is so profound that I think it's worth stopping and dwelling on because [00:53:00] it is a root diagnosis for climate change, for inequality. Every time that what's good for me is bad for a group above me or our nation, or what's good for our nation is bad for everyone, that can be explained by seeing the world through this competitive landscape and then asking, "At what level are we optimizing for?" and when we look then through the lens of tech, we are almost always optimizing for individuals, individual usage, individual engagement. So would it be surprising at all that it would cause the thing above it, like groups, coherence, governance to start breaking?

**TRISTAN HARRIS - HOST, YOUR UNDIVIDED ATTENTION:** Yeah, your point about the chickens, I think, it's really worth pausing for people. So if I'm optimizing for what's the most producing chicken, if I just make a transplant of that metaphor to [00:54:00] Twitter, what's the most producing attention user on Twitter? Well, it's going to be the out grouping, aggressive, loud mouth, cynical, commenting on everything as loudly as possible because that's what's

going to get me the most attention. And so, how do we create these cooperative mechanics is what the core of your whole work is. And I would like for you to respond to the idea that cooperation is for patsies, the peaceful tribes get killed by the warlike tribes, Daniel Schmachtenberger talks about that. The extractive energy economies win over the sustainable energy economies because they just get more resources and then kill the other guy and take their stuff. What you're talking about is a flip to the logic. How do we switch from this kind of ruthless Hobbesian war of all against all individual selection into this group selection?

**DAVID SLOAN WILSON :** It's here that we could begin to outline an optimistic picture about how the end of the day we really have a blueprint, you might say, an optimistic blueprint for how to make things better at all scales, all contexts, [00:55:00] including the global scale. But it begins with, I need to add a new concept which is the concept of major evolutionary transitions. And so, in nature, I mean, so often, we think that nature left to itself strikes some kind of harmonious balance. We could look at ecosystems or something and there's wisdom for us to learn and so on. But certainly most primate societies, including chimp societies, one of our closest ancestors, you would not want to live in those societies. Those societies would be despotic in human terms, naked aggression is over a 100 times more frequent in a chimp community than in a small scale human community.

And so, in most species and ecosystems, you see some cooperation, but you also see a lot of disruptive self-serving behaviors. But sometimes what happens is you get a shift in the balance. So that basically [00:56:00] altruistic groups beating selfish groups is what prevails. And when this happens, the higher level unit, the group actually becomes the new organism. And that explains what makes our species so special. Unlike so many animal societies where there's a little cooperation and a lot of competition, our ancestors evolved mechanisms to suppress bullying behaviors. So that between group selection became the predominant evolutionary force. And so, that's a major evolutionary transition. We're selected to cooperate originally in small groups, of course, just very small groups. But nevertheless, that cooperation caused the group to be the organism to a large extent.

And so, cooperation is required to explain our nature as a species. And I think it's become clear, it's a guarded form of cooperation. It's not just that we evolved to be nice, it's that we evolved to be vigilant [00:57:00] and capable of defending ourselves against within group disruption. And so, if human history is a process of cultural evolution leading to ever larger scales of cooperation. So you can't just say the cooperation often loses, absolutely not. Cooperation wins much of the time and we need to cause it to win more so in a larger scale.

## Summary 12-5-23

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with *Andrewism*, looking at why our general conception of human nature is wrong. *Against the Grain* explored the theme of human nature even further. The *Human Restoration Project* looked at the relationship between our education system and nihilism in the youth. *The New Humanitarian* looked at the benefits of Si-Fi with a positive vision for the future. *The New Abnormal* looked at Si-Fi that incorporates traditional knowledge into the future. And *Our Changing Climate* looked at architectural design techniques that can be an inspiration for building in a way that [00:58:00] works with nature rather than against it.

That's what everybody heard. But numbers also heard a bonus clip from *Your Undivided Attention*, looking at the relationship between culture and evolution, and the benefits of working cooperatively and not always in competition with one another. To hear that and have 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](http://BestOfTheLeft.com/support), or shoot me an email requesting a financial hardship membership, because we don't let a lack of funds stand in the way of hearing more information.

And now we'll hear from you.

## Geoengineering concerns - Bud from Idaho

**VOICEMAILER BUD FROM IDAHO:** Hi, Jay. This is Bud from Idaho. I was just listening to your climate change episode, #1594, and I'm very interested in some of the geothermal options. I especially was impressed with the idea of using existing oil drilling resources, I [00:59:00] guess you would say. But the scariest part of it was the idea of geoengineering. There's two main things that I'm concerned about. One was that what you concentrated mostly on was reflecting solar away. And my fear there is probably two or three fold. One is that my freshly installed solar array might not work as well, and I may have to expand that. I would imagine that they would take that into consideration and that would be one of the first. The other two things that concern me about that are how long would it last, or would it be reversible? And then the other is, it sounds like, if I'm understanding what he said, this would cause more acidification of the oceans and more acid rain. So, I suppose it's all on a spectrum. If the water's cooler, maybe it won't be quite as acid? I don't know.

[01:00:00] And then, finally, the last thing that concerns me about solar reflection, I guess, is that the - I'm assuming this, I don't have any actual - but, really anything to do with geoengineering would have to be done on such a scale that any unforeseen results, any unforeseen consequences, would also be on a global scale, which is very frightening. But, it was still a very informative episode. Keep up the good work. I'll talk to you next time.

## **Final comments clarifying some details about using Solar Radiation Management as a geoengineering strategy**

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Thanks to those who call into the voicemail line or write in their messages to be played as voicemails. If you'd like to leave a comment or question of your own to be played on the show, you can record or text us a message at 202-999-3991, or send an email to [jay@bestoftheleft.com](mailto:jay@bestoftheleft.com).

Thanks to Bud for calling in with his concerns. I will do my best to address them all, I think. Not that I can explain them away,[01:01:00] because there are some real concerns here, but I can at least add some clarification. So, the first was reducing the solar energy efficiency, like on Bud's personal personal solar array. I can't speak to this one directly, but I believe we are talking in terms of reducing the percentage of solar radiation in the very low single digits. Of course, all of this is subject to change and needs more research, et cetera. But I believe that they're looking at only reflecting in the range of 1 to 2% of the sun's radiation hitting the earth away. So yes, that could impact solar energy generation. But not hugely.

Then there was a question, how long would it last and is it reversible? And we are certainly getting into the crux of the matter here. In terms of it being reversible that's like a "yes", with a giant asterisk. So, the sulfur dioxide that would be [01:02:00] injected into the stratosphere naturally dissipates in only a few years. So if we tried to do this for like a year and we didn't like the result, then yes, it is reversible in a fairly short amount of time. But the question of how long we would choose to make it last is a stickier problem. In theory, we should only need it for as long as it takes us to decarbonize our society. But, even if we do it really well, that's going to be probably a decades long process. Right? And because the capacity of the atmosphere to trap heat is continuing to go up, if we were to start solar radiation management, we really wouldn't want to stop it once we'd been implementing it for more than just a few years. Because if we were to stop, there would be a shock to the system. As the

shading effect wore off in a short amount of time and the [01:03:00] full impact of the warming would be felt, it would be sort of sudden and could be dangerous. So, if we do go down the path for more than a few years, we'd really want to be totally committed to the project and avoid going off of it to avoid the shock effect that could be dangerous.

But now for some good news. Solar radiation management does not make ocean acidification worse. So, I think there was a bit of misinterpretation there. Ocean acidification is caused by an over abundance of carbon in the atmosphere. So, we're already causing that problem. Solar radiation management prevents as much heat from entering the system from the sun. But it doesn't increase nor decrease the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere or how much of it gets absorbed by the oceans. So the point that Mike was making is that solar radiation management isn't a cure-all [01:04:00] and gave ocean acidification as an example of, like, See? This isn't going to be fixed by it. And so we should all understand that using solar, radiation management, is not an excuse to continue to do anything other than decarbonize the economy as quickly as possible. I think there was a double negative in there. No one should say, Okay, now we don't have to decarbonize as much because, you know, we're shading the sun, so it's okay. We don't have to worry. No, no, no, no. Because ocean acidification is still a major problem, we need to deal with it regardless.

Now as for acid rain, that's a problem when sulfur dioxide is in the lower atmosphere, like we get from dirty cargo ship fuel emissions. The idea for the intentional geoengineering using the same chemical is that it would be put into the stratosphere. So, you get the same shading effect without the direct air pollution that impacts people. At least that's the [01:05:00] idea; as always, more research needed.

And finally, concerning the unintended consequences that would be felt globally, that's definitely what further research would attempt to work out. And yes, some of it would be unavoidable and negative. But that's why we need enough information to be able to make a comparison between bad options. We already know that the status quo is a really bad option. So, what kind of problems are we going to create with this other idea and how do they compare with the terribleness of the status quo?

But on that note, I did hear one pretty good idea that addresses multiples of these concerns. It was suggested that the solar radiation management program should only aim to reduce the warming of the planet by half of our actual goal. So say we're headed for a two degree increase over comfortable temperatures. We shouldn't reflect enough sunlight to reduce the warming [01:06:00] by two degrees, but by only one degree, and here are the benefits. One, it doesn't stop

anyone's motivation to decarbonize because temperatures are still rising, just slower to give us more time to react. But still, we need to react. And two, if we aim to reduce the warming by only half, then hopefully the unintended negative consequences would also only be half as intense. And therefore more manageable. Which really brings us back to the need for international cooperation and agreement on a path forward. And that can only come with more research and information to make informed decisions. And of course the best case scenario is that we do the research and then we ended up not needing to use it after all because of a combination of other factors like new high-tech geothermal power that no one predicted until recently. Fingers crossed.

That is going to be it for today. If you have any more thoughts or questions to add, please send them my way. Thanks [01:07:00] 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, web mastering, 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](https://bestoftheleft.com/support). You can join them by signing up today and it would be greatly appreciated. You'll find that link in the show notes, right along with a link to join our Discord community, where you can also continue the discussion.

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