

# #1597 The rise of fascism around the world driven by economic insecurity

**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 look at how neoliberalism has created a lot of economic suffering and insecurity over the past few decades and how now, in what may be the most devastating result of the ideology yet, neo-liberalism may be leading much of the world toward fascism, bolstered by legitimate grievances about economic precarity, which are co-opted by the false promises of right-wing populism. Sources today include *The ReidOut*, *The Democracy Paradox*, *Democracy Now!*, *On the Media*, and *The Broadcast*, with additional members only clips from *On the Media* and *The Democracy Paradox*.

## Far-right extremism on the rise around the globe - The ReidOutwith Joy Reid - Air Day 11-28-23

**JOY REID - HOST, THE REIDOUT:** And we begin tonight with a dark moon rising around the globe. Just before we all broke for the Thanksgiving holiday, we received disturbing news from the Netherlands. The Dutch people handed anti-Islamic populist Geert Wilders a stunning and resounding victory. [00:01:00] What he offered his country was a referendum on leaving the European Union, or "Nexit", a complete hold on asylum seekers, and a migrant pushback at Dutch borders. He's also called for the de-Islamization of the country, which includes no mosques and no Islamic schools. It was a stunning swing for the country, which is one of Europe's most socially liberal, and has prided itself on tolerance.

Now many of you probably don't know or remember Wilders, but he has been an opposition force in the country for years, and he's best known for his bottle blonde hair. He's also well known for his Islamophobic rhetoric, which has made him a magnet for extremists and popular among ultra-nationalist leaders worldwide. He once compared the Qur'an to *Mein Kampf*. His victory comes as Europe and the rest of the world go through this spasmodic tug of war between liberalism and ultra-nationalism.

Roughly a week ago, the Argentine people elected [00:02:00] self-proclaimed anarcho-capitalist libertarian Javier Milei as president. In 2020, as he announced

his entry into politics, Milei told the world that he wanted to "blow up the system". He also defended the country's dictatorship and their atrocities. We'll soon get to see what that looks like. Milei has already promised to ban abortion, ban gay marriage, and slash the size of government.

In October, the Polish people, who've been ruled by a conservative party that dismantled the judicial system, mainstreamed nationalism, and set the country at odds with the European Union, well, they voted that party out. Meanwhile, in Italy, Giorgia Meloni was elected prime minister. Her party, the Brothers of Italy, has roots in nostalgia for fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. Meloni has moderated her stance, which is what Wilders has vowed to do. But he will have to bring together a governing coalition first.

Naturally, you can't [00:03:00] help but wonder if this is what's in store for the U.S. Given that we are dangerously close to reelecting Donald Trump, a man who's made vengeance, xenophobia, and authoritarian crackdowns his 2024 political platform. Trump spent Thanksgiving "Truthing" unhinged promises about repealing Obamacare and screaming about his legal cases when he wasn't confusing Joe Biden for Barack Obama again. We already know what he wants to do to migrants in the United States, and it's a plan based on President Eisenhower's 1954 deportation campaign, offensively called "Operation Wetback", which is fitting for Trump trump wants to conduct sweeping raids to round up millions of migrants, shove them into camps and have them forcibly deported. This will be paired with a ban on immigration from Muslim-majority countries, and he plans to revoke visa status for foreign students who participated in anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian protests. He also plans to end temporary protected status for people like Haitians and Afghan immigrants fleeing the [00:04:00] Taliban.

And for all of those who want to take to the streets and protest, well, he's already stated his desire to use the Insurrection Act to direct the U. S. military to crush dissent in mostly democratic cities. And frankly, the way our laws are written, and given the weakness and fecklessness of Trump's political party, there isn't much that can stop him. The signs we're seeing at home and abroad make it clear that we continue to face an existential crisis. And as Perry Bacon Jr. notes in the *Washington Post*, "it's more than democratic versus anti-democratic. It's whether we want a multiracial democracy or no democracy at all."

## **How Can Democracy Survive in an Age of Discontent**

**Rachel Navarre and Matthew**

# Rhodes-Purdy on Populism and Political Extremism - Democracy Paradox - Air Date 11-28-23

**JUSTIN KEMPF - HOST, DEMOCRACY PARADOX:** Rachel, do you feel that discontent is just inherently anti democratic, or do you think that it's just a dissatisfaction with the way that we approach democracy?

**RACHEL NAVARRE:** I think there are some that do decide that, yes, you know, democracy doesn't work and, that, you know, the experiment has failed. But I do think a lot of it is a [00:05:00] discontent with how we expect democracy to occur, you know, the folk theory of democracy that we have.

If you are in a community or something, you see everybody... well, most people around me feel like this, so why can't the politicians do anything? And it doesn't always have to be a feeling. I mean, we know that there are issues where the public's opinion is very much out of sync with what the politicians think the public opinion is and, like, the United States and stuff.

So, I think the fact that you do also have these anti-majoritarian policies and democracies, which, for the most part, I'm a little bit more in favor of those constitutional protections and stuff than that, but that might sound a little that that's not for constitutional protections. But I'm a little bit more on the rules to protect the constitutional order, I guess.

But I think it's this idea that, you know, if we're the majority, why don't we always get what we want? And not understanding [00:06:00] that sometimes there are these problems that we do see where there really is an outline where the government doesn't want to do what the people want. And sometimes that doesn't exist for protections of minority groups or things like that. And I think people do get frustrated when they look at a government and say, Well, we're the majority why aren't our policies what's winning?

**JUSTIN KEMPF - HOST, DEMOCRACY PARADOX:** So, Levitsky and Ziblatt just recently came out with a book, and I talked to Daniel Ziblatt about it called *The Tyranny of the Minority*. But it focuses a lot on specific circumstances related to the United States. The fact that the United States has so many different checks and balances, like Francis Fukuyama calls it vitocracy in the United States. You make the case that it's not just the United States that has what you call "weak voice", that many democracies throughout the world, both in Latin America and Europe specifically, don't necessarily always follow

through on policies that have broad, widespread support. [00:07:00] And we're not just talking about things that affect minority rights. I mean, we're talking about policies that are bread and butter issues sometimes. So, Rachel, why is it that, in your words, that democracy has produced such weak voice in so many different countries?

**RACHEL NAVARRE:** I mean, I think a lot of it has to do with institutional structure. Some of it is also just the pressure of winning elections. You know, we had this period of neoliberal consensus where you start to see a lot of agreement on policies. So you start seeing the center left party or the left parties become closer and closer to the right parties, and the right parties also have the same thing.

But I think what it has to do a lot [with is] the growing agreement between the left and the right. You see this in the '90s, you see this after the fall of communism, we see the Washington consensus emerge, and we see left parties and right parties becoming more similar. So you have the rise of the [00:08:00] new left. And what happens is that gives parties or people less of a chance to go... different. So if you happen to want more left wing policies or more social safety net, the space for that has really diminished in very many countries. And so it gives the idea that, first off, all the parties are the same, they're all serving the same interests, they're all serving the same things. And so it gives an opportunity for the supply side of populism to come in and say, Look, look at these policies. They both want free trade, they both want to cut the social safety net, they both want to do this. They're exactly the same. Why don't you vote for me? At least I'm something different.

**MATTHEW RHODES-PURDY:** Yeah. That consensus, that lack of differentiation between left and right, I think is the big driving factor. That's not an accident either. You know, we focus on the role of economic crises, that sort of acute mode as the spark that sets things off. But, you know, a spark doesn't make fire without fuel and the fuel, we argue, is this long standing [00:09:00] process, this inversion to neoliberalism and particularly deindustrialization, which critically undermine the organizational strength of the popular sectors throughout the democratic world. And what that means essentially is that effective voice is impossible. The effective voice of the popular sectors requires organization in order for people who don't necessarily have all the time or all the resources or all the educational resources to become politically effective on their own, to get together with others and become politically effective.

So, you asked earlier, is discontent inherently democratic? I mean, there are aspects of it that are always dangerous because it's an aggressive form of politics. But I think the key variable there is, are there effective channels to

where it can become a pro-reform impulse? And the answer in most contemporary democracies is no. Because of the organizational weakness of the popular sectors, to the point where, you know, Rachel mentioned people who want left wing policies, I think we're actually past that. People who sort of need or would benefit from left wing policies, [00:10:00] but really are so disconnected from other people, disorganized in terms of being part of the popular sectors that would benefit from them, they may not even really understand the policies that would benefit them or have a conception of what the possible solutions are.

**JUSTIN KEMPF - HOST, DEMOCRACY PARADOX:** Yeah, I think one of the problems with thinking through economic crisis as a cause of discontent, populism, or however else you want to name it is the fact that a lot of the parties that have been emerging, particularly in the United States and Europe, but even within Latin America in recent years, the parties of discontent, the parties of populism, are coming from the right. They're not necessarily coming from the left. I mean, we saw Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, but that happened a decade before the financial crisis actually occurred. The more recent examples seem to be coming from the right, which seems to have a very different explanation, which of course you guys get to, and we're going to kind of touch on that.

First, I'd like to kind of understand a little bit [00:11:00] more about the connection though, between discontent and populism, because I feel like we're going to mix those terms up and use them interchangeably in a lot of ways. Matt, do you think that discontent is a true cause for populism or do you think it's a specific type of populism?

**MATTHEW RHODES-PURDY:** Actually, I think populism is rather a specific form of discontent. Discontent is sort of the umbrella term. It's this vague sense that the way things are being done is not working, that democracy is not effective, that it's not serving my interests, so on and so forth. And how that manifests. Really depends on the circumstances in a particular country and for a particular person. So, essentially, when people have these vague feelings, they generally go forth and search existing social narratives in order to explain why they feel the way they do, why they have these sentiments. And populist narratives capture that sense of discontent and give it more specificity, particularly they give it an [00:12:00] explanation. You feel discontented because these elites are evil and they are ignoring you, not you, the individual, but you, who is a member of this imagined unity that is called the people. It sort of morally ennobles the person and makes their discontent valid, which everybody wants to be validated. And it also gives them a very clear opponent to strike at, which is the elite and whoever's interests they are serving instead of the people.

# Argentina's Trump Far-Right Javier Milei Wins Presidency with Echoes of Past Dictatorship - Democracy Now! - Air Date 11-21-23

**AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** Can you talk about the significance of this victory? I mean, months ago, Milei was hardly known to the general population of Argentina, became famous as he carried a chainsaw with him and would use it during his speeches. Talk about the significance of that and what he represents.

**FRANCO METAZA:** Hi, Amy. Very pleased to greet you. Well, what Milei implies for Argentina today [00:13:00] is uncertainty. He got to win the election with some promises. You mentioned one of them. And the main one is the dollarization, to change our current currency for the U.S. dollar. So, he made great expectations in the population. People want to earn their salary in dollars in the next month. And that would be impossible. So, what is one of the main issues? The uncertainty and the expectations for the U.S. dollar. And the other thing that I want to underline is the human rights. We are in a country that has a very deep history for the dictatorship we had. It was one of the most terrific ones in the region. And we could [00:14:00] got all of them and make justice for the victims, and the genocides are in jail now. And he wants to take them out of jail. So, those are the main issues we are experiencing these days here.

**JUAN GONZALEZ, CO-HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** And, Franco Metaza, could you talk about why the incumbent Peronist coalition, a center-left coalition, lost this election? What factors do you think contributed to that? And also, how you expect that Milei will be able to govern, since he doesn't have a majority in the Legislature?

**FRANCO METAZA:** Well, I think we lost because of the inflation. When one analyzes all the elections in Argentina, they always have to do with the economy. And we have a very high inflation. What did cause that [00:15:00] inflation? Well, it began when the IMF gave us — not us, but the right-wing government of Mauricio Macri — the biggest loan in the history of IMF. They gave us \$45 billion. And that's even three times the amount they are giving to Ukraine to recover from the war. And we were not in a war. Even the pandemic hasn't happened then. It was a political loan. And that make us — that make our country to pay a lot of money per month, and that is extremely difficult for our economy. So, we lost because of the inflation caused by the IMF.



And the second question you made is very interesting, because he doesn't [00:16:00] have majority, but he has a political association with Mauricio Macri, so they will get more senators and more representatives than they have today. And that's very important, because he got to win the election saying that he was the new, that he came up with new people, not the old politician, not the traditional elite, and finally, he will be part of this elite. He says — he said today who is going to be his minister of economy, and it was the same minister of economy of our former President Fernando de la Rúa, who ended with a crisis of 2001 that you might remember, and it was the same president of the central bank of Mauricio Macri, the previous right-wing government that lost the election with us in 2019.[00:17:00]

## **How Can Democracy Survive in an Age of Discontent Rachel Navarre and Matthew Rhodes-Purdy on Populism and Political Extremism Part 2 - Democracy Paradox - Air Date 11-28-23**

**MATTHEW RHODES-PURDY:** The other thing is, yeah, this is a process. People go out and look for narratives and they hear these ideas. They tend to get radicalized over time. They start out with relatively antiseptic, but still prejudiced and bigoted ideas about, Oh, the government only wants to help people of color, it doesn't want to help me, and then they kind of go layer by layer into radicalization as they go, they find increasingly, you know, extremist narratives and then get down into radical right populism. And I also think there is a taboo against sort of open bigotry and racism in most contemporary societies. And that taboo needs to be worn away. I think particularly in the United States, you see sort of opposition to Obama among conservatives taking increasingly racialized tone, repetition of the birther conspiracy. These things over time, they get mainstream, more and more people in office or in positions of authority or people in the media are at least treating these as plausible. And I think gradually that emboldens people [00:18:00] to visibly support these kinds of prejudicial politics, which is all laying the foundation for something like Trump.

But it does certainly take time because you don't switch away from a society where those ideas are considered taboo and also just, you know, those are outsider ideas. People who believe these things are not serious political actors because serious political actors don't believe these things.

**RACHEL NAVARRE:** I mean, I think to what also happens, and this is something in the United States. In the United States, we have a tradition of the outsider. Everybody kind of always uses a little bit of populism, in the United States, especially. Everyone's always campaigning against Washington. And so I think part of it is, like Matt said, you have to have these narratives floating around and sometimes it takes time for them to come in. And Matt and I were both grad students in Texas when, say, Ted Cruz started his, you know, rise to power. And Ted Cruz would say, You vote for me, we're going to get rid of Obamacare. But he doesn't have the votes. There was no way they were [00:19:00] ever going to get rid of Obamacare. But if you're telling people, Hey, you vote for me, and I'm going to make this big change for you, a specific change, and that change doesn't happen, the conservative firebrand in the Senate has just gone further and further right. Why? Because every one of them is saying we're going to do this, we're going to get rid of whatever, we're going to get rid of Obamacare, and then they don't do it. They get elected and they don't do it. So this also sends people searching for people that will do it. And I think it can get further and further away.

And then you can also have this problem of the other side not recognizing what they're dealing with. So, going back to Obama and immigration, Obama was trying to get the Republicans to buy in desperately to the immigration package. You know, the amount of spending that went into the border, the amount of enforcement that went in. You have left groups calling Obama the "deporter in chief", and there's a bunch of debates about how deportations are counted and [00:20:00] things like that. But at the same time, so you see Obama kind of cracking down on immigration to try to get Republicans to say, Yes, the border is secure, but the Republicans were never going to say that they were never going to compromise. So instead you get a bunch of people on the left who see Obama being deporter in chief and not getting any of this comprehensive immigration reform that we want.

So, you're getting people frustrated with that. But you're also getting people frustrated on the right, with those that say, Oh, we're going to stop immigration completely, or we're going to shut down the border, or we're going to get rid of Obamacare. They can't do that. So, you get people that are frustrated with the way things are going on. You get politicians that are telling them, Oh, we can actually do this. And it just ends up getting people further and further into looking for new solutions and more and more upset with how things are going.

**JUSTIN KEMPF - HOST, DEMOCRACY PARADOX:** But where I'm struggling to understand is, because populist politicians do the same thing, that they make promises that they can't achieve. Donald Trump is a great example because [00:21:00] he did the same exact thing that Ted Cruz did. He said that



he was going to repeal Obamacare and replace it with something that was significantly better. Not only did they not replace it with something that was better, they couldn't even repeal Obamacare. Another example of Trump in terms of immigration is he said that he was going to build a wall along the border. And I actually think that he probably could have found a compromise with the Democrats to be able to get more funding, to be able to build the border fencing and a wall if he had tried a little bit harder to be able to work for that. But he didn't. I mean, they didn't really make much progress on that. He didn't make any progress on immigration reform. Things are still kind of at the same point that they've been. And yet Trump has enormous loyalty from his supporters. So what is it about these populist politicians, both in the United States, in Latin America with Bolsonaro in Europe, with so many of the different [00:22:00] populist politicians, why is it that they have so much loyalty, even when they deliver results?

**RACHEL NAVARRE:** Typically once they're in power for a long time, it tends to fall apart. The problem is you can always go and blame, especially with populists who really go wholeheartedly in. Part of Ted Cruz's problem is he's not willing to go all the way he needs to go and no one likes him. So that also makes deals hard. But yeah, you know, Donald Trump is also willing to go in and just torch everything. You know, Donald Trump is willing to be fully conspiratorial. The reason it didn't work? Well, because those elites are still there and they're blocking us. The solution is for you to give me more power and more time.

**MATTHEW RHODES-PURDY:** Yeah, Justin, I think your previous statement makes sense outside of the populist context. I actually think you're operating on a false assumption, which is that he would have been better off building the wall through compromise than not building it through aggression. Compromise would have hurt him. The whole point of the [00:23:00] wall is punitive. It's 'we're going to build a wall and make Mexico pay for it'. People forget that second part a lot. You know, think about the other catchphrase of Trump, 'lock her up'. These are deliberate, aggressive acts against perceived wrongdoers, whether the Mexican government for exploiting the United States and sending immigrants here and taking our jobs, yada, yada. Or, you know, Hillary Clinton for being corrupt, although he really wasn't ever talking about her. He was talking about her as an avatar of the entire political establishment, who she was as a person really wasn't all that relevant. And so the aggression really is the point.

People who are charismatically attached to these figures are in a kind of identity crisis, they lose the ability to distinguish themselves from the leader. You know, when you see this in the leader's rhetoric, they say things like, I am your voice,

or I am the people, I am the voice of the people. You know, Trump has used this language, Chavez used this language in Venezuela, it's a very common trope in populism. And the idea is, they're giving people vicarious satisfaction [00:24:00] because they alone are sufficiently powerful to go out and confront this elite that has evaded popular accountability for so long.

That said, once they get into power, that fiction becomes harder and harder to maintain. I mean, because the populist worldview is a sham. Like things are bad not because the elite are all bad people. They might not be all that great people. I mean, you can believe that, but that's not the reason. There are structural issues, historical issues. There's all sorts of stuff going on here that one person at one moment cannot overcome. However, they've already primed their followers at that point to follow them down the rabbit hole. And this is where conspiracy theories come in. We actually have a subheading in the book that a conspiracy theory is a warm hug.

And the idea is that charismatically [attached] individuals, when they see this supposedly superhuman figure they follow faltering, it's terrifying. It's psychologically intolerable to accept that this person they followed is, in fact, you know, a venal and selfish and very stupid and incompetent human being. And so, it's much easier to accept that the deep state is doing this. I mean, QAnon, this whole conspiracy theory that we [00:25:00] talked about, is a really interesting example, because it's sort of a merger of old sort of antisemitic conspiracy theories on blood libel and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, but it actually started out pretty simply. And it was just this idea of, Trump was supposed to be destroying corruption, how is it that this respected Republican figure, Robert Mueller, is investigating? Those things don't go together. And so the narrative that emerges is, the investigation is a sham. Boy, it's actually an excuse for him to work with Trump to take down the deep state. So, if you actually look at the origins of this real bizarre conspiracy theory, it's excusing Trump's failure and corruption.

## **Media Coverage of the Trump Movement is Missing Vital Context - On the Media - Air Date 11-29-23**

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** In his Veterans Day speech a couple of weeks ago, former President Donald Trump said this about his political enemies:

**SPEAKER 2:** The proposals include leveraging the Department of Justice to go after his political rivals.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** On the campaign trail, he has been equally vivid in outlining his proposed agenda for a second term in office.

**SPEAKER 2:** The 2025 agenda would also expand the hardline immigration policies Trump pursued during his first term in [00:26:00] office.

**TRUMP:** We will begin the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** Trump currently faces 91 felony counts in 4 criminal cases in Washington, New York, Florida, and Georgia. Back in June of this year, right around the time he was receiving his second indictment, we observed that some of the messages in defense of Trump from members of the GOP were incomprehensible to the casual reader.

For instance, Representative Clay Higgins from Louisiana tweeted that the summoning of President Trump to the Miami federal courthouse in June was, quote, "a perimeter probe from the oppressors. Hold. Our POTUS has this. Buckle up. 1/50K. Know your bridges. Rock Steady Com. That is all."

**JEFF SHARLET:** Yeah, after Representative Higgins tweeted that, a lot of people were delighted. They said, this was word salad, and look at these goofballs and they're harmless. [00:27:00]

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** Jeff Sharlet is the author of the book *The Undertow: Scenes from a Slow Civil War*, and a professor in the art of writing at Dartmouth College. For the book, which was published earlier this year, he crossed the country to trace the undertow.

I asked him back in June to translate Representative Higgins malicious speak for me.

**JEFF SHARLET:** For a nation so steeped in war movies, I was surprised that more people couldn't figure out that a perimeter probe is testing the enemy. Our POTUS is real POTUS, the real President of the United States. But most importantly, 1/50K is 1 to 50,000. It's the scale of military-grade maps and maps used by the U. S. Geological Survey for areas mostly around military facilities. And "know your bridges," what he's referring to is a kind of longstanding

militia fantasy, which rose out of a white supremacist movement, that the highest legal authority in the United States is actually your county [00:28:00] sheriff who has the right to nullify laws. The fantasy in militia world is that the feds are coming to take your guns, they're coming to invade the perimeter probe. It's an attack. They're getting ready for a big strike. Get ready to defend yourself.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** I knew that there was something going on in his tweet that I didn't understand, but is it important? Is he important?

**JEFF SHARLET:** He is. Representative Clay Higgins, longtime sheriff, in many ways a media creation, the result of years of positive coverage from so-called liberal media for his kind of tough-on-crime viral videos. In the current Congress, he's Chairman of Border Security on the subcommittee on the Homeland Security Department. Moreover, he has militia credibility. He doesn't say he supports militias. He says he is militia. He identifies as a 3 percenter.

So I've been driving back and forth across the country and the first thing I notice is more guns [00:29:00] than I've seen in 20 years. And I'm not afraid of guns. I'm a gun owner. But this is really something different. Churches arming up militias.

And you take any one of these stories individually, yeah, it seems fringe. But the better way to understand this is there's a great mass of fringe which is making the fabric of what I think we can, plausibly and without hyperbole argue, is an American fascist movement now. And I don't use that term lightly. And in fact, I've argued against it in the past, but here we are.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** I'm wondering how Trump's own reaction to this indictment reinforced and built on some of this. He tweeted that in the wake of the indictment, "the seal was broken" and that went right over my head.

**JEFF SHARLET:** It's a seal on the indictment. A lot of people hear it as the seventh seal of the book of Revelation. It marks the coming of Jesus in this apocalyptic final battle, which Trump has been talking about for a while now. I've been writing [00:30:00] about the broadcast and the reception of Trump, paying attention always to these stories since 2015. In Trump's speeches of past, you would have long segments describing, in detail, stabbings, rape, decapitation, disembowelment.

**TRUMP:** These men took the bullets, the 50 bullets, dropped them in the pigs, swished them around.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** This is an old yarn about how General Jack Black Pershing killed Muslims a century ago.

**TRUMP:** So there was blood all over those bullets, had his men, instructed his men to put the bullets into the rifles. And they shot 49 men.

**JEFF SHARLET:** Really violent, gory, horror movie rhetoric. But his post-indictment speech last Saturday:

**TRUMP:** We have a record crowd here today, so that's...

**JEFF SHARLET:** represented a turning point in his rhetoric. He was talking about the final battle, which he's been doing.

**TRUMP:** This is the final battle. This is the most important election we've ever had.

**JEFF SHARLET:** But then there was another element. He's speaking of [00:31:00] obliteration. He's saying, not only is there a risk of World War III, there will absolutely be World War III unless I am returned to power.

**TRUMP:** I will prevent World War III. I will prevent it. And now people believe it, too.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** Well, he said the same thing in the speech that just preceded January 6th.

He said, you have to fight as hard as you can or you won't have a country.

**JEFF SHARLET:** Oh, no, that's not the same thing. When he means World War III, he's not talking about not having a country. He's talking about nuclear obliteration.

**TRUMP:** This won't be a conventional war with army tanks going back and forth shooting each other. This will be nuclear war. This will be obliteration, perhaps obliteration of the entire world. I will prevent it. Nobody else can say that.

**JEFF SHARLET:** I alone can stop it, which is of course a classic of fascist rhetoric.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** The Democrats are just gonna fire off a nuke for no reason?

**JEFF SHARLET:** Yeah, I think that is how it's being heard, that we are very close to nuclear war [00:32:00] with Russia, that he alone can stop it.

But it's even more abstract than that, right? So when he says,

**TRUMP:** At the end of the day, either the Communists win, and destroy America, or we destroy the Communists, because that's what they are. They may go by a different name -- fascists, Marxists.

**JEFF SHARLET:** He opens and closes the speech with some kind of classic antisemitism, talking about globalists and Marxists.

He's expanding the potent conspiracism of antisemitism so that it applies to all of his enemies. But, lest anyone be confused, he doubles down in the middle by talking about Jack Smith.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** The special counsel who indicted him.

**TRUMP:** Jack Smith, what do you think his name used to be? I don't know, does anybody have it? Jack Smith, sounds so innocent.

**JEFF SHARLET:** What is his original name? What's his real name? It's Jack Smith. But it couldn't be, that sounds so innocent, by which he means it sounds so all-American white. And then at the end, and this was new, he said:

**TRUMP:** We will drive out the globalists.[00:33:00] We will cast out the Communists. We will throw off the sick political class that hates our country and wants to destroy our country.

**JEFF SHARLET:** This is a reference to driving out the money changers, Jesus driving out the money changers. And to make sure you don't miss it, he refers -- the speech writer, I should say -- refers to both the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Matthew. The money changers, historically in antisemitism, are understood as the Jews, but in this moment, it's understood as the enemy. And the enemy is, it's Jack Smith, it's whoever is on the other side.



**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** That's interesting. Rather than cast the Jew as enemy -- that's the tradition -- here, that's already assumed, and so you cast the enemy, whoever that may be, as Jews.

**JEFF SHARLET:** Yeah, the Jew becomes metaphor, and he's got plausible deniability because, of course, there are enough right wing Jews, maybe Stephen Miller, who is Jewish, wrote that speech for him and has not been shy of using that language before, [00:34:00] so he can say, this isn't about Jews, in a way. For Trump, it's really not. His enemy is whoever is against him and his power. And then since he's become proxy, when I go out and I speak to everyday people, they see him as a martyr.

## **'Democracy on a Knife's Edge' Far-right electoral victories in Argentina, Holland; Trump threatens Insurrection Act - The Bradcast - Air Date 11-28-23**

**BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** Trump has spoken openly about his plans, should he win the presidency, including using the military at the border and in cities that are struggling with violent crime. His plans also have included using the military against foreign drug cartels -- a view, by the way, that has been echoed by other Republican primary candidates. For example, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley, the former UN Ambassador and South Carolina Governor. You may recall that we discussed that after the the recent GOP presidential primary debates where both Ron DeSantis and the latest GOP sweetheart, Nikki Haley, both suggested, with little or no pushback from either the [00:35:00] other candidates on the stage, or most notably, from the moderators, that yes, they would send the US military into Mexico to fight drug cartels, which of course would be going to war against Mexico.

And you would think that would invite a follow-up question or two from the debate moderators, but apparently not. Apparently, maybe, that's one of the reasons why Republicans don't seem to be particularly troubled about Vladimir Putin marching into his neighboring country of Ukraine. Because, hey, sounds like a good idea. We could do that to Mexico, couldn't we?

Now, on a side note today, in case Republicans come to their senses once primary voting starts and decide that they would prefer someone who'd be more difficult, most likely, for Joe Biden to defeat next year, the Koch networks, Charles Koch's network Americans for Prosperity, the AFP superPAC has now

decided to, for the first time, to endorse a Republican presidential candidate in the primary, they have decided [00:36:00] to endorse Nikki Haley on Tuesday, and to unleash their tens of millions of dollars -- that's low balling it, it's more like hundreds of millions of dollars and a huge boots-on-the-ground organization in all 50 states -- They've decided to unleash all of that behind her, behind Nikki Haley.

Will it make a difference with Trump still leading by -- I don't know, 30, 40 points, whatever -- I don't know, but the right-wing Koch-funded groups that are putting together Project 2025, the plan for the next Republican president, theoretically it's a plan for no matter who that Republican president turns out to be, includes, among other things, invoking the Insurrection Act on day one.

And those folks have a whole lot of money to spend on their favorite Republican next year. And by the way, in recent head-to-head polling, Nikki Haley is doing better against Joe Biden than either Ron DeSantis [00:37:00] or Donald Trump. That's why I say if Republicans come to their senses, I think Nikki Haley would be much more difficult for Biden to beat. At least according to the polls, at least according to the data that we have currently.

Attempts to invoke the Insurrection Act and use the military for domestic policing, the AP's Fields adds optimistically here, I think, would likely elicit pushback from the Pentagon, where the new chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is General Charles Q. Brown. He was one of the eight members of the Joint Chiefs who signed a memo to military personnel in the aftermath of the January 6, 2021 attacks on the U. S. Capitol. That memo emphasized that the oaths they took -- and it cited those oaths and called the events of that day -- which were intended to stop certification of Joe Biden's victory over Trump -- quote, "sedition and insurrection."

And I say that Fields cites that optimistically because, though the tenure [00:38:00] of the joint chief chair spans presidential terms, so C.Q. Brown would in theory still be the the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff of the military under whoever serves in the next term of the presidency.

I suspect that pushing him out, if it was Donald Trump, forcing him to resign in protest for any particular reason to then be replaced by someone more amenable to Trump's authoritarianism, I suspect that wouldn't be all that hard. Trump and his party retained wide support among those who served in the military, according to AP's in-depth survey of more than 94,000 voters nationwide. It's called their VoteCast survey. They found that almost 60 percent of US military veterans voted for Trump in the 2020 presidential election. And in the 2022 midterms, 57 percent of military veterans supported Republican candidates.

And it's not [00:39:00] as if Trump wouldn't be able to cite precedent for unleashing the US military for domestic purposes in order to offer a sort of a patina of legitimacy for all of this, because American presidents have done it before. In fact, they have issued a total of 40 proclamations invoking that law. It's not that unusual. All the other presidents did. Why shouldn't Donald Trump?

Lyndon Johnson invoked it three times in Baltimore, Chicago, and Washington in response to unrest in cities after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. back in 1968. Presidents Johnson and John F. Kennedy and Dwight Eisenhower all used the law to protect activists and students desegregating schools. Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne to Little Rock, Arkansas to protect black students integrating Central High School after the state's governor activated the National Guard to keep the students out.

So Donald Trump wouldn't really be doing much different than that, right? Just keeping the peace. [00:40:00]

George H. W. Bush was the last president to use the Insurrection Act in response to riots out here in Los Angeles in 1992, after the acquittal of the white police officers who beat black motorist Rodney King.

"There are a lot of institutional checks and balances in our country that are pretty well developed legally, and it'll make it hard for a president to just do something randomly out of the blue," said Joseph Nunn, a national security expert at Brennan Center for Justice, who specializes in US defense strategy and the use of military force. He said, "But Trump is good at developing a semi-logical train of thought that might lead to a place where there's enough mayhem, there's enough violence and legal murkiness to call in the military."

## **How Can Democracy Survive in an Age of Discontent Rachel Navarre and Matthew Rhodes-Purdy on Populism and Political Extremism Part 3 - Democracy Paradox - Air Date 11-28-23**

**JUSTIN KEMPF - HOST, DEMOCRACY PARADOX:** One of the themes of the book is the fact that neoliberalism has taken away a lot of the security that government would provide people. It's kind of hollowed out government [00:41:00] resources for people. The final chapter that you have is titled, "Is

neoliberal democracy sustainable?" You answer that in that chapter, but what I'd like to ask you is, do you feel that that's enough? That if we shift away from neoliberalism, that that would be enough to avoid future discontent? And for those who are currently discontented, is that all that's necessary to happen to be able to alleviate those emotions of discontent that would normalize politics? Is that what we need to do? And is that all that we need to be able to do at this point?

**MATTHEW RHODES-PURDY:** So a couple of answers to your question.

First of all, the things we do to avoid discontent and the things we do to get rid of it once it's already there and built up are probably two very different things. I think we know much less about how we deal with discontent once we've had full-blown effective polarization throughout society. It becomes self sustaining. I [00:42:00] think there are very different interventions that need to take place there. And some of the things you do to prevent discontent in an ordinary situation might actually be problematic in an already-polarized polity.

The short answer is, moving away from neoliberalism, no, is absolutely not sufficient. Because neoliberalism has two effects. First of all, it's the economic insecurity, but it's also the hollowing of the democracy that needs to take place in order to support neoliberalism. Because technically speaking, I think very few people in ordinary society, very few of them are genuinely neoliberals. Theda Skocpol's book on the Tea Party kind of lays this out.

People are neoliberal for groups that they don't like and socialist for themselves. They want to protect their own benefits and they want to get rid of benefits for young people or people of color or whoever they feel is outside of themselves. And so in order to actually build an effective democracy that also marries itself to neoliberalism, you have to essentially reduce democratic voice to the point where popular majorities really can't influence policy. Which is basically what we have in the United States. And it's what's happened in [00:43:00] the rest of the world, not so much through institutional veto points like we have here, but just through the breakdown of popular sector organization, the breakdown of unions, the center-left parties that have relied on them to advance their interests.

So if you just get rid of neoliberalism, you still have these hollow democracies that make people feel unheard and voiceless. And here's the thing: I also don't think you can get rid of neoliberalism. The people who are at the top like it and benefit from it. You need the re-democratization in order to accomplish the move away from neoliberalism to some sort of more pro-social economy.

And so my big focus that I've always said is democratization has to come first. You have to democratize the system, moving veto points, making systems more responsive, more representative. But a big part of that is actually outside of the state structure in most places, and it's about trying to figure out, how do we organize popular sectors effectively in this new post-industrial world? And I think you alluded to this when you talked about Podemos trying to not be a political [00:44:00] party, wants to be a movement of movements. Podemos, as far as I can tell, is doing that rather poorly, frankly. But there are political parties, one of which is the Broad Front in Uruguay, we discussed at length, is actually one that has effectively employed that strategy to provide voice.

So I think re democratization is absolutely critical and is in fact a necessary condition for increasing economic security because it's not going to happen without a push.

**RACHEL NAVARRE:** Yeah. I mean, I think Matt's got a very good point. What we do to prevent it could be very different than what we do to solve it.

And, I am seeing very good signs in the United States, I think, that the hot labor summer and pushing back and having more people think about unions and seeing unions do really good stuff and getting the support for the Hollywood strike is huge. And so I think, seeing some of that in this talk of the UAW telling people, Hey, we need to have all of our union contracts come up in 2028, so we can see this movement. You're [00:45:00] starting to see some of these links that have been destroyed being built back up. So it's not quite the bowling alone scenario, but it is a little bit. We do have these disconnects between the people and the party. We're not seeing the same sort of influence.

So I think bringing that in is a good way to help stop populism rising on the left of the United States. But I do think that might be different than what you have to do once populism also exists. So I think bringing back in voice, recreating the social safety net.

Now, of course, this still leaves problems, because while we focus on emotional transfer from economic crises, we don't focus on emotional transfer that might be caused by other crises.

So if you happen to have a cultural crisis or something like that, which is oftentimes more associated with the right, that can still have your emotional transfer as well. [00:46:00] So I think once you get into that stage, it's a little different. I don't think we have much to say on that yet..

# **BONUS Media Coverage of the Trump Movement is Missing Vital Context Part 2 - On the Media - Air Date 11-29-23**

**JEFF SHARLET:** When I saw Ashley Babbitt, white woman, who led a mob, climbed up to a broken window, and a Capitol Hill police officer shot her and killed her. So we saw only the hands of the officer, and is a black man, and I understood immediately, as a student of American mythology and history, this is the lynching story: innocent, white womanhood killed by a black man. This is the template of Hollywood. You go back to the *Birth of a Nation*, one of the most influential movies of all time, 1915, based on a novel called *The Klansman*. It's a positive story about the Ku Klux Klan and a white woman flees from a dangerous black man and jumps over a cliff and dies, and thus the Klan must ride to avenge her.

Ashley Babbitt was such a productive martyr because she's wearing an American flag outfit, she's the only woman in this crowd, but she's really fierce and tough. She's also a veteran. And I started traveling around the country watching the myth in formation. [00:47:00] Who Ashley Babbitt was doesn't matter to them.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** Given all the myth making about Ashley, you looked into her life and what did you find?

**JEFF SHARLET:** She documented her life very extensively, 8,000 tweets, she made a lot of videos. I found someone I think would surprise a lot of people. Ashley Babbitt, from deep blue Southern California, a beach person. Votes for Obama twice, thinks he's the best president ever.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** How did she get from there to here? What was the turning point?

**JEFF SHARLET:** She talks about a houseless man in Southern California defecating on her front lawn. And the compassion she's tried to have in her life, she just says, to hell with it. And Trump is right there with this story. You know what? That anger you feel? It's not anger. It's love for your country. You don't have to swim against the current. Give into the undertow. Let it take you out. Here's white supremacy. It's ready to carry you. And now she's got a leader and she's got a mythology, and it's so easy to go with it.



**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** [00:48:00] You call what's going on "a cult of militant eroticism"? Can you talk about that?

**JEFF SHARLET:** Part of the aesthetics of fascism has always been titillation and the thrill, because the eroticism is of transgression. Think of Steve Bannon. Not an attractive man, and yet, here is a man, he does what he wants, he eats what he wants to eat, he smokes what he wants to smoke, if he was a truck driver, he'd be driving a coal roller, spewing out black, he lives fully.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** They're bad boys.

**JEFF SHARLET:** Yeah, the same thing with so many of these right wing politicians doing ads where they're firing guns. For some people, that's sexy. And it's also saying, you know what, I'm free. And free is exciting.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** And after reporting your book, you concluded that we're in the midst of something you call "a slow civil war. That is, we're in the undertow."

**JEFF SHARLET:** In spring of 2021, I started noticing academic [00:49:00] historians talking about civil war, and I'm married to a historian. Historians are necessarily cautious. They know that history usually moves slow. I came to the term "slow civil war" as I started to think no, wait a minute. There already are casualties, when we look at the wave of queer and trans suicide, the ways in which many people are now criminalized in 20 states and counting; all the pregnant people dying or in trouble for lack of reproductive rights; and so many of the victims of mass shootings.

What I do is I read the manifestos and I see how each one builds on another. Literally, they cut and paste from the last one, and then they say, here's how I did it, and I'm probably going to die. In fact, that's my plan. But I hope the next man can learn from what I did and can carry this forward.

When I look at the men who line up with AR-15s outside of hospitals and libraries and schools and bars.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** Isn't that just performative?

**JEFF SHARLET:** [00:50:00] Oh, this, that's my favorite question, Brooke. For so long, the political press, which was built to report on a fairly stable establishment, wants to dismiss anything outside of that as just theater. And that

works really well for the growth of fascism, because fascism is theater. No "just" about it.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** You say that the mainstream media is reluctant to use the word fascism to describe the movement Trump fueled in road to power. Why is fascism a better characterization than the much more often used "crisis of democracy"?

**JEFF SHARLET:** I'm actually against the term "the crisis of democracy", and I'm against "climate crisis." I understand why people use them. But crisis is, narratively, a word that supposes this is a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It's going to have a happy ending or a sad ending. And that's not the nature of the situation we face. Some things were [00:51:00] lost. Fascism is understood in the press as a kind of an "F word," as opposed to describing a political movement. Look at these elements: the cult of personality, the idea that a strong man leader alone can fix it, that he transcends the normal rule of law, a persecuted in-group, a mysterious out-group that can take any form. But most importantly -- and I think this is also, this goes back to the militant eroticism -- not just a rhetoric of violence, but of *pleasure and violence*. That's a key part of fascism, and I think, inasmuch as we resist it, and I'm sympathetic to that resistance, but what if we don't see it as a crisis, as a final battle, but say, hey, that's the condition. How do we get through this?

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** Do you think this is a coast versus Midwest, rural versus urban divide?

**JEFF SHARLET:** Both sides in this conflict want to believe that. But I know it's not, because I've been driving around the country and I can cross the [00:52:00] front lines, the battle lines in any given county in the United States.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** But if you set out looking for fascists you're gonna find them. How widespread is it really?

**JEFF SHARLET:** I think it's a powerful minority. There's all kinds of arguments: don't worry, they're just a minority, we're the majority; don't worry, the country is diversifying; don't worry, they're aging out. I'm 51. Since I was a teenager, I've been hearing that: don't worry, conservatism is dead, your generation's gonna save us we didn't save squat. The diversification story is ignoring the latest American contribution to fascism, what scholar Anthea Butler, author of *White Evangelical Racism* calls "the promise of whiteness." it brings in increasing numbers of people of color who believe that they can be part of this.

So that's not going to get us out. I don't think you can just sit there and let a current carry you out of fascism. Democracy is not something you have. You have to actually go and do it, right?

I think about that group, the 3 Percenters. A militia movement with which Congressman Higgins identifies, and they [00:53:00] believe that the American Revolution was fought only by 3%. So from their perspective, it only takes 3 percent to overthrow an empire, right? The British Empire. This isn't true. Scholars say the number is closer, maybe 25, 26%. But what matters is what 3 percent can do in terms of disrupting things.

And the reality is fascism, it's a minority, but it has a hold of more than 3%. I live in deep blue Vermont. I go up the road, I see the flag of Trump as Rambo. I go the other direction, I can see a Confederate flag. That ripples across the state.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** I don't see it in Brooklyn.

**JEFF SHARLET:** You don't see it in Brooklyn. And the reality is, you want to know what? There are more Pride flags in America than there are fascist flags. There are. If you say that settles it, I guess we win.

I think a better way to understand it than in terms of crisis -- which is narratively a word that supposes this is a story with a beginning, a middle, and an [00:54:00] end -- it's a little bit like we're striking matches. And none of them are flaring, thank God.

**BROOKE GLADSTONE - HOST, ON THE MEDIA:** January 6th was a flare.

**JEFF SHARLET:** January, it was a flare, right? But the flame didn't last. And that left a lot of them broken hearted for a while until they saw, oh wait, we're not going to show up to be arrested by the FBI. That's a trap. We're going to work in different ways.

**JUSTIN KEMPF - HOST, DEMOCRACY PARADOX:** A

**BONUS How Can Democracy Survive in an Age of Discontent Rachel Navarre and Matthew Rhodes-Purdy on Populism and**

## Political Extremism Part 4 - Democracy Paradox - Air Date 11-28-23

big part of the theory is that economic insecurity eventually leads to emotions that produce cultural backlash. One of the problems that I have wrapping my head around this idea is that many of the people that are experiencing cultural backlash tend to be older. They tend to be older in terms of age demographics, at least according to Pippa Norris and the Ronald Inglehart study on cultural backlash. They tend to be the most economically secure because they have a government pension. They have government health care provided for them. Oftentimes, [00:55:00] they oftentimes have savings that younger people don't have. They're dealing with kids. They're dealing with lots of different problems. They could get laid off at any moment. Why is it that those people, who I would think would be less concerned that the government actually puts more resources towards to be able to take care of, why is it that they're the ones who are experiencing the most cultural anxiety, rather than the younger people who should be experiencing the most economic insecurity?

**RACHEL NAVARRE:** Well, so we kind of talk about this and it's not so much your actual - you know, if we lay it down and put it on paper - it's not so much the actual insecurity you have. If you've never had anything, you don't have much to lose. It's the perception and it's the mismatch of where you perceive you should be in your expectation of what you should be. Because I mean, yeah, you know, it's not the guy that's contracted to work with the plumbing company, the low level [00:56:00] employee of the plumbing company, that's the Trumper. It's the plumbing company owner who's driving around in, you know, a \$90,000 pickup truck. Because there is more to lose, they're not where they think they should be. And they also kind of perceive more of it as a zero sum, that if someone else gains, I'm losing. So, it kind of evolves into this sort of perception, and how do you feel. And, you know, they do have a lot to lose. You have one bad medical emergency and your nice, comfortable middle class life is gone. You get unemployed for a year, there is no safety net for you. It's either this continues to go and you continue to do good, or you could lose everything. So it's those people that have something to lose and that also perceive that they should be doing better and perceive that someone else maybe is getting ahead of them.

**MATTHEW RHODES-PURDY:** Yeah. I mean, you think about people who retire [00:57:00] in the wake of 2008, I mean, the kind of people we're talking about who are Trump voters, if you're retiring in 2009-2010, you're not having the kind of retirement you thought you were going to. Social Security and Medicare are kind of cold comfort, right? Your 401k has been destroyed. The

fact that the 401k is how you retire these days and not on a fixed pension for a lot of people is indicative of the kind of long term erosion of Social Security that we talk about throughout the book.

You're exposed to the vicissitudes of the market now. You don't have the kind of guaranteed lifestyle into old age and into death. But I think Rachel really hit most of it, which is just, yeah, a lot of Trump voters and a lot of the populace in general, particularly on the right, are comfortable. They have good lifestyle in terms of nice houses and nice cars, but yet, insecurity I think is underappreciated.

You know, there's been a lot of focus on deprivation. Recently, we've been talking a lot about inequality. What we conclude in the book is that really, insecurity is what's driving this. It's people who expected to have [00:58:00] comfortable middle class lifestyles, and expected to be able to provide those for their children, are now feeling like their children are going to be worse off than they are.

## Final comments on preparing for the 2024 election

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with *The Readout* making the connections between the election of a right-wing populists in the Netherlands and the continuing threat of Trump in the U.S. *The Democracy Paradox* looked at the failures of neo-liberalism and the need to re-establish real democracy. *Democracy Now!* discussed the election of a far right libertarian populist in Argentina. *The Democracy Paradox* dove into how unfulfilled right-wing promises help foster the conspiracy mindset. *On the Media* spoke with Jeff Sharlet about the slow civil war. *The Broadcast* warned that democracy in the U.S. appears to be balanced on a knife's edge. And *The Democracy Paradox* looked at how economic policy changes would be beneficial for reducing discontent, but insufficient for fully reversing the levels of [00:59:00] polarization and discontent that already exists. That's what everybody heard, but members also heard bonus clips from *On the Media* discussing how the media misses the importance of what it considers simply far right performative theater. And finally *The Democracy Paradox* got deep into the weeds of how economic procarity feels to different groups of people.

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](https://bestoftheleft.com/support). And during December, we're offering 20% off on

memberships for yourself or as gifts. So definitely take advantage of that while you can. Or you can simply 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.

For more on the international far right and the connection to neoliberal economic policies, I have a couple of our past episodes to suggest: # 1491 is [01:00:00] titled "Mismanaging Capitalism Can Lead To Fascism" and it was published back in May 2022 and focuses on how economic distress can destabilize societies. And #1519 titled "International Fascist Movement On the Move" is from October 2022 and looks at elections in Italy, Sweden, and Brazil, as the far-right was looking to make more gains in those countries. So check those out. Again, those were episodes 1491 and 1519.

Now to wrap up, I'll just leave you with this. As nerve wracking as it is to face another potential Trump election, that is how much energy needs to go into election activism over the coming year: voter registration drives; voter inspiration drives, you know, phone banking, in person canvassing, and the like; support for organizations that fight against voter disenfranchisement through overly strict [01:01:00] voter ID laws; anything that any of us can do to help move the needle in next November's election will be crucial. I've been warning for a little while now that we should all be bracing ourselves for this coming year. Ever since it became clear that the bulk of Trump's trials would be playing out in the middle of the primary elections next year, it was obvious that the next 11 months will be an absolute shit show. But I've also been saying that the best way to manage the anxiety that 2024 will assuredly bring is to take action. There is so much we can't influence and that causes stress. But there are some things that we can influence and stepping up to do our part in support of maintaining at least a somewhat functioning democracy we'll not only be good for the country and the world, but will actually help each of us individually manage the disorienting and, sort of, likely overwhelming upheaval we are [01:02:00] headed for in the next year.

So don't wait until you are potentially frozen with stress and anxiety next year to figure out what you're going to do. Make a plan for your activism now, so that you can look to that plan six months from now when things are looking bad for one reason or another, because they certainly will be. So have your plan ready because hope that others will act in sufficient numbers is not a plan. That is not a winning strategy at all.

So here's just one option: VoteRiders provides voter ID assistance to help every American cast a ballot that counts, which is a caveat that I wish we didn't need, but we do. VoteRiders will help voters identify the documents needed to get an



ID, request and pay for the documents, pay the DMV fees, and even drive voters to the DMV for free. They also help [01:03:00] educate on confusing voter ID laws for each state, including the new ID requirements needed to vote by mail in states like Texas and Florida. So voters can call or text to their helpline at 866-ID-2-VOTE, that's 866-432-8683, or go to [VoteRiders.org/FreeHelp](https://VoteRiders.org/FreeHelp) to check state laws or submit an online form to get assistance. And if you don't need an ID, you can become a volunteer to help make sure that voters know the information they need and get the help they need or donate to support their sadly needed work. It's just one of the many concrete ways that you can help improve access to the ballot box leading up to the 2024 election.

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 to [01:04:00] 202-999-3991, or simply email me to [jat@bestoftheleft.com](mailto:jat@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, 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), now available for 20% off and 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 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 members and donors to the show from [01:05:00] [bestoftheleft.com](https://bestoftheleft.com).