

# #1604 The Border Crisis is Manufactured for Political Opportunity

**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 at why it is evident that the immigration debate is more about acquiring raw power than about immigration, as demands from the Republican party change along with whatever strategies they feel are most likely to get Republicans elected. And in the age of Trump, of course, that means the most draconian, harmful, and ultimately pointless and cruel demands to date. Sources today include *Under the Shadow*, *Democracy Now!*, *The NPR Politics Podcast*, *What Next*, and *The Thom Hartmann Program*, with additional members-only clips from *The Majority Report*.

## The Beginning Monroe and Migration Part 1 - Under the Shadow - Air Date 1-9-24

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** 200 years ago, on December 2nd, 1823, under a dark, moonless sky, then-President James Monroe delivered his State of the Union Address to Congress. In his address, Monroe lays out what would become both one of the most consequential and devastating ideas for Latin America. It would be called the Monroe [00:01:00] Doctrine, an articulation of the United States's sovereign right to bend Latin America to its will. And the US would repeatedly cite it as a perennial warrant to invade foreign countries, overthrow leaders, and police the Americas. At least that's what it became. But that wasn't the idea in the beginning.

**GREG GRANDIN:** Yeah, yeah. I mean, other countries have statements; we have doctrines. You know, that's the thing.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** That's historian Greg Grandin.

**GREG GRANDIN:** I teach history at Yale University. And I'm the author of a number of books, the most recent one being *The End of the Myth*.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** He's also the author of *Empire's Workshop*, which looks at Latin America's role as a testing ground for US imperial strategies.

**GREG GRANDIN:** So basically the language of the Monroe Doctrine, it was scattered throughout this larger, many thousand word speech, and it was very vague on what the intentions were. Basically, summed up, it said that, quote unquote, the free and independent nations of the two American continents were off limits for [00:02:00] future colonization by any European power. And Monroe let it be known that any effort to, quote unquote, extend Europe's system to any portion of the hemisphere would be viewed as the United States as a threat. That's the core of what we think of as the Monroe Doctrine.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** It was actually a pretty simple idea. Europe, stay out of the hemisphere.

Remember, by 1823, most of Spain's former colonies in the Americas had just won their independence.

**GREG GRANDIN:** But at the time, the Monroe Doctrine was celebrated by Latin America, by independence leaders. One, they were happy that the United States seemed to finally come out to Latin America, Spanish American independence. That was a huge thing. There was still a couple of big battles left before Spain finally gave up completely.

But the more important thing is that they [00:03:00] read in the Monroe Doctrine a corollary to their own anti-colonialism. They didn't read it as a doctrine of neo-colonialism. They read it as a doctrine of anti-colonialism, that no part of the Americas is eligible for reconquest. They saw it as analogous to their own anti-colonialism.

So there was a lot of, celebratory messages to Monroe from Latin American leaders, thanking him for, not the doctrine, but for the pronouncement.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** This is important to understand. Remember, at the time, the US was still small. Settlers were paving their way across the country, violently pushing indigenous peoples from their land. But the United States was far from an empire. In fact, like its newly independent Spanish American neighbors, the US had also freed itself from empire and monarchy only 40 years before.

**MARIXA LASSO:** We need to understand that the big division at the time wasn't US/Latin America. It was the [00:04:00] division between republics and monarchies.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** That's Marixa Lasso, she's a Panamanian historian whose research has focused on the Panama Canal and South American liberator Simón Bolívar.

**MARIXA LASSO:** This is what people understood at the time and this is really important, because we take it so much for granted, the idea of being a republic, that we forget how radical it was in the early 19th century, how fragile it felt for protagonists like Simón Bolívar. How new it was. Think about it: Only the US was a republic, and then all of these Spanish American new republics. France was not a republic anymore by then. And then you had also Haiti. So, it was new, it was fragile.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** In 1826, Simón Bolívar convened an international congress in Panama, which at the time was still [00:05:00] part of Colombia. Representatives came from most of the newly independent Spanish nations. One of the items on the agenda was, ironically, the establishment of the Monroe Doctrine as a guiding framework against threats of reconquest from Europe, and in particular, Spain.

For this podcast, I visited the location where the conference was held in Panama City. The convent where it took place is gone, but a large statue of Simón Bolívar stands in its place, in a little square down by the waterfront and across the street from Panama's Ministry of Foreign Relations. Bolívar's dream was to unite the countries in some sort of federation.

It failed for far too many reasons to discuss here.

Just three years later, Bolívar is quoted to have said, The United States appears to be destined by providence to plague America with misery in the name of liberty. Prophetic words.[00:06:00]

The US grew, expanded west, killing and removing indigenous peoples from their lands. The United States invaded Mexico, captured Mexico City, and took more than half of the country's land, what is now today most of the Western United States. It was only the beginning. Greg Grandin.

**GREG GRANDIN:** As time goes on, the Monroe Doctrine becomes more of a doctrine of, as I mentioned, informal empire, mandatory power. And this is

explicit with Theodore Roosevelt and his corollary, which says, Monroe Doctrine basically gives the United States the right to police the hemisphere.

**THEODORE ROOSEVELT:** The great fundamental issue now before our people can be taken free.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** That is the voice of President Theodore [00:07:00] Roosevelt. Unfortunately, there are no recordings of him delivering his 1904 State of the Union address when he made this addendum to the Monroe Doctrine, or what's called the Roosevelt Corollary. The full text, however, is pretty shocking. We asked a voice actor to read an excerpt.

**VOICE ACTOR:** Any country whose people conduct themselves well can count upon our hearty friendship. If a nation shows that it knows how to act with reasonable efficiency and decency in social and political matters, if it keeps order and pays its obligations, it need fear no interference from the United States. Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, [00:08:00] may, in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation. And, in the Western Hemisphere, the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** In other words...

**MARIXA LASSO:** Certain circumstances may force the United States to be exercised upon international police power. No? To protect the world from the general loosening of the ties of civilized society. Those are his words.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** Professor Marixa Lasso says that 1904 speech is a justification in many ways...

**MARIXA LASSO:** of what happened in Panama, [00:09:00] which is that he supported the separation of Panama from Colombia and then taking control of an area of the Isthmus.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** That was just the tip of the iceberg.

# Rep. Greg Casar on GOP's Hard-Line Immigration Demands in Ukraine Funding Request - Democracy Now! - Air Date 12-13-23

**REP. GREG CASAR:** It is a really scary time here on Capitol Hill, where Republicans in the Senate are asking Democrats to cave in and hand them some of the worst changes to our immigration system in decades. Republicans and Democrats alike have both said that they support continued assistance to Ukraine, but the Republicans have held that hostage and have said, "First you've got to throw immigrant families under the bus." And like you've described, this would mean actually closing legal pathways for migration here and accelerating the deportation and separation of immigrant families.

And so, in the mainstream media, this is often being reported as, "Well, are they going to trade border security for Ukraine money?" But this has nothing to do with changing or improving a situation at the border. What the [00:10:00] Republicans are demanding is making it less easy to legally migrate, and therefore fuel more irregular migration. What they're talking about is punishing families that are already in our cities and communities, dismantling the asylum system that we established after the enormous wave we made after World War II, turning refugees away. It is sick.

And so, what we're asking is for the Biden administration to stop encouraging these talks, asking Leader Schumer to just step in and say, "If we want to debate Ukraine, we should debate Ukraine, but we shouldn't start throwing immigrant families under the bus." Next thing, they may ask for an abortion ban nationwide in exchange for something. Are they going to be asking for a ban on gay marriage next time? We just can't have Democrats doing the Republicans' dirty work here.

**JUAN GONZALEZ:** And, Congressman, as we discussed at the briefing yesterday, the United States has spent over \$330 billion the past 20 years on [00:11:00] agencies that do border enforcement, and yet we have record numbers of people attempting to cross the border. What can be done to get Congress to finally address the issue of a much more comprehensive reform of our immigration system?

**REP. GREG CASAR:** We have to actually want to improve the system for folks in the United States and for people migrating here. Unfortunately, the right

wing wants to keep the system as broken as possible so that they can then complain about it. It's the classic case of the arsonist trying to blame the firefighters for the flames.

And so, in this case, Republican policy—and, frankly, even some conservative and neoliberal Democratic policy—has only fueled greater challenges. Those policies are things like sanctions, imposing harsh sanctions in Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, then forcing people who are starving, in part because of our policies, to migrate, and [00:12:00] then complaining about it. Instead, we should make sure that people, if they want to be able to stay at home, stay in their home countries, that they can, and then open up legal pathways for migration. Instead, the Republican proposals we're dealing with, actually what they mostly would help is cartel profits, because what they want to do is close legal pathways for migration, force people that we are helping starve have to move, oftentimes have to pay criminal organizations, and then the Republicans get to complain about it. It is a toxic brew that Democrats shouldn't be playing into.

Instead, we should say, "Let's open up more legal pathways for people to migrate here. Let's open up the ability for folks to ask for parole and get on a plane and apply and come here and get a work permit quickly." That would relieve a lot of what you're seeing on the TV, Fox TV cameras on the border, and actually make things better for people in Latin America and in the United States. But instead, we insist on punishing Latin America, pushing people out of their home countries, and then not opening up legal pathways for them to migrate.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Juan, I [00:13:00] wanted to put this question to you. You and Congressman Greg Casar were part of a panel yesterday called "200 Years Is Enough: Moving Past the Monroe Doctrine Toward a New Era in U.S.-Latin American Relations." Can you put this current push at this moment, because the House speaker says they're going to go home at the end of the week if they don't get their way on border, Biden is desperate to get money for Ukraine, and so we don't know at this point what's going to happen. McConnell says there's no way they can do this before Christmas. But put this in that broader 200-year context. I mean, you wrote that incredible book that's now a textbook in so many college classes, called *Harvest of Empire*. Talk about how this fits in with the Monroe Doctrine and what that was.

**JUAN GONZALEZ:** The Monroe Doctrine for 200 years has been the basic policy that the United States has pursued in the entire Western [00:14:00] Hemisphere, but especially toward Latin America, telling European and other colonial powers, "You stay out of the Western Hemisphere. This is our



backyard,” in essence. And it’s been used repeatedly by U.S. presidents and congresses to invade countries in Latin America, to foment clandestine or covert operations to remove leaders that weren’t sufficiently obedient to the United States. And I think it’s never really been repealed or refuted by U.S. leaders. I mean, there was a small attempt by John Kerry during the Obama administration to claim it was over, but President Trump backtracked on that and went back to the bullying of the United States in Latin America. And I’m wondering, Congressman Casar, your sense of the prospects for being able to have a new [00:15:00] policy for Latin America in the future.

**REP. GREG CASAR:** It’s time for us to leave that 200-year Monroe Doctrine legacy behind us. And I think a small number of progressives who start to open up a window to a new relationship in Latin America are going to carve the path forward here, because instead of spending our limited resources on things you’ve covered, Juan — overthrowing the government in Guatemala in the ’50s, the invasion of Cuba, arming Contra rebels in Nicaragua, currently continuing to starve instead of feed people in places like Cuba and Venezuela — instead of engaging in that, that, honestly, doesn’t help in Latin America and doesn’t help us here, we can create a new partnership.

I was just in Chile for nearly the anniversary of us helping overthrow the Chilean government of Allende back in the day. And part of the reason we did that is because we wanted to protect United States and Chilean elites in the copper industry. That was [00:16:00] disastrous. So many people died. It helped no one. But instead, finally, we could have a conversation about how do we support democracy and support one another in rising authoritarianism; how, as we head towards a renewable and climate more resilient future, they have, instead, the resources for us to create batteries. How do we create those together and make sure working-class people in Chile and the United States benefit, not just big corporations? There is a real ability for us to work with Latin America to tackle the climate crisis, beat back authoritarianism, address migration. That would actually benefit our constituents and our communities. And I think folks would get reelected on that kind of work in Latin America rather than continued invasions.

## **The Migrant Crisis On The Border And The Hill - The NPR Politics Podcast - Air Date 1-11-24**

**ASHLEY LOPEZ:** Migrants are crossing the southwest border in high numbers. In December, border authorities reported 225, 000 encounters with

migrants at the U. S. Mexico border. And House Republicans are blaming the Biden administration for the influx of migrants and targeting Homeland Security [00:17:00] Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas. Wednesday they began the process to impeach the secretary.

Before we get to all that, though, Jasmine, remind us who is crossing the border right now and why is this happening at such high volumes?

**JASMINE GARSD:** Sure. I've been covering immigration for several years and I've never seen anything quite like this at the border. And what I'm talking about is a really diverse group of people over the last two years or. So I've met people from Ukraine, from Russia who are fleeing that conflict, a lot of people, a lot of people from Venezuela who are trying to get away from a very repressive government and poverty. A ton of people from Ecuador who, as we saw in very recent news is being really run over by violent gangs, which leads to the next point, which is, I don't think you can talk about this big influx of migration [00:18:00] without talking about the fact that there was a historic rise in the last Year of displaced people worldwide. That's according to the UN, the White House has also signaled that, and it's really, really tangible when you get to the border, that displacement.

**ASHLEY LOPEZ:** I know this has changed over time, but can you tell us what happens to these migrants now? They actually reached the border.

**JASMINE GARSD:** It really depends on who we're talking about. Really the centerpiece of the Biden administration's immigration policy has been this carrot/stick approach where it encourages people to apply through legal pathways. You also get plenty of people who are coming in through non legal pathways, and I have to say there's a lot of misinformation there.

I think a lot of people are crossing through via organized crime, and they are being told, "if you cross, just turn yourself over to Border Patrol and you'll get [00:19:00] asylum", which isn't how it works. So many people who I've spoken to in the last year, what happens is they either turn themselves in or they get apprehended and they're given an NTA, a notice to appear in court, which is the initiation of a deportation proceeding. And they can apply for asylum, but the asylum application process, it's really, really complicated.

**ASHLEY LOPEZ:** Yeah, and Deidre, the optics of thousands of people amassing at the US border with Mexico obviously is not great for the Biden administration, but optics and policy are two very different things. What is your



sense of the reasoning House Republicans are giving for impeaching Secretary Mayorkas right now?

**DEIDRE WALSH:** I mean, House Republicans or Republicans in general, I think, see this issue of the crisis at the border as a huge political advantage for their party going into the 2024 election. And in terms of Mayorkas, House Republicans are really singling out the Secretary [00:20:00] of Homeland Security as sort of the person responsible for the failures or the overwhelmed system at the border right now.

They say he's ignoring the law, other people say he's not enforcing the law, but they're making him the poster child. And I think part of that is that the border, whether it's in districts or states along the border, or in districts even away from the border, they're feeling the impact that this situation is having, whether it's in terms of migrants being moved into their communities, like places like New York, or the fentanyl crisis that continues to plague this country and have an impact around the country.

And I think the politics, too, are that there seems to be agreement among House Republicans, which aren't always on the same page, about the issue of addressing immigration and impeaching Mayorkas, while there isn't agreement necessarily about impeaching President Biden. [00:21:00] I mean, they are moving on two tracks to do both, but it seems to me right now they have more agreement amongst their members about targeting the Homeland Security Secretary.

## **GOP Bets It All on the Border - What Next - Air Date 11-8-23**

**MARY HARRIS - HOST, WHAT NEXT:** If you are wondering why some Republicans are digging in their heels so hard when it comes to immigration, Mariana Sotomayor says there's a simple reason for that. When Americans get asked who they trust more when it comes to border policy, their answer is Republicans, hands down.

**MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR:** I think when these questions are asked in polling, it is about the border and migrants that are coming in. And there has been a shift in the public about how many people are coming in. There was a record 250,000 migrants that came in through the border in December.

**MARY HARRIS - HOST, WHAT NEXT:** I think you wrote that it was the most recorded ever crossing the border in one month.

**MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR:** Yeah.

**MARY HARRIS - HOST, WHAT NEXT:** Wow.

**MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR:** More people are paying attention. It's been interesting even, I will be honest, during this holiday break, going back home, talking to friends who are not even politically involved, kind of having this [00:22:00] top of mind of, "whoa, did you see this?" Republicans are messaging this as part of broader security. The migrant crisis plays into that fear, and Republicans are obviously using that, and they've been good over the years to use that kind of fear politically to be able to win a number of races.

So, it seems like this issue is more front of mind for the public, and the reason it seems like they're siding with Republicans is because there is this feeling of "well, what is Biden doing about it? What is Biden doing about it?" And that's what I hear from voters too, "Why isn't Biden doing anything?"

Well, here's the thing, Biden can only do so much, any president can only do so much through executive order. Through executive order, you definitely can't just overhaul the immigration system. This fundamentally falls on the shoulders of Congress, and they have been unable, for decades, to be able to figure this out. And again, goodwill exists to do that, but because of the margins, because of how politically toxic this issue has become, [00:23:00] Congress has been unable to deal with it. And if past is precedence, then I don't know if they'll be able to figure it out this time.

And again, it's interesting to me that the public doesn't necessarily realize that, that this is a Congress issue. It is way easier to blame one person.

**MARY HARRIS - HOST, WHAT NEXT:** You're saying Congress is like the hot dog guy meme. Like, "ooh, we're going to look into who did this!"

**MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR:** Yes. Literally, yes. Yes.

**MARY HARRIS - HOST, WHAT NEXT:** Republicans are going to get a chance to focus on immigration in a different way than this bill they're trying to pass when they open up impeachment hearings against the Department of Homeland Security, Alejandro Mayorkas. Can you just tell me what's going to happen with that and how quickly once Congress gets back in session?

**MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR:** It actually could be pretty quickly. Many Republicans have said that impeaching Mayorkas has always been the lowest hanging fruit, because of the border issue and how it animates the base, and Republicans have successfully made [00:24:00] Mayorkas into a boogeyman from I think the moment he was nominated, not even confirmed to be DHS secretary.

And we have seen the patients run out from certain far right members to impeaching him. Marjorie Taylor Greene in particular, last year, tried to force an impeachment vote against Mayorkas, twice. Both times they referred back to the committee, the Homeland Security Committee, who has already been investigating Mayorkas over time, over this past year in particular.

And what the chairman, Mark Greene, has been saying is there's mounting evidence that he has neglected his duty and they're just pointing to the simple fact that, yes, under the Biden administration, there has been a record uptick of border crossings.

**MARY HARRIS - HOST, WHAT NEXT:** What do they want mayorkas to do about it?

**MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR:** Well, what they want is a little bit of what we see in HR 2, that bill that [00:25:00] House Republicans passed. Ideally, if the far right had their way, they want to immediately shut down any border where it could be overwhelmed by migrants. They want to reinstitute a number of Trump policies, like Remain in Mexico. They just want Mayorkas to shut everything down immediately.

**MARY HARRIS - HOST, WHAT NEXT:** But impeachment is mostly about malfeasance, right? Are they accusing Mayorkas of doing something wrong, illegal, something that should get him kicked out?

**MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR:** This is all messaging, and there actually have been some Republican lawmakers who have admitted that this is all about messaging, "it's all about electing Trump."

This again, just animates their base. And here's the thing. If House Republicans hold a vote to impeach Mayorkas, I am not sure at this moment if there are enough votes, by just House Republicans alone, to be able to actually impeach Mayorkas, we will see. And that, in and of itself, it's going to be fascinating, because we have already seen far [00:26:00] right House members go after their colleagues when they voted against things that they thought they should have

voted for, does that amp the pressure against those members to vote for, to impeach Mayorkas just because they don't want any of the political toxicity?

**MARY HARRIS - HOST, WHAT NEXT:** So, you've laid out the case for how Republicans are going to try to make 2024. the year of immigration, if you were a betting woman, what do you think happens now?

**MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR:** You know, it's going to fall on Speaker Johnson. He's obviously new to this job. He was just a member. He was very low ranking in leadership, and to be thrown into such a position, I mean, I do not envy him. Every single decision is going to fall on Johnson's shoulders.

## **The Beginning Monroe and Migration Part 2 - Under the Shadow - Air Date 1-9-24**

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** Maria is Honduran, 33 years old. Intense, dark brown eyes. She wears tiny earrings in the shape of the cross. Her long, curly hair is pulled up over the top of her head. She looks both beautiful and exhausted. Her two young boys scramble over her. [00:27:00] One of them holds a pink plastic toy gun. "My life is in danger," she says. "I've denounced it with the police, but they're waiting to kill me. My children are in danger, and that's why I've left Honduras."

In 2022, she made it all the way to the US border before she was caught by US Border Patrol guards. She was detained for a week. She says they told her they weren't accepting Hondurans, and she was deported back home. There, she collected her kids, and now, she's trying again. "There's no future in Honduras. There are too many gangs, too many crises," she says. "I did what I could to survive there. Some days I ate, some days I didn't. I cried, so did my kids, because I didn't even have the money to buy a small bag of salt. So I'm looking for a better life for my children, and with God's help, I'll make it." Maria says she's waiting to receive her humanitarian visa in Mexico. Once she has her papers, then she and her kids will continue [00:28:00] the long journey north to the US border. There, she says she wants to do everything right to request legal asylum in the United States. But it's all a really slow process. And there's no promise that she'll even get it. "This is really stressful. Sometimes I cry because I don't want to be here in Mexico," she says. "I would love to be on the road, but I can't go without papers, because I know that without papers, they'll just grab me and deport me back to Honduras."

Everyone is desperate and tired of waiting. Tapachula has a way of sucking you in, migrants say. Grinding you down. The wait can be long and tedious. And many just want to make a run for it.

Caravans are leaving once every couple of days, with hundreds of people as they work their way, they leave down the highway and work their way north. And it's the constant stream of these caravans, and the question is how far they'll actually get.

Caravans like this.

The bulk of travelers [00:29:00] on this road today are Venezuelan. But there are people from countries across Latin America and the globe. They're still in Mexico's southern state of Chiapas, but about a day or two hike up the highway from Tapachula. "We've been walking from Colombia." Venezuelan migrant Alexis tells me without breaking pace, walking, asking for rides, praying to God that we arrive alright.

Up the road, 20-something Xon and two friends are ahead of the pack and making good time. "The dream is the US border," he says. "With God's will, for us and those who are behind us."

The phenomenon of the caravans started about five years ago.

**REPORTER:** Through the rain, scorching heat and humidity, thousands of migrants make the perilous journey through southern Mexico, hoping to reach the United States. It's been called the largest Central American migrant caravan in decades. And thousands more [00:30:00] migrants are joining, fleeing dire conditions in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** That was 2018, when migrant caravans traveling through Mexico became headline news and an endless source of political hysteria throughout the US midterm elections.

But those weren't the first caravans, and they certainly weren't the last. We barely hear about them in the media today, but countless caravans of people are still traveling from Tapachula and marching through Mexico.

Professor Adrienne Pine is the author of the 2020 book, *Asylum for Sale: Profit and Protest in the Migration Industry*.

**ADRIENNE PINE:** The vast majority of migration, especially if we're talking about migratory flows north in the Americas toward the United States, is a result of US foreign policy. And [00:31:00] which US foreign policy we're talking about differs depending on the state. But regardless, it's all harmful. It's all displacing people. And it's all rooted in US imperialist capitalism, right? It's US using its military occupation of many countries in Latin America and its military and other war threats.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** As we'll look at in the coming episodes, Central America has been ground zero. Whether it was US support for genocide in Guatemala, or for the authoritarian regimes in El Salvador in the 1980s, or the 2009 Honduran coup.

**ADRIENNE PINE:** Each of these events, some of them short term, some of them long term, were followed by massive waves of people fleeing the violence, the US-led violence in their countries, fleeing and going to the most obvious place, which is the United States, which of course ironically caused that violence in the first [00:32:00] place.

So you have, in some cases this sort of direct US military intervention. Or in other cases you have instances where the United States is very friendly with the government, but that's only because the government is, bowing down to the US's demands.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** Quick refresher course:

**REPORTER:** Angry protestors at the doorsteps of Honduras's Presidential Palace want President Manuel Zelaya back.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** In 2009, the Honduran military removed the country's democratically-elected president Manuel Zelaya from power. The United States adamantly backed the coup. The US-backed coup unleashed a series of repercussions including political repression, spiraling violence, cuts to the social safety net, government corruption, and rising inequality. Honduran migration increased only a few years later.

In the wake of the 2017 elections, repression against protesters was reminiscent of [00:33:00] the crackdown after the coup, fueling a new exodus.

**ARTURO J. VISCARRO:** Hondurans are still usually the number one Central American population that is going through. So apart from the political stuff, there's obviously the violence of the state, the violence of criminal



organizations, in this case the gangs, and, of course, economic violence and, inequality that has been prevalent for a very long time in the region.

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** It was not the first time that US foreign policy or intervention deteriorated the situation inside a country, resulting in increased migration toward the United States. In fact, although this is barely ever talked about, the United States itself is at the root of much of the so-called migration crisis the US has seen in recent decades, and which former President Donald Trump, among many [00:34:00] other prominent public figures, continues to use as political fodder.

**DONALD TRUMP:** They're poisoning the blood of our country. That's what they've done. They're pouring into our country. Nobody's even looking at them. They just come in. The crime is going to be tremendous. The terrorism is going to be -- and we built a tremendous piece of the wall, and then we're going to build more....

**MICHAEL FOX - HOST, UNDER THE SHADOW:** That was him in December 2023.

**ARTURO J. VISCARRO:** Then there's his actually looking at the actual policies, the military intervention, the propping up of dictatorships, the violence people were fleeing. But then there's just the economic policies that have continued to be mostly dictated by the US. Then you have to come to -- you should come to the realization that the US bears a ton of the responsibility for why people leave these countries.

And yet we can't really have an honest conversation about that. Yet [00:35:00] the vulnerable people that are migrating are the ones that are blamed for it. And it's absurd, and it's cruel, and it's lazy.

## **Trump Plans to Declare War on Who - Thom Hartmann Program - Air Date 1-9-24**

**THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM:** So, Donald Trump, he has announced on multiple occasions, various plans when he becomes president again which he's hoping to do. He wants to become dictator for at least one day. He wants to basically make himself president for life. It just goes on and on.

So now he's got this new thing, and Stephen Miller has been talking about this, as has Donald Trump, and it's a law that has been on the books for a long, long time, it's called the Alien Enemies Act, and the Alien Enemies Act is basically a piece of legislation that was designed to target foreign agents, principally spies, within our country during time of war.

This goes back to World War I, World War II. Say, during World War II, if there was a German spy here in the United States, you'd go after him with the Alien Enemies Act. It's substantial. It gives you the ability to arrest people, to deport [00:36:00] people, to put people in prison for long periods of time.

So Donald Trump and Steve Miller say that if this law, which was first passed in 1798, and it says that the president himself can remove any foreign national over the age of 14 from the United States, and by the way, you have to have declared war on a country. We haven't declared war on a country since World War II.

But he says that he's going to identify cartels, gangs, and drug dealers in Latin America and within the United States who have... he's saying we can use this law to attack Mexico because they're so corrupt. And we can use this the law to attack gang members in the United States.

This is the kind of, "I don't care what the law says, I'm a tough guy," stuff, that appeals to authoritarian right wingers. They love this kind of [00:37:00] stuff. And he even said, it's not enough to deport the bosses and the drug dealers. He wants to expel their family members and their associates as well. A future Trump administration could, "suspend the due process that normally applies to a removal proceeding," that's a quote from Steve Miller. He was on a talk radio show back in September and he said this. So that Trump could carry out mass deportations and he could start filling his concentration camps, essentially the same way that Adolf Hitler did in the early 1930s in Germany.

The first camps, I've been to Dachau a couple of times it's near Munich, between Munich and Nuremberg, and I used to live just north of Nuremberg, and Dachau was not built as a death camp. There were literally hundreds, I believe over 400 of these concentration camps built in Germany, and they were called concentration camps because they concentrated people.

In other words, they were points where the criminals in [00:38:00] society were brought. They were basically just, prisons, prison camps. Now, toward the end of the war, they started killing people in those concentration camps, but the death camps, Hitler built all of the death camps outside Germany.

So if they were ever discovered, he could say, Oh, Belsen, Belsen, that's the Dutch. Oh oh, I'm forgetting the name of the city in Poland. But, well, that's, that was Poland. And on and on and on, right? He could just, he could blame other countries. Well, this is what Donald Trump wants to do, not the death camps part, he hasn't come out and said that, but the concentration camps for sure.

He's bragging about it, he wants to put millions of people in concentration camps in America, and just like Hitler, Hitler started out by saying, we're going to put the enemies of the state in there, we're going to put illegal immigrants in there, we're going to, we're going to put communists in there, people who there's a broad consensus are, bad for our country. And then, within a matter of months, journalists started appearing in Dachau, and politicians started appearing in [00:39:00] Dachau, and just that continued for the next seven years, eight years, for the rest of Hitler's rule.

This is what Donald Trump says, out loud, he wants to do here in the United States. So we should take him seriously.

## **Under Attack TX Law Targets Immigrants as Trump Cites Hitler, GOP Pushes for Border Crackdown - Democracy Now! - Air Date 12-20-23**

**AMY GOODMAN:** Senate leaders say President Biden will have to wait until next year to negotiate a deal with Republicans on immigration as part of an emergency funding package for Ukraine and Israel and Taiwan and more. Meanwhile, Donald Trump, the leading Republican candidate in next year's presidential race, doubled down on his hateful comments about immigrants at a campaign event Tuesday in Iowa, when he paraphrased the Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler as he spoke between two Christmas trees.

**DONALD TRUMP:** It's crazy, what's going on. They're ruining our country. And it's true: They're destroying the blood of our country. That's what they're doing. They're destroying our country. They don't like it when I said that. And I never read Mein Kampf.

**AMY GOODMAN:** [00:40:00] Hitler used the phrase "blood poisoning" in Mein Kampf to argue German blood was being, quote, "poisoned" by Jews.

Trump drew outrage for similar comments at a rally Saturday in New Hampshire.

This comes as Texas Governor Greg Abbott, major Trump supporter, approved a sweeping new law, just signed it into law, that allows police to arrest anyone they suspect to have entered the U.S. without authorization.

For more, we're joined by Marisa Limón Garza, executive director of Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, which is part of a lawsuit to stop the new Texas law from going into effect in March. Her op-ed for The Messenger is headlined "The Senate Shouldn't Treat Migrants as Bargaining Chips."

Marisa, welcome back to Democracy Now! Let's start with the law that the governor signed in the last few days. The significance of what this means, and why even local police chiefs are against this in Texas?

**MARISA LIMON GARZA:** So, [00:41:00] Senate Bill 4 here in the state of Texas is part of legislation that the governor has been pushing since the regular session. This was just the end of the fourth special session, specifically to push on school vouchers, public education, as well as on this anti-immigrant, racist policy. This is built off of the knowledge of what happened with Arizona in SB 1070, the "Show Me Your Papers" law there. And it finds — it's a little more slippery. It finds loopholes that are able to make it so that any peace officer anywhere in the state of Texas, not just along the southern border, but anywhere, and loosely defined — if this peace officer has probable cause, they can make the determination that if a person has not crossed into Texas from Mexico at an official U.S. port of entry, they can then be detained, jailed and even deported. Obviously, this is the jurisdiction of the federal government, which is why we're calling on the Department of Justice to immediately get involved. And yes, Las [00:42:00] Americas, along with American Gateways, our partners at the El Paso County and the ACLU, are in litigation against SB4 and its rollout.

**JUAN GONZALEZ:** And, Marisa, you've written that your office had received a staggering number of calls, up to 7,000 a day, from asylum seekers in Ciudad Juárez. How do you see the situation now, especially those Americans who say that the situation at the border is completely out of control?

**MARISA LIMON GARZA:** So, I'd just like to paint a picture. You know, the reality at the southern border is we have been seeing a small piece of what is global migration. So, this phenomenon is 110 million people forcibly displaced across the globe, according to U.N. statistics, for the month of September. And so, this is just one pedazito of that reality.

And it's important also to recognize that the state of Texas is, in fact, you know, [00:43:00] a multiracial democracy. It just happens to be one that is severely oppressed. And this attempt at erasure really makes things a lot more complicated. We have to take that into context, along with the reality that Texas has very lax gun laws, the reality that Texas does not really make it easy for people to vote, does not provide a quality education for the young people of this state. We're focused on banning books. We're focusing on eliminating diversity, equity, inclusion at public universities. So it's basically the silencing and the erasure of a people. And that cannot go uncontested.

And if we, again, zoom out, we know that this global migration — and specifically the people that we're seeing along the U.S.-Mexico border reflect global migration, but it also reflects U.S. involvement around the globe, but particularly in Central and South America. Whether it's destabilization during the Obama administration, whether it's further back, there are U.S. fingerprints [00:44:00] all over the migrants that we see at the southern border.

Our work is to accompany. So we do that as folks reach out to us, whether it's from Tapachula, Querétaro, Mexico City, to Ciudad Juárez. We accompany people across the port, and then we accompany people in the U.S. detention settings, as well as in our community. And we like to do as warm handoffs as possible to folks in the interior. And it's important to recognize that, actually, USCIS is doing a phenomenal job of a new program where they are collocating with us at the southern border in San Diego, El Paso and Brownsville to make sure that people, migrants who use CBP One, the application that this administration has put forward as the tool that should be used, if they come through that app and they come to one of the shelters that's offering the service, they will be able to leave our community with a work authorization. That means that when they get to Chicago, New York, L.A., wherever, they will rely much less on the social safety nets of those communities and will begin [00:45:00] to have a dignified life as they go through their asylum claims.

**JUAN GONZALEZ:** And we have about a minute left. Could you talk about the response of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to the Biden administration basically not even consulting them in terms of its decisions on negotiations for another \$14 billion in border security money that the president is requesting?

**MARISA LIMON GARZA:** Yes. We were all duped. You know, we've been involved in conversations with the Biden administration since they were the transition team. I personally have hosted Secretary Mayorkas in our office. I sat next to the vice president when she was here. Our local bishop welcomed President Biden and spent several minutes with him in private. They know our reality. And they know that these leaders of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus

represent us. And they're not being quiet. They're being quite loud. And the fact that they're not even being given the respect of a seat at the table [00:46:00] is a further slap in the face of everything that we're trying to accomplish.

And the representation that we have, none of the Senate negotiators are people of color. The one senator who is a person from a borderland state is Kyrsten Sinema from Arizona, and she does not live near the border. Our two senators here in Texas, Ted Cruz and Senator Cornyn, do not have offices in El Paso. If you go to their website, it says "contact us. So they have them everywhere else.

And so, it's very clear that we are under attack. It's very clear from the language of the previous president and from our governor, who's interested in being his running mate, that we have targets on our backs. And we in El Paso, along with people in Uvalde and all across the country, know that when you mix that kind of rhetoric with gun laws that we have and policies and laws like SB4, it's very dangerous cocktail.

## **Fox Host Admits GOP Doesn't Give A Sh— About Immigration - The Majority Report - Air Date 1-12-24**

**GREG ABBOTT:** We are using every tool that can be used, from building a border wall to building these border barriers to passing this law that I signed that led to another lawsuit by [00:47:00] the Biden administration where I signed a law making it illegal for somebody to enter Texas from another country. And so, they're subject to arrest, uh, and subject to deportation. And so we are deploying every tool and strategy that we possibly can. The only thing that we're not doing is we're not shooting people who come across the border because of course the Biden administration would charge us with murder.

**EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Oh, of course.

**SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** But you know, if we could get away with it...

**EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** ...we would. They know that Biden's, that the federal government's going to sue them, by the way. Like, they know that the DOJ is going to respond to them kind of superseding federal authority over the border.



**SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Oh, of course.

**EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** This is why... I mean, I really can't stress this enough. The Biden administration is being so short-sighted and stupid about the border by not providing any alternative narrative whatsoever and letting the right determine it. Because Biden, you know, wanted to keep Title [00:48:00] 42. I mean, he's giving all... he is acting quite conservatively, quite right wing, on the border. It doesn't matter. Like, they're still going to be provocative in Texas. They're still going to challenge him. And then when the Biden administration is like, Okay, you're breaking, kind of, federal law here, this is our jurisdiction, and they sue them or they go after them, that'll be an opportunity for Abbott and *Fox News* to say, Well, look at that, he's soft on the border. It doesn't matter what he does.

**SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Well, of course.

**EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** It does not matter what he does. He is soft on the border which, maybe, a smart move would be, what does it mean to be a border hawk and what has that led to? Can the Democrats provide any kind of narrative for that? Can they provide, like... even in the Obama administration, we're talking about dreamers, we're talking about a pathway to citizenship. Has Biden addressed this whatsoever, instead of just freaking out and acting more right wing because he thinks that'll appease people? It won't. It won't.

**SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Uh, [00:49:00] the point is you need to sort of build a long term sort of like, a set of policies that you can articulate to the American public. And it feels like Democratic administrations are just like, We're not in the business of doing that. And it ends up coming back to bite them in the ass.

**EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Yep.

**SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Obama famously said in 2010, like, It's not my job to teach the American public about deficits or fight, you know, the ideas of austerity and this and that. And, um, had he done so, and we know this, like, you know...

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** I was shocked.

**SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Had he done so, there's a very good chance that maybe he could have salvaged, uh, more of his

administration's ability to get stuff done on behalf of like the broader Democratic party. Uh, because now we're in an era of anti-austerity. So, it was certainly doable. Uh, it's just that he didn't push it at that time.

Laura [00:50:00] Ingram just the other day was like, we should saying [sic] about Republicans. In fact, here's the clip, Matt. Laura Ingram was saying the other day, um, let's not make any deal with Biden on the border stuff because we don't want to give them the win.

**EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Yeah.

**SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** \They don't really care about the policies. It's just as a wedge issue is that they see the value in it. And if you're getting played like that, you need to go on the offensive. You cannot attempt to just run into the arms of the people who are criticizing you. And here's Laura Ingraham talking about that. This is in the context of the government funding deals.

**LAURA INGRAHAM:** Any border deal that has the support of McConnell and Schumer will be rejected by the Republican voters, period. Where were any of them, by the way, any of these top officials three years ago when the migrants were lining up at the border to rush in right before Biden was [00:51:00] inaugurated? Where was Mitch McConnell, and any, frankly, in the Senate leadership, when the Biden administration was making a laughingstock out of all of us on the issue of the border? So, anything drafted by some Chamber of Commerce flunky on immigration is meaningless. Mayorkas will simply take the money and use it to settle migrants in the United States more quickly, more efficiently. Isn't that great? So, Republicans should get out of these ridiculous negotiations. We invited Senator Lankford onto the show tonight. He's reportedly leading these talks, but he could not join us. He did say, though, that once the full text is out, he's going to come here and answer all of our questions. I look forward to that interview. Look, this is nothing personal toward him, or frankly, anyone. This is an issue of our country and its preservation. But we strongly recommend that Lankford refuse to be the face of this. Ask Marco Rubio how that worked out for him. What was that, back in [00:52:00] 2013? Imagine this audience, the audience reaction in a town hall in Oklahoma City. Remember, Lankford's a senator from Oklahoma. Let's say he convenes a town hall in Oklahoma City to sell a border deal that would have to be enforced by Secretary Mayorkas. What do you think the reaction of that crowd would be in Oklahoma? We all know what it would be. It would be boo's. They would say, no way, no how, don't do it. So, this is a hot potato that McConnell has tossed to Lankford and that he should toss it right back. Let McConnell negotiate it. Think of it this way. Why on earth, after the Democrats did everything in their

power to flood America with millions of indigents from across the globe, would Republicans ever give Biden an opportunity to take a victory lap, and then pretend that he's done anything to solve this problem? And by the way, if House Republicans do the smart thing and say no to this raw deal - speaker shouldn't even consider it, should say out of hand he's rejecting it - the Biden campaign is going to [00:53:00] hit the airwaves with the message, they've probably already made the commercials, See? The border's their fault. Bottom line, you can't make a deal with someone who has no intention of fulfilling the terms of the deal. I told you that at the end of 2023 that we're winning. And these two Biden moves, they're covering for an incompetent and insubordinate cabinet official and they're conniving to pin the blame on conservatives for their border. These are desperate measures for desperate people. And that's the angle.

**SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Alright, that's it. So, uh, I mean, it gives away the game. Laura Ingraham, incidentally, was key when George W. Bush was trying to do immigration. And she was one of the key, sort of like, right wing radio hosts. Who, um, she's quite good at drumming up racial resentment. Funny that. Really well done.

**EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Good job, Biden.

**SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Well-practiced in that.

## **AOC Dismantles GOP Immigration Lies - The Majority Report - Air Date 9-25-23**

**EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Alexandria Ocasio Cortez went on CBS, their [00:54:00] Sunday political show with Margaret Brennan, I think it's *Face the Nation* is what it's called, and they were speaking about immigration policy at the southern border. AOC brings up the sanctions against Venezuela and sanctions in general and what those kinds of economic chokeholds do to countries and to populations in those countries who then become desperate and seek to live elsewhere so they can provide for their family. I think this is incredibly important to counter program the national discourse around immigration, which is just the borders of mass, we've got to get more militant and frankly...

**MATT LECH - PRODUCER, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** All these people want to come here just because of all the great stuff going on in America.

**EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Because of the freedom!

**MATT LECH - PRODUCER, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Not because we've been like, yeah, sanctioning their country trying to do regime change.

**EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Yeah, because our streets are paved with gold and whatnot. It relies on like this adherence to American mythology that the rest of the world just doesn't share. But regardless, like the Biden [00:55:00] administration and Democrats in general should take a page out of her book here, because there needs to be a counter narrative, as I say, to the incredibly right wing framing around militants at the border, and I think she did a good job here doing so.

**REP. ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ:** I definitely think that we need to have comprehensive immigration reform so that we aren't constantly doing this patchwork policy extensions, that has not happened for decades. But additionally, I think we also need to examine the root of this problem because if we are constantly engaging in foreign policy that drives people to our southern border, in this specific instance, U. S. sanctions that were originally authored by Marco Rubio began and precipitated, certainly took a large part in the driving of populations to our southern border. Shortly after those sanctions, those broad based sanctions...

**MARGARET BRENNAN - HOST, FACE THE NATION:** You're talking about Venezuela.

**REP. ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ:** Yes, shortly after those broad-based sanctions were enacted, we [00:56:00] started seeing dramatic increases in these populations that were coming to our southern border. And so we have to address the root of these population movements and the migration crisis. And we also have to address the domestic US policy issues when it comes to immigration reform.

**MARGARET BRENNAN - HOST, FACE THE NATION:** But you know, the Maduro government has also been responsible for large parts of that.

**REP. ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ:** Absolutely.

**MARGARET BRENNAN - HOST, FACE THE NATION:** Are you saying that you want to, you want the Biden administration to pull back pressure on him?

**REP. ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ:** I think we need to re examine the nature of these sanctions. There are sanctions that are very specific. For example, the Magnitsky Act sanctions that do actually focus on the decision makers and people who may be violating norms, practices, civil rights. But broad-based sanctions that punish the overall economy and harm everyday working people, that are driving them into the economic and political destitution, that force millions of people both, not just to the United States, but even to our regional partners...

**EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** [00:57:00] Yeah, um, that was an odd cut there, but that is, I thought, a very well-stated case for ending what she defines as broad-based sanctions there. Look, like, she is speaking to a broader audience than we would be on this program. So, she's going to give more deference to, you know, Margaret Brennan's needless interjection about Maduro there and things like that. But the reality is, is that Venezuela's economic contraction as a result of the United States sanctions is completely something that you can draw a line to in terms of the influx of migrants from Venezuela. Like, oil is a huge part of the Venezuelan economy, a massive part. And the sanctions that the United States has been engaged in, really since the Bush administration, and then they got ramped up and put on steroids under Trump, have resulted in deep economic desperation in Venezuela, forcing people to go elsewhere. And this was all a part, really, like... we pretend as if [00:58:00] this is a way to help the Venezuelan people long term, when in reality what it is, is a way to make the conditions in a nation so difficult that they turn on the leader that we, as the United States, don't like. First, it was Chavez, and now it's Maduro. And we propped up Juan Guaido, who claimed to be the leader of the country falsely, for years. And both parties were a part of that. And it hasn't worked and in fact it has, like, actually spilled over to the United States and then all the Republicans want to do is triple down and be even more cruel to the people that we starved.

## **Final comments on the naked power grab behind the immigration debate and Trump's long-held fascination with Hitler**

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today starting with *Under the Shadow*, explaining the history of the Monroe doctrine. *Democracy Now!* looked at the GOP's attempt to tie Ukraine aid to horrific immigration reform. *The NPR Politics Podcast* looked at the larger systemic forces [00:59:00] driving global immigration. *What Next* highlighted the political motivation for the GOP to focus on immigration. *Under the*

*Shadow* looked at personal accounts and US policy to understand the driving forces of immigration. Thom Hartmann called out the fascist parallels of what Trump is openly calling for. And *Democracy Now!* zeroed in on the debate in Texas.

That's what everybody heard, but members also heard bonus clips from *The Majority Report*, the first reacting to a Fox news host giving the conservative game away, and the second from *The Majority Report* highlighting AOC dismantling some GOP lies on immigration.

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) or shoot me an email requesting a financial hardship membership, because we don't let a lack of funds stand in the way of hearing more information.

Now to wrap up.

I just want to share a couple more things. The first is one more [01:00:00] piece of evidence, in case it wasn't already obvious enough, that the immigration debate isn't really about immigration. This got some coverage - I mean, obviously, I heard about it, but I'm not sure how much - and it feels like the sort of thing that should be turned into campaign commercials taking the GOP to task for abdicating their responsibility to actually govern rather than just vying for power. *The New Republic* wrote about this under the headline "House Republican admits hill kill border deal if it helps Biden". And this is just from early January. "Texas Representative Troy Nehls showed his true colors on Wednesday refusing to back any sort of border deal because he claimed it could help President Joe Biden's slumping poll numbers". Quoting Nehls, " 'Let me tell you, I'm not willing to do too damn much right now to help a Democrat and to help Joe Biden's approval rating. I will not help the Democrats try to improve this man's dismal approval rating. I'm not going to do it. Why would I?'"

[01:01:00] And to be clear, he's arguing that the House already passed a border policy bill and is complaining that the Senate hasn't taken it up. Of course, it's monstrous and stupid policy and the Senate is run by Democrats, so they're not going to just go with that terrible policy, nor would Biden sign it. So, the Senate tried to do what the Senate does and what, you know, government is generally supposed to do and tried to do some negotiating and pass something that no one would be happy with, you know, classic democracy. And that quote was the MAGA Republican's response. Not, It's not good enough, but, Not if it would help Biden while we're trying to win elections. Just a hundred percent gross and



a total abdication of what it should be to be an elected official who is there to pass legislation.

The second thing today is something that you may also have come across. It's related to Trump's long held tendency to [01:02:00] be, you know, at the very least, fascism curious. But as an introduction, Seth Meyers on *Late Night* did a pretty good roundup.

**SETH MEYERS - HOST, LATE NIGHT:** In a 1990 interview with *Playboy*, he praised China's brutal massacre of pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square.

**CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:** Trump himself, very, very early on, way before he was a political, you know, figment of anybody's imagination, said to *Playboy* magazine, "When the students poured into Tiananmen Square, the Chinese government almost blew it. Then they were vicious, they were horrible, but they put it down with strength. That shows you the power of strength. Our country is right now perceived as weak".

**SETH MEYERS - HOST, LATE NIGHT:** So that was back in 1990. Donald Trump has changed his opinions on almost everything since then. He used to be pro-choice, now he's anti abortion. He used to be for gun control, now he's against it. But the one thing he's been consistent on his entire life is his support for dictators. Trump has been very clear that in the second term, he will aspire to be a dictator by using the language of dictators. His recent [01:03:00] embrace of fascist rhetoric has drawn comparisons to dictators like Adolf Hitler, who used the same language, which prompted Trump to defend himself this week in a way that only raised more questions.

**DONALD TRUMP:** It's crazy what's going on. They're ruining our country, and it's true. They're destroying the blood of our country. That's what they're doing. They're destroying our country. They don't like it when I said that. And I never read *Mein Kampf*.

**SETH MEYERS - HOST, LATE NIGHT:** Still, pulled that title up pretty quick, didn't he?

**JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** And we also play back clip today of Trump emphasizing that he'd never read *Mein Kampf*. But when I first heard him say that it reminded me of this long past factoid about him, that I learned I don't know how long ago. Probably around the birtherism days, but, you know, I can't be sure. And the factoid is that his first wife had claimed

again, coincidentally, in a 1990 interview, I guess that was a big year for him, that Trump had kept a book of Hitler's collected speeches in a cabinet by his bed. [01:04:00] Not *Mein Kampf*. But his collected speeches. And I thought that this was, you know, nearly lost to history and that I was going to have to bring it up as a reminder. But when I did a quick search today to find that original article, how surprised was I to see that several articles from mid-December, just a month ago, we're saying that this story had resurfaced, that this old interview had resurfaced. So, as I said, maybe it's made the rounds again and you've heard this but better to repeat it too often than not often enough, I say. So, again, he denied reading *Mein Kampf*, but what is probably more accurate and actually, like, fits better with the now history that we know came after this 1990 interview, it actually makes perfect sense.

This is from the original interview . "Ivana Trump told her lawyer, Michael Kennedy, that from time to time, her husband reads a book of Hitler's collected speeches, *My New Order*, which he keeps in a cabinet by his bed. Hitler's speeches, from his earliest days up [01:05:00] through the phony war of 1939, reveal his extraordinary ability as a master propagandist". And I'm actually reading from a *Business Insider* article, so it explains that when Brenner, that's the original *Vanity Fair* writer, when Brenner asked Trump about how he came to possess Hitler's speeches, Trump hesitated and then said, "Who told you that?" Brenner reportedly replied, "I don't remember". Trump then recalled, "Actually, it was my friend, Marty Davis, from Paramount, who gave me a copy of *Mein Kampf*, and he's a Jew." Continuing this *Business Insider* article, Brenner added that Davis did acknowledge that he gave Trump a book about Hitler, but quoting Marty Davis, "But it was *My New Order*, Hitler's speeches, not *Mein Kampf*", Davis reportedly said. "I thought he would find it interesting. I am [01:06:00] his friend. But I'm not Jewish".

So, obviously, the key takeaway here is to be horrified, like probably not surprised, but still horrified that someone who's been praising dictators since at least Bill Clinton's first election year could himself become president at least once and, you know, stands a chance of doing it again, even after fully taking the mask off. But the second takeaway is that the weakness of his defense at the time is pretty funny. First, there's the classic 'who told you that?' defense, followed by, 'it wasn't me, it was my friend'. Topped off with the apparently incorrect assertion that his friend is Jewish. So his defense is basically, 'it's not like I took the initiative to be interested enough in Hitler to get his book. It's just that a friend of mine who knows me well and thoughtfully picked out a [01:07:00] gift for me after coming across Hitler's book and thinking, You know who'd really like this I think? Donald Trump. And, you know, as the old saying goes, I'm sure in many variations, when the character of a man is not clear to you, look to his friends.

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 a voicemail or send us a text at 202-999-3991 or simply email me to [jay@bestoftheleft.com](mailto:jay@bestoftheleft.com). Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to our Transcriptionist Trio, Ken, Brian, and Ben, 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 the bonus show co-hosting. And thanks to those who already support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships. [01:08:00] You can join them by signing up today at [bestoftheleft.com/support](https://bestoftheleft.com/support), through our Patreon page, or from right inside the Apple podcast app. Membership is how you get instant access to our incredibly good and often funny bonus episodes, in addition to there being extra content, no ads, and chapter markers in all of our regular episodes, all through your regular podcast player. You'll find that link in the show notes, along with a link to join our Discord community, where you can continue the discussion.

So, coming to 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).