

The following is a full transcript of Episode 12 of the 2020 season of the Praxis Radio podcast. You can download it as a pdf [here](#) and listen/subscribe [here](#).

## **Praxis Radio 2020 Podcast**

### **Episode 12: Season Finale Mega-Mix**

*<orchestral music intro, "Praxis Theme" by Jason Cross continues to play under narration>*

**Taylor, the host of the show:** "Welcome listeners to the final installment of this 2020 season of Praxis. If you've listened this far, you know the deal-- this season has been a revisitation of a radio road trip I took in the summer of 2015 meeting activists, organizers, artists and friends all across the US and Canada. If this is your first episode, that's fine too, but I recommend listening back through the earlier episodes or the trailer to get a full feel for the show. You can find all of that anywhere you listen to podcasts at [praxisradio.com/subscribe](http://praxisradio.com/subscribe).

Today's show will be a little different because I'm attempting to catch the pieces that were unable to fit elsewhere, share some stories from folks who couldn't be interviewed a second time this summer, include some teaser content for the archive that's being amended to include all the full length interviews, and pay tribute to a guest on the show who's no longer with us. Before we get to the new, I want to just recap where we've been over these past few months, paying short homage to the generous folks who shared their time and wisdom with me and boiling down what I learned in each conversation.

*<music fades out>*

We started in Portland with Paul who taught us ways to popularize anarchism and anti fascism while your city is under siege, went to Colorado where Jim taught us how to keep people's history alive, bring it to life for the first time, and take down monuments to oppressive systems and figures. In that same episode Elka at Bread and Puppet in Vermont shared lessons on how to use old skills and simple tools to stoke radical imagination for 50 years. Chas in South Dakota taught us by example how to radicalize self care practice by knowing when to take a step back and care for your direct community and offered guidance on how to decolonize our movements. In Detroit, Peter taught us how to stay radical as you grow up-- as seen in 55 years of anarchist publishing at Fifth Estate. In that same episode, Sandy in Montreal taught us how to use books and theater to spread anarchist ideas and root radical praxis. In New York City, Rachel raised questions on how to leverage the crucial power of artists' way of seeing the world in mass movements.

The next four guests all had their roots in one rally, at least in relationship to meeting me, in Richmond, California. There was Ratha, who taught us how to build and maintain powerful coalitions across differences that can fight the intersecting factors behind

climate chaos for the long haul. And Ethan, who taught us how to sustain ourselves through long term organizing work and learn to step back and support local and most impacted leaders. Reverend Earl taught us how to use the power of storytelling to power ecological justice with honesty and without "hope-ium". He introduced me to Kim, who spoke to me from Atlanta, teaching how to bridge the gap between the white supremacist legacy of the environmental movement and the reality of Black leadership on environmental justice work as we build power. Andy at Project Censored taught us how to be media critical, spot bullshit, and to question the benevolence of our tech overlords. Paul sent me to kai in New Orleans, who taught us how to bring militant whimsy, joy, jokes, and radical jazz-infused vision to our abolition practice. Feral in Montreal showed us how to learn from the history of movements, see patterns, and remember to question everything in our dystopian world.

And in the last full episode, Jennifer and Arnie in Denver shared what they know about learning how to listen, step up, and physically protect those most vulnerable under Empire while Arturo, from his life in sanctuary in a Denver church back in 2015, taught us how to have the courage to be publicly vulnerable and bring injustice to light. I'm so honored to have been able to spend time with all of these amazing people, both five years ago and then again in my series of pandemic long distance phone interviews. Both the radio iteration of this show in the past and this podcast project now have consistently challenged me to be more critical of my own praxis, and question my assumptions about how social change ought to look.

One person really reminded me of that need for flexibility and our beliefs as we work towards social change in whatever form we desire. I was sad to discover through a mutual friend when his email bounced during my round of reaching out this summer that he had died in 2018. His name was Richard Stone. The Fresno paper Community Alliance describes him as a beloved member of the progressive community. And I'd like to share the bulk of our conversation from summer 2015 when we sat in his living room and talked broadly about it all. I have been lucky in my life to have many wonderful elders who help impart wisdom and ground the impatience of youth in the vision of the long game. Richard didn't describe himself as an organizer, and in revisiting this conversation at the start of a new year, setting new intentions for myself, I really loved thinking and hearing about his thoughts on a more yogic approach to changing ourselves and then maybe the world.

*<radio static bursts>*

Here's the interview with Richard. Rest in power and peace."

*<radio static bursts>*

**Richard Stone (RS):** "Okay, my name is Richard Stone. I've lived in Fresno since 1978. I'm actually a native New Yorker, born in the Bronx. But we, my partner and I came out here in 78, with no intention to stay. And here we are 30-odd years later. During this time, I've been involved with several different kinds of endeavors. Earliest

ones was there was a newly forming gay activist community. And I got involved with that working on the newspaper and we started a helpline and a community center, which didn't last in perpetuity, but long enough to get some things established. And, and now there's a pretty thriving gay community.

And then about 20 years ago, through almost accidental circumstances, I became involved with the Fresno Center for Nonviolence. And as much through that involvement as through my own initiative, actually began to look at what was involved with the causes of violence in our world, and how to alleviate them with the understanding that you can't use violent means to end violence. What you're left with is hard work, and slow going. But I've I've been working with the Center for over 20 years now. And also with a wonderful community newspaper, the *Community Alliance*, which has I think it's over 10 years now. It's a monthly newspaper, which has, I call it all the news that's not in the *Fresno Daily*. And I've just been learning about the people who are involved in similar kinds of activities. And here to answer any of your questions.

**Taylor Roseweeds (TRW):** “What—what kept you in Fresno against your expectations all those years ago?”

**RS:** Partly, there was just no specific place that we wanted to go to. And the connections that I fell into were very growth producing and, and it's an easy place to live, except for the climate. Which is pretty awful. You can buy a house cheaply, easy to get around in, everything is 10 or 15 minutes away. So it's been an easy place to live in that respect. But I think mostly just the fact that I became connected in ways that challenged me and I'm not a competitive person at all, and we lived in the Bay Area for a while. And I felt very overwhelmed there-- there were so many people doing things, who seemed they could do better than I could-- and, and here anything I wanted to try, people were open to it, because there was no one else doing it. So it's provided opportunities for me that I would not have found in a larger place.

**TRW:** And you just showed me this book of profiles that you've done over the years writing for *Community Alliance*, of progressive activists in Fresno, and it's not an overwhelmingly progressive city...

<laughter>

**TRW:** ...so these people are very important, proportionately, to the population. It's called *Hidden in Plain Sight*. What commonalities did you find in those profiles between people who kind of end up in that role in society?

**RS:** Well, I mean, there are some very young people there who may or may not continue. And there are people who have been doing the work for 50 years. I think the commonality is, is a feeling that--of frustration of the way politics and economics are done in this country and in this place. And again, the same thing that I experienced. So 'here's an opportunity, there's actually an opportunity for me to do something!' and it feels so good to be able to do that and, and feel part of something, part of a movement.

And there are a lot of people trying to do that in various ways, and there's no one way to do it. But there are a lot of people who are trying to do it.

**TRW:** What do you think-- I mean, obviously, there's so much to work on right now because the world is shot to hell in many different ways at the moment because of the violence you were mentioning earlier, kind of across the board--but where are you seeing people focus their efforts? And where do you think people should most focus their efforts right now?

**RS:** Well, I don't think there's a should....

**TRW:** OK

**RS:**...I think, I think people need to find where... what draws their passion, where they feel most connected. And also, it's also a matter of fact of who you connect with, who are the people who encourage you and back you up, and that you work well with? No way to know in advance. *<laughs>* And in some ways, I'm a pessimist. I think in some ways that we're past the tipping point. That civilization as we know it is unsustainable, and will not be sustained. I don't know when-- it's 30 years, 50 years, 100 years. What I've come to... I don't know, whether it's kind of a vision, or a hope, or an intuition or whatever, is that, that there really is an intelligence operating in the universe, not necessarily in control. *<laughs>* But there. That we can align ourselves with it and we can be... contribute to the work of creating order and of creating kinship and, and the kind of unity that's needed, no matter what happens to our civilization. I mean, that seems to be the only life worth living and I don't know how else to do it.

**TRW:** Sure. And how does that maybe tie in to work with the Center for Nonviolence? And how... what role does nonviolence play in in kind of actualizing that vision?

**RS:** Well, early on in our time together there, we put together what we call a peace agenda, which has four basic tenets to it, which I probably can't repeat offhand. But that's really been a guide for me: the understanding of non violence and what that means. I don't... I don't think it's possible to have that as an absolute, but as a direction. To say, 'how can we bring more non violence into the world? How can we live less violently,?' That can be a constant aspiration. And for me, that's the underpinning of pretty much everything that I do. You know, am I working in that direction or not? Other than that, you know, where, where I connect myself just, it's not so much by design or by willpower, or by intention, things kind of happen.

*<laughter>*

**RS:** I got involved with the, with the Center, purely accidentally. I had visited a friend in Berkeley, and he took me to see a one woman play by a Palestinian woman. And I enjoyed it very much and afterwards asked her whether she might be willing to come to Fresno. And she said for a couple hundred dollars and whatever, I'd be glad to do that. I said, 'oh, that sounds doable'. So I came back and wanted to do that, intended to do

that, but had no idea how to go about it. I mean, I knew how I... how I could bring her, but I didn't know... I needed some way of getting the word out that she was coming. I had no thoughts of how to do this. A colleague at work said, 'oh, you should try this new Center that just opened'. So I went down there to their meeting and presented this and said I'd like to do it and up front the money, but I need help with the publicity and getting a place. And they said 'oh, yeah, we'd be glad to do that'. So we did that. And it wasn't a money making enterprise, but it was a good experience, people enjoyed it. And a week later, I got a call and said, 'Would you like to be our program director?'

<laughter>

**RS:** If there had been a job description out, I would never have answered that. It that's not how I saw myself at all.

**TRW:** Yeah

**RS:** But the opportunity was there and I thought it through, etc., I had some conditions and they agreed to them. And so we did it and I got started there. Same thing with the-- the *[Community] Alliance*, I would never have thought of myself, I've submitted articles to them, but they invited me to come on to the editorial board. I'd have never. And then once I was there, like, the idea of doing these weekly... this monthly profiles came and they said, 'Oh, that's a good idea'. So I started doing them. It wasn't something I intended to do.

**TRW:** Yeah, that tends to be a good sign though, I think. When people who are out seeking...

**RS:** And right now one of the most meaningful pieces of work that I'm doing-- I'm in semi retirement now, doing a lot less than before--but one of my colleagues at the Center has been involved with prison work for 30 years. And she again provided the opportunity for me to work with her. We go out to one of the local state prisons every week. And we run a group there--it's a curriculum, it's about a four month curriculum, called Houses of Healing. And the guys who come in commit themselves very deeply to changing their lives, understanding how they got there, what's their responsibility, what happened in their lives that led them that way, what they can do differently, how they have to reconceive and restructure their lives. And it's a wonderful, wonderful program. It's something I feel privileged to be part of and again, if someone had said, 'Would you like to engage in prison work?' it wouldn't have occurred to me.

**TRW:** So it's all kind of fallen into place over the years? What do you think makes that happen?

<laughter>

**TRW:** I mean, well, I'm just curious, I have people ask me all the time how, you know, I want to do something, but I don't know what to do.

**RS** :What— what I've concluded is, I rarely make decisions. I do...one of the characters in the book there is a guy named George Ballas, who I worked with for several years. And he he did what he called counseling. Not like a mental health counselor, but c-o-u-n-c-i-l, council. And what it means is that people who are involved, or sometimes your own inner voices that are involved, you let them each speak, and they talk to each other. If you're doing it with several people, you can do it in a circle, and just let the...with a talking stick and let the stick circulate and people listen to each other. And eventually, something happens where people see a way to deal with it that's taken everyone's concerns into account. And I say I do that internally, too. When I'm confronted with a decision, or how to do something I...my most frequent phrase is 'I don't know'.

I had an interesting experience with that, too. Many years ago, I was just in a... a life situation where I would just say, 'I don't know, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know'. And gradually that changed and morphed and became 'Adonai', which is Hebrew for 'my Lord', which is a prayer. 'I don't know...give me guidance, I don't know.' And I think, I mean, it doesn't always happen in the timing that you want, or... I think if you remain open and don't try and impose your will on the world, something happens. I don't... I don't know what. I'm not a... like a mystic or someone who, who thinks that you know there's someone watching over you who will make good things happen. Maybe there is, I don't know? I don't know.

*<laughter>*

But I've had over and over again, where just something opens. And that gives me a direction for the next year, five years, 10 years whenever. I had an experience, I was in the Peace Corps in Ethiopia when I was a very, very young man. And had an occasion to go back about seven years ago, a friend who was--I met in Fresno and now lives in the East Coast, Ethiopian friend--and he was going back and invited me to go with him. [He] said, 'you need to go back and see what's going on now'. So I went and something happened. I had an anxiety attack. I-- the altitude, it's up to about 7000 feet, the altitude affected me very strongly. And I was completely incapacitated. I just could hardly move.

And my friend said, 'well, you need to come out with me. Come to... I'm going to meet some friends and have tea'. So I went with them and there was this one man, he had something in his voice calmed me and it just, like, penetrated me and calmed me down. And...at one point he asked me, 'what are you doing here?' and I explained a little bit. I said, 'and I was here forty years ago. My second year-- first year I was in the capital-- but the second year I went out to a tiny town in...in Welega, you...you might not even know it, Dembi Dolo'. He looked at me and said, 'that's where I'm from'. And he wound up inviting me to stay with him in his apartment. We had very, very profound encounters and conversations. And it was like, something that had happened 40 years ago, this out of time in a continuum, that was out of chronological time and it just tapped back into it. You know, I can... I can make up stories about this, but I don't, I don't know whether they're real or whether they're stories.

**TRW:** Sure

**RS:** But that's what it seemed like, to me. And I feel like there's-- there is this, somehow the stream of something that we're not very aware of, or occasionally aware of, but that, that we're part of it and if we allow it to...to lead us, good things happen.

**TRW:** Yeah. How do you think on a, on a societal level, we can allow for that space? Like, what-- what do you think are the conditions that create possibilities for that kind of openness and connection?

**RS:** I think for the most part, it happens on the personal level-- on the individual and personal level. But there are certainly ways all of our institutions are bound or confined, confining. I have a book I called *Beyond*. <laughs> Which is looking at several... like education and health and religion and sexuality, and saying, how do you... open up our conceptions of what's possible in these areas? And in every area there, there are ways to do that, to move beyond what we think education means or beyond what we think healthcare means, or religion. How to get people to do that and to aspire for it? That's what my work has been looking-- looking, how...how do we do this?

That's what the Center for Nonviolence is about. How do we create opportunities for people to open up their minds beyond what they know, or think they know, it's not something... I've been told by wise people that that's not something that you can make happen, all you can do is work towards it. And when it happens, it happens and your work has been valuable, but you don't make it happen. I work with yoga too, I'm a yoga instructor. And that's one of the principles there you know, you can do the work, you can prepare yourself for something to happen, you can prepare for meditation, for opening yourself, but you're not in control over whether it happens or not. And it typically doesn't happen unless you do the work.

**TRW:** Hmm. I tend to have, you know, in less time, but had some pretty... had some experiences that would affirm that. And it seems on the surface, kind of counter to the whole idea of, of activism, right? And of organizing, which is kind of all about making things happen, at least on the surface. What-- what's your take on that? I mean...

**RS:** Some of my best friends are organizers.

<laughter>

**TRW:** Yeah, sure.

**RS:** And I support their work. It's not where I live, but some people are born to do that. They... that's, that's their medium. They have the strength and the the daring and the whatever, to go out there and confront and challenge people and I support their work. When I can, I go out there and join them. I don't have a constitution to do that. <laughs> You have to find another way.

**TRW:** I don't know whether I do either...we'll find out. But the storytelling aspect, I mean, in terms of whether it's through *Community Alliance*, whether it's their other mediums, I think is absolutely a huge part of it.

**RS:** Absolutely. Everything you know, like the yoga, too, I mean people come to yoga because they want to relax, but they're... once they start doing it, there's so much more to it. They might not even be aware that there's more to it, but there is. You're learning how to live in your body in a non willful way, where you're not forcing yourself into achievement. Some yoga, like at gyms is taught that way that you're...but that's not what real yoga's about. Real yoga is about yoking the mind and the body. And for people to learn how to live that way. It's very different than straight ahead. 'I'm going to achieve what I'm going to achieve'. But there's just all kinds of ways to do it. And you're sitting here, how did you get here? Because I knew Hollis 30 years ago.

**TRW:** Yeah, sure. Exactly.

**RS:** Because we were...

**TRW:** Hi Hollis!

**RS:**...together at the Center.

**TRW:** Yeah, it's true. Yeah. It is.

**RS:** There is another one of these wonderful, say, 'how did I get here?' organizations called the Central Valley Progressive PAC. And that's their, their mission is to figure out electorally how to win city council elections and shift the basis of power.

**TRW:** It looks like there's... oh, I missed Food Not Bombs today.

**RS:** They're great.

**TRW:** Yeah, I did that in Spokane for a while. But I'm just looking through this list. Well, yeah. Is there anything else you want to add for people? Things you want people to know about? Anything at all? Resources?

**RS:** The newspaper [*Community Alliance*], and KFCF radio station, 88.1 FM, furthest to the left on the dial.

<laughter>

**TRW:** Yeah, that's actually our call number too. At KYRS, yeah.

**RS:** They bring the information. They're wonderful community resources. I think people who come here looking for progressive engagements are very surprised at what is

available, what there actually is. It's been slow developing, but now there are just a lot of people working on things from a lot of different angles. Something that I think is just an extraordinarily wonderful example--over the last two years, the city and the police have dismantled all the homeless encampments where, you know, people had actually created some semblance of shelter, and community. And they just went in with bulldozers and tore it all down and scattered people, right? And they said, we say, 'did you have a plan on what to do with these people before you did that?'. No.

So just as as a response to that, one woman took her life savings, bought up a property, which is a house and a very, very large, enclosed back area, and has converted it into a model of a homeless encampment where they have cement slabs for people to put their tents on. They have three or four people living in the house. They screen people coming in, they have house meetings, people share responsibility, they have a big garden, they help figure out how to get beyond this. It's all done by, started by, one person, and they have a little private corporation that does this. Meanwhile, the city does nothing.

**TRW:** Wow

**RS:** What the city has done is build a couple of apartment complexes at just huge expense per person, housing I don't know, maybe 40 people, and there are only maybe 15 or 20 people at this, but it's a model that can be easily and cheaply replicated.

**TRW:** Yeah. Is that nearby?

**RS:** Nothing's far.

**TRW:** Okay.

**RS:** It's like 15 minutes. 10, 15 minutes?

**TRW:** Yeah. Well, yeah, I should probably hit the hay, and get stuff done. Yeah, thanks for talking with me."

**RS:** Pleasure."

*<music fades in under narration>*

**TRW:** "Thank you so much, Richard, wherever you may be for sharing your home, your cat, and your thoughts with me that day. The rest of the episode is going to pick up some loose ends, highlights I don't want to leave behind, a catch all of issues and approaches just like the whole trip and the whole show.

These ones will proceed in the order they happened, starting in Eugene, OR, where I got a flat tire in front of anarchist and anti civilization thinker, John Zerzan's house. That seems like it should be symbolic in some way or the setup for a joke, but I can't quite work it out.

John is one of the people who most challenged my thinking during my baby anarchist days, and I've been happy to be in conversation with him for the show multiple times since then. We had two long conversations that probably should have been their own episode, but I'll share some now and you can look forward to the rest in the archive. Here's part of what we discussed this summer by phone.

*<music fades out>*

*<radio static burst>*

**John Zerzan (JZ):** “Okay, I'm John Zerzan, I'm an anarchist writer. I've been around quite a while and I've come to an anti-civilization, anti-technology orientation or conclusion. And yeah, trying to pursue this stuff in my writings and on my weekly *Anarchy Radio* broadcast. Um, yeah, basically that's been a long road and I'm-- I was just saying I'm trying to keep open to you... you have to be willing to change your mind, you know, if you get... if the evidence is telling you to. And it's always a challenge, because I think we're always prone to ideological hardening of the arteries.

**TRW:** “Mm hmm. And that's a perfect segue, cause... so we talked in 2015 and we talked, I think also back in 2012, when I was first starting the show, and, you know, you've been pretty consistent over the years in a lot of, you know, aspects of your, your philosophy. And since I'm revisiting these interviews from five years ago, what has changed in your outlook or your perspective, or kind of the landscape, as you see it, in the last five years? And what are you doing now that might be different than then?”

**JZ:** Well, I don't know if it's making me see things differently. I mean, it's gotten worse, it's gotten visibly worse. And I think that has to do with things on a civilizational level. You know, I've been thinking more about the idea that civilizations fail, they all seem to fail. And then the next one, has a bigger reach, it has to have a bigger reach, because civilizations consume their host. And then that's the end of that civilization, you know, more or less, to put it that way anyway. And we're really seeing it now, I mean, just everything. What was really starting me to think maybe about this a little more urgently, was the mass shootings, the school shootings, and that was-- that predates five years ago. I mean, it really started at the end of the 90s. So, that has always gotten my attention. And you know, what's up with that, is that ever going to get better, or we're going to just see, this is just a common place that never gets fixed?

And now, of course, we're in the age of pandemics. These things are not new, you know, Zika, Ebola, H1N1, and there's a whole big list, and the list is getting longer, and they're coming closer together, and again, have a bigger reach. That's why it's-- the word is pandemic, not just...and what I'm seeing more of, and I think I'm not the only one, is that these things merge together, they impact each other. The environmental crisis, the climate crisis, and the... and now the health crisis, the pandemic crisis, you know, I was just reading about how air pollution exacerbates the seriousness of the COVID-19 strain infections, you're more likely to die. And we know that, actually, air pollution is a far bigger pandemic than this Coronavirus thing. It just...it kills a lot more

people. And... but this is much more in a way timely, I guess you can, you read about it, of course, every single day. These things, it's deepening the crisis, and it's an overarching crisis. So that I think now, at least I'm hoping and see some signs of this, but what I'm getting at is that more people have to question things more deeply. There's more of a likelihood that they do or will."

**TRW, narrating:** "In 2015, we had begun talking about the signs of increased receptivity to forbidden ideas regarding anarchism, the left, and civilization itself. Again, full versions will be in the archive soon."

**TRW:** "What is your hope in...you know, putting... I think even after all these years, anarchism's still a taboo and a lot of ways, I guess, what's your strategy? What's your idea with...I mean, calling it *Anarchy Radio* and just putting that idea just out front? And how has that played out for you?"

**JZ:** "Well, like you were saying before, there's... we can discover that there's... people are ready for real stuff that was shocking. Let me put it this way, when I started doing some speaking in other countries, starting in 2001, I think it was, and if you go back to the same place and here, this would have more to do with the US, not that that happens a lot, but I have been in the same place again. And then you can tell, you can get some gauge, in terms of remembering the reaction the first time around. And you're still saying roughly the same thrust of it, you know, the details would be different. It would be boring to give the same talk all the time, that's for sure. I wouldn't want to do that. It would bore me crazy. But anyway, I have noticed that sometimes it...It struck me that like early on, early on in this millennium, people would listen because it just seemed like a novelty. Like, 'wow, that's pretty crazy'. You know, like, 'Huh...', you know what I mean?"

But now it's less that than, 'we really need to talk about things like this because things are so far gone'. And there's no mistaking it now. There's no ignoring it now. There's-- well, of course there is in general, you know, there's any number of ways to distract yourself and not think about things. But I mean, in terms of people who might come to a talk I would give, it just seems like much more serious. And 'let's stay and talk' and let's get down, and we really need to address stuff, you know, we really need to have serious discussions. Whereas earlier, you know, less of that. I mean, people would show up, and, you know, like I said, they might be interested, just because it's kind of... they never heard anything so crazy. But, you know, much more, not bat an eye, not... you know, cause what is way crazier is what's going on, you know, way more off the wall. So, you know, obviously, that's very bad. But the upside is that now people are more receptive, you know, they're already thinking along these lines, you know, as often as not, don't need some American to come over here and tell you all this stuff, you already know that. So what are we gonna do about it?"

**TRW:** And that kind of leads into-- this is something I think about a lot. So, we obviously need to radically restructure. No matter where you are on that threshold, I think many people would agree that we need to fairly radically restructure most things about most aspects of how we live. And there's different visions for that, but as capitalism teeters,

you know, globally starts to get out of hand. And as climate change accelerates, it's going to, I think, quicken that, that shift as well, it's all kind of... it's all falling apart right now, to some extent. And I think we're seeing as you were talking about [Chris] Hedges a little bit, as he points out, you know, we're gonna see a fascist grasping and backlash against that, which we're already seeing. But-- so as all that happens, where's the balance between building something else to transition into? Rebuilding different knowledge of ways to do things and accelerating that process of stopping the destruction from all of these? How did those interplay?

**JZ:** Such a daunting thing, because nothing has worked yet, although I feel like there's a lot of energy out there. And like, we were just saying, there's quite a bit of receptivity, which we sometimes greatly underestimate. But, you know, you look for the touchstones where do we learn things? And I think the biggest thing to me is, is the indigenous dimension, you know, the... the traditional ways. And everybody almost, well, a lot of people anyway, give lip service to that stuff, but it really isn't permitted in terms of what that would mean, what it would undo, what it would reject and get rid of. So it's, it's the positive and the negative, you got to have both, you know, you gotta have alternatives, you gotta have some, some connection to something practical. How do we feed ourselves? You know, I mean, you know, the obvious questions, while you're trying to figure out what is the negative? What is-- how can you proceed against all these enemies, all these institutions that, all of which need to go, in my opinion, virtually everything you can think of. It's that total. I mean, it's, that's... that's the nature of this condition. And to just, and just to go after one issue, or whatever, it's way past that time, you know, I mean, I don't think it ever was that time, but that's just missing the boat altogether.

I think for the anarchist milieu, or whatever we want to call it, it's... it's what we can learn in conjunction with.... with Native folks who are trying to do stuff. And they are, I mean, just take a look at all the anti pipeline stuff that's going on in this, in North America. And I've got friends in Arizona, southern Arizona, it's just been an incredible privilege to learn stuff there to be in some contact with O'odham people, for example, through... there is going to be an opening in that sense. And it, to me, it was a fatal problem with Occupy that it didn't move, it never moved to de-occupy, to decolonize.

**TRW:** Mmhmm”

**JZ:** And so, and I think that's a very big reason why no anarchists I know were interested in Occupy. Right away, they could see almost totally, it was just a liberal deal. It wasn't, it wasn't gonna go anywhere, even though it was militant in some places like Oakland and San Francisco, even in New York a little bit, but it never made an orientation shift that was needed. It never...there's the legacy of the Left, as some people proclaim it proudly. Well, I reject that. The legacy is there... is there among the people who used to live here and, and to miss entirely that this is occupied land, and to call it Occupy is just a strange gaffe. You know, it's more than a gaffe. But I mean, for starters, Occupy? I mean, come on. What are you...? But the left is still around, stopping things from going in a qualitatively better direction, in my opinion. All these people who,

who love technology and mass society, and, you know, 'it's time for Native people to become voters and consumers and workers', like all the rest of the slaves, you know, fuck that.

I mean, to me, that's the, that's the single most specific, important thing that that we're managing to miss, and not entirely. I mean, there's a bunch of new zines, for example, that are not missing that. You know, *Black and Green Review*, I'm now an editor there, and I'm delighted that there's way more anti civilization ferment and thinking. But again, you know, we have yet to really connect the dots. So we get to these lovely ideas or critique and stuff, but it's always the question, 'so what do you do with that?'. You know, where do you get going? And that's, and that's a terrifically big terrain. You and I were talking about media, and the closed door, the-- the amazingly strict parameters on what gets to be discussed, especially in America, you know, and what is just forbidden, just ain't gonna happen without a fight. You know, but but when that opens up, then we'll see."

<music fades in under narration>

**TRW:** "Once I had a new tire, I trucked south to the Bay, then through Bakersfield to Vegas, north through Utah and into Colorado. You heard from some of the folks in Denver last week and in episode two, but here are a couple more Colorado voices, in Boulder. The first, depending on your media tastes, may be one of your more recognizable voices in the alternative media landscape. We had met before in Spokane when he visited our community radio station and despite a busy life, has always made time to be in contact with me. We weren't able to do a second interview, but here is what David Barsamian had to say in 2015 in the *Alternative Radio* offices. He sent me off with probably too much garden-fresh zucchini and some great contacts for the rest of the trip. Here is that interview."

<music fades out>

<radio static bursts>

**David Barsamian (DB):** "This is David Barsamian. I'm the founder and director of *Alternative Radio* based in Boulder, Colorado, soon to celebrate its 30th anniversary. I was fed up with the corporate media and I wanted to do something about it. And by serendipity, when I moved to Boulder in 1978, the community radio station went on the air-- KGNU-- they needed volunteers, I didn't have a job, I didn't have any job prospects. And I said, 'Okay, I'll volunteer'. And a few years after that, after honing my skills in editing and writing and narrating and speaking, I started *Alternative Radio* as as a tonic to the waste and toxicity that's produced by the major networks.

**TRW:** "How in these last 30 years, has the alternative media outlook changed?"

**DB:** Well, it's grown considerably. I'm not that lone island out there. There are other islands that have grown and expanded like Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now*, like the Real News Network, all of the online services that are available now, *Al Jazeera* is-- on

the Middle East, you know-- one of the best sources of information. There's all kinds of new developments, you know, community radio stations are continuing, there's cable TV, there's deep dish TV, there's Link, there's Free Speech TV. So there's much more of an independent presence in the media landscape than 30 years ago.

**TRW:** And we're at a pretty pivotal time, you know, I mean, the last few decades have been a very pivotal time in terms of 'are we going to make it as a species or not?'. Really if we look at climate change, the ways that politics has been fully overtaken in this country by capital, and the rest--what do you hear from, from listeners and from your guests regarding... regarding that, like what we're looking at right now, what's your assessment of that situation?

**DB:** The overriding crisis, without question, is what we are doing to the planet, the war on nature. That will trump everything. It will trump Palestine, Somalia, all of these other issues that are not unimportant, but if we don't have a habitat, you know, we're talking about game over. And the unrelenting war of corporate capitalism on nature, the looting and plunder and extraction of resources is leading to a dead end. It's unsustainable. The system is unsustainable. And capitalism, breaking news, is incapable of addressing this issue because of its DNA, its own DNA, which is connected to profits.

**TRW:** And growth, forever...

**DB:** It has to make money forever, what is called growth, what is called progress and jobs. So, we need a radical transformation of the political and economic landscape and a whole rethink, and it's got to be done fairly soon, because I don't think time is on our side. On the planet's side, that is.

**TRW:** Sure, and what role do you think that media-- alternative media-- has in that?

**DB:** Well, we have to raise these issues, and we have to insist that, you know, our political system, which is awash in corporate cash, you know, is responsive to what the planet demands, not what the system demands. Because that is it's, as I said, it's, we're on a collision course and moving deck chairs on the Titanic is, is going to buy us some time. Okay, you know, we'll all drive Priuses, we'll all bike to work. We'll all compost, we'll all recycle cardboard and glass and plastic and do all those nice little things. But that-- we're just buying months, maybe a few years. It's so... you know, just moving those deck chairs around. The iceberg is clearly visible. There is no scientific doubt about it. And, you know, the corporations, of course, are sowing doubt by creating fake science and...

**TRW:** Successfully...unfortunately...

**DB:**...bogus reports. There's a documentary on this called *Merchants of Doubt* that's been out and other, you know, very substantiated reports of how, for example, Exxon Mobil knew in 1981 that climate change was happening. What did it do? Did it publicize the news? No, it buried it, and then dedicated the next decades to producing fake

science that it's just, you know, these are weather phenomenon and different weather patterns.

And they've been, you know, largely successful, but I think something critical happened in September in New York, September 2014. First was the largest march in history, three to four hundred thousand people, but the next day, the Rockefeller Brothers fund divested from fossil fuel corporations-- hugely symbolic and significant. I mean, this is the Rockefellers, John D. Rockefeller, the founder of Standard Oil, you know, the first oil man, his family is divesting. And now, I was in Portland, Oregon and an activist told me it's... it's the hottest issue on campuses all across the country: divestment from fossil fuel corporations. So that's a hopeful sign.

**TRW:** Sure. And what are some other--through interviews you've done, or stories, or specific activists who are working-- what are some other approaches, types of analysis and the rest that, that make you hopeful? If there are any. Some of your favorite thinkers and projects around addressing...?

**DB:** Well, I've worked with Naomi Klein, and actually, I've done two programs with her very recently. One is called 'Transitioning to Climate Justice'. I mean, that's another issue. And the other one is called 'Capitalism vs. the Climate: Collision Course'. And I've been working with Bill McKibben, you know, getting these ideas out and trying to mainstream them, trying to get them into circulation, so that people are aware. The Pope's comments on climate change, and the environment and ecotastrophe, the ecocide that is going on are very, very significant and have attracted quite a bit of attention.

**TRW:** So do you think that that's making a difference in terms of general public acceptance...or?

**DB:** Yes, the encyclical, the papal encyclical, of course, is... has to be discussed in churches. You know, it's, it's on the menu, it's on the agenda. So hopefully, congregations will become, you know, engaged and involved. A major church just divested from fossil fuels. So that could be the start of a whole movement, because the capitalists understand one thing, money. And if people are taking money away from them, they get that, and they'll have to adjust and change the destructive pattern that they're on.

**TRW:** And then hopefully, we just do something completely different. But we'll see. We'll see what happens.

**DB:** Everything, you know, as the Buddhists say, is interconnected. You can't just argue for one thing, you know, you can't just say 'stop this pipeline', it has to be about changing the way we generate energy, and, and switch to sustainable energy, which in the West is abundant, solar and the wind, very abundant, we could... we could be doing that.

**TRW:** Sure, or just scaling back the way we do things. I mean, industrial solar and industrial wind have their issues, too. They're certainly less directly pollutive than, than oil and the rest. But yeah, we're just gonna have to change a lot of things. And I think that-- I think that I've, I mean, this is why I do community media work, but I think that we kind of lay the groundwork to make that possible in people's minds, to tell these other stories. What else outside of the media do you think that people can look to in terms of...?"

**DB :**Going—look what Medea Benjamin does with Code Pink, going to... buying shares, small shares, you know, a few shares in a corporation that is environmentally destructive, and showing up at the, at the board meetings and, you know, asking uncomfortable questions, inconvenient truths, injecting that. That's... that's one, you know, possibility. But the question I always get asked, you know, it's about, you know, 'I'm feeling full of despair and des... depression, I feel hopeless'. My advice and my response to that is to quote Eduardo Galeano, the late Uruguayan writer and journalist, who said, 'you know, let's save despair for better times'. When we start winning, we can indulge in some despair, but this is not the time, this is the time to engage and be active."

*<music fades in under narration>*

**TRW:** “Thank you, David, for that conversation and for all of the incredible work of *Alternative Radio* these 40-odd years. You can find his show and more links to the folks you're hearing from today in the show notes below the episode. The same day in Boulder, I headed to meet Michelle Gabrielloff-Parish, an educator, mother and activist working on innovative direct action and creative education to stop development at a dangerous nuclear site.

Having grown up in Eastern Washington, in the odd shadow of the Hanford nuclear site, knowing many so called 'downwinders' who suffer long term health effects, I felt like a sort of cousin to Michelle and all of the people navigating the legacy of Rocky Flats and challenging the dominant narrative of our nation's nuclear legacy. Here's some of what she had to say about her story.

*<music fades out>*

There's a bit of noise because we're on a rooftop adjacent to a busy road.”

*<radio static bursts>*

**Michelle Gabrielloff-Parish (MGP):** “So I'm Michelle Gabrielloff-Parish, and I'm a mother of three and a wife and I live in Superior, Colorado. And I found out after I moved to where I moved, how close we were to Rocky Flats. Growing up in Colorado, I'd kind of heard of Rocky Flats but didn't really know that much about it, just that maybe it's kind of a toxic site and, you know, you wouldn't maybe want to live downstream from it

or something, but I didn't know that much. And I also didn't realize that the property jutted towards my house when we passed the sign that said where it was.

So how I got involved? I actually was at a training with Joanna Macy in California and someone... well, she and her assistant have worked a lot with people here in Colorado around Rocky Flats. And especially in hindsight, I can tell that this woman Anne was having a hard time figuring out how to approach the issue with me, you know? And as someone who's worked before on other sort of community issues, I totally recognize it now, where she was like, 'you live where?', 'how many children do you have?'. And then you could see her try to calm herself down and be like, 'you know, have you...have you spoken with anybody about Rocky Flats? Or have you been involved with that at all?'. And I was like, 'no, I don't think it affects me, I don't think I'm that close to it'.

You know, and you could just sort of see her like, trying to figure out what to tell me. And she just basically was like, please meet my friend out there that works for Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice. So I met with him, and he started working on these issues since 1978, which is the year I was born, and just totally blew my mind as to what's actually there, how close me and my family actually are, and also the fact that, you know, we're pretty conscious about what we eat. And on top of that, one of my sons has a lot of allergies. So we were avoiding wheat and dairy and corn syrup and all kinds of stuff, but here we were living right next to an ex nuclear Superfund site. And I feel like I should-- do I need to talk about Rocky Flats a little bit first?

**TRW:** "About what it is and the history? Yeah, sure.

**MGP:** So I found out in talking with Leroy that this site produced all of the nuclear bombs during the Cold War-- 70,000 plutonium pits. And I had heard the reference to these plutonium pits or buttons, or triggers, actually, that was the word I had heard used was they just built the triggers. And I was like, 'oh, that's weird. So even just building the triggers, is... can be contaminating'. But to me that word 'trigger' meant like, I just imagined a gun. I thought it was like some sort of electrical something. I didn't understand that what they were referring to was the part of the nuclear bomb that explodes. The part of the bomb that explodes.

**TRW:** The particle that splits, that is split?

**MGP:** Yes, yes. So, and also that these are triggers for hydrogen bombs because you need an atomic explosion that sets off the next explosion. So how crazy also to find that out, you know, and like, what is it? 'Oh, yeah, they were just doing triggers out there'. Well, yes, the trigger is the part of the bomb that explodes. That's not what I thought was out there. And people don't use the term bomb, because, you know, the shell and the metal was manufactured elsewhere. But to me, the important part was manufactured here.

**TRW:** That's probably no more harmful than manufacturing cars or something. I mean, like, it's that level of pollution.

**MGP:** Exactly, which is what I thought maybe was there, maybe a little bit tainted with plutonium. The other thing is that the threat from the plutonium is breathing it in or swallowing it, ingesting it or getting it into a cut. Which also is different, because the way that people talk about radiation, you think that you're just exposing yourself to, you know, the equivalent of a chest X ray or the equivalent of a dental X ray every year, something like that. But it's not like that, you know, you can have a group of people... you could have a group of people standing out there every day for five days, and nobody gets any harm from it. And then somebody comes and visits and walks through the property and inhales some plutonium, and that's a lethal dose. So it's really random.

It's also random where it gets lodged in your body, which I think has also been part of the difficulty. You can't look at our area and say, okay, people have more lung cancer here, because people have-- if you combine it all and look at like, anomalous health problems with autoimmune diseases, brain cancer, kidney cancer, liver cancer, salivary gland cancer--if you look at that stuff, and put it all together, then maybe we'd be above normal. But the thing is that it acts differently in different people's bodies, and it gets... it gravitates to different places in people's bodies. It looks like in children, a lot of times it gravitates to the reproductive organs. So we know that it's there.

And if you learn about the history of the site, that's the other thing, you start learning about the history of the site, and you're horrified. So I started learning about the history of the site, all the contamination that happened, all of the cover ups, all of the accidents, there was some serious fires that happened out there. And I started thinking I need to get involved and I saw that they wanted to build a toll road going over what we know is some of the most contaminated part of the site. And so I signed the petition and then I, like, posted it on social media with my friends saying, 'we have to stop this toll road because if they build a toll road, soon there's gonna be housing and businesses out there'. You don't have a road in the middle of nowhere. A few months later, I was driving down to Denver and went that back way right by Rocky Flats and I saw the signs for Candelas. And I didn't quite know what it was, but I went and I looked, and it turned out that I was wrong. Which is rare.

*<laughter>*

**MGP:** It turns out that I was wrong and that they'd already started on the housing and the housing and businesses come first, and then they're going to build a toll road. And so, in searching around about it, I realized that no one could find out about this housing development called Candelas. No one could find out about the controversy like, you, if you look at it, or you Google it, there was nothing that said there's a controversy so I decided that I was going to have to do something about it and raise awareness. So I started Candelas Glows. And I did candelasglows.com and started a Facebook page and then decided to go to the grand opening events with some friends...

*<laughter>*

**MGP:**...and some hazmat suits...

**TRW:** Oh my gosh.

**MGP:**...and some information, some fliers with the timeline about the history of the plant. And we went out there a couple of times for a couple of grand opening events that they had, and... and I partly named it Candelas Glows-- sorry if I'm all over the place...

**TRW:** No, it's great. It's great.

**MGP:** I partly named it Candelas Glows because in Spanish *candelas* is like, candle. So it's Candelas Glows. Well, it turns out that the site was, when it was in operation, the plant was shut down by an FBI and EPA raid, it's the only time in history that that's happened, where government agencies have gone and raided another government agency like that. And it turns out that the FBI internally referred to the raid as Operation Desert Glow.

**TRW:** Wow.

**MGP:** So and it turns out that people who grew up in the area have all kinds of jokes and inside, you know, references, things about glowing...

**TRW:** Things about glowing in the dark?

**MGP:** Uh huh...So, we started Candelas Glows, we went out there a couple of times, we got a much bigger response than I could have imagined because it turns out, this is such a big part of Colorado history. So I didn't really realize what I was tapping into and the richness of people's experiences with this, there's people who protested to bring-- to bring awareness about it, which is partly why the FBI and EPA got involved, there were workers, there were people that worked at this cleanup that they attempted to do. So it turned out that--and there were all the neighbors that were concerned, and who'd either been sick, or their family member had been sick, or their neighbors had been sick. So the response that we got was crazy. And some of it was really intense, you know, and I don't think that I'd really been prepared for that either.

Where we, you know, we went out there, held some signs, wanted it to be fun, and we had like, two people come up to us that first time and ask us if we thought that their thyroid cancer came from Rocky Flats. You know, and I'm like, 'oh, my God, I don't know, I'm not a doctor...I don't'...at that point, I was certainly no expert on the history of the site, or how this stuff works. And by the time that started happening on a regular basis, I started saying, 'you know, I don't know, but you're not the first person to ask me that'. And I have started to realize that a lot of people in this area have thyroid issues. But there's other things, too, and there's also cancers and some cancers that people don't feel comfortable talking about, you know, like reproductive cancers, especially in children. People don't want to talk about that and people feel ashamed, I think. So, we had that.

We also had intense interactions with workers, you know, workers who, at first maybe even seemed mad at us, and then suddenly would change their tune and be like, you know, in a still a kind of an aggressive way, sometimes that they'd be like, 'you have to stop this. And you have to stop people from living out here. This is really dangerous. In fact, you probably shouldn't even be standing out here to raise awareness'. Right? Not just like, don't live here. They're like, walking around here is not safe.

**TRW:** Wow.”

**MGP:** So, we also had workers come to us and tell us that what we were concerned about was only the tip of the iceberg. And I did go and look at that time and saw that the Department of Labor said there's over a thousand carcinogens at the site. So plutonium is just one of the thousands of things that we know cause cancer there. So that was that-- I've got three kids, I've got a job. I'm a pretty busy person. You know, I didn't intend for this to take up so much of my time, but then the developers of the development, Candelas, threatened to sue me for millions of dollars if I didn't shut up.”

*<radio static bursts>*

**TRW:** “So sorry to leave that tale on a cliffhanger, but you can follow Candelas Glows online and find the full interview soon in the archive. Women taking charge in fights against pollution is a tradition. And I want to also offer a shout out to Donna Young, who I met just before reaching Colorado, where her work as a midwife made her a whistleblower against the dangers of fracking in her small town of Vernal, Utah. That conversation, too, will hit the archive soon.

*<music fades in>*

After Colorado, I headed to South Dakota, then on a social visit to Yellowstone, north to Calgary and-- thwarted by a rare and terrifying tornado on the BC Alberta border--back to Spokane by way of my grandparents house on the Canadian border, a little bit early. I returned the car I had borrowed and flew with a good friend to start the mass transit leg of the journey with a week together in Detroit with some of her friends there. That was a surprising challenge, though also a lot of fun.

For a lot of my life, and certainly up until the point of this trip, I kept my activist life kind of cloistered from the rest of my life. Some of my radical comrades became friends, and some of my friends were or became radicals, but others I just kept in a different zone. This led to some intense discussions in Detroit, with my old friend and my new friends where we crashed. Gentrification was a big flashpoint, class in general, race, religion, the whole mess. Looking back, I think that having real deep conversations with these folks, rather than small talk upon meeting, actually gave us a better, more genuine relationship and I've gone back since to visit on my own.

This is a part of the conversation I had this summer with in order of voice appearance, Billy, Christopher and Kori. They live in a split house on an old, beautiful, tree-lined

block with their young families. While they've all been involved in arts, the food system, and other activist stuff, I talked to them just as neighbors, which too is a political role. I learned and reflected a lot in talking with them and I hope you enjoy our talk as well. Here it is-- via imperfect Zoom call-- this summer.

*<music fades out>*

**Christopher (C):** “I don't want to speak first. You want to go Billy?”

**Billy (B):** *<in theatrical old man voice>* “No, no, I'm just still trying to get all your pictures on the same screen.

**Taylor (T):** “Up in the right hand corner, you got a little thing that says speaker view and you want to switch it to gallery view.

**C:** You're so old Billy.

**B:** It's an iPad!

**T:** Oh shit, I don't know.

**C:** Uh oh.

**T:** I don't know how to do it on an iPad... *<laughs>*

**B:** Oh! There, I got it, I've got it. It was an iPad. Okay. So those are huge topics...is there any one particular that you'd like to start off with? Or... is there something that you heard last time that you want to... a thread that you want us to pick up on?

**T:** I mean, last when we talked, there seemed to be a lot of... we talked about, about the block a lot. Talking about kind of racial dynamics of both having lived there, but one family being Black, one family being white, the dynamics of Detroit in general, right in that moment. I guess that could be a good place to start? Just, like, I don't know what's happened in the last five years out there.

**C:** Yeah, well, one of the one of the biggest things that has happened on the block is housing. When you were here, less than half of the block, the housing on the block, was occupied. And there are three structures now unoccupied, out of fifteen? Sixteen? So when Billy and Sarah first bought on the block, it was maybe a quarter? Less? Yeah, maybe a quarter occupied and the rest were vacant. And when Kori and I moved, moved in, just a little bit more, and it has been a fast track period, from 2014 to 2020.

And it's interesting, the majority of the housing renovation has actually happened by a Community Development Corporation here. They've been in the neighborhood for 25 years. They're fairly well respected and it is one of their goals to maintain the culture of the neighborhood. And they are... they are providing housing at below market rate,

which our area, market rate went from-- when we moved in-- to \$300-\$400 a unit to \$1200 a unit, you know, in five or six years. Asinine incline of market rate. But CDC [Central Detroit Christian, the community development corporation] because they own so much in the neighborhood, the neighborhood is uniquely positioned to battle gentrification, from what we talked about before.

But there are still instances specific on our block of two four-family flats that were purchased, renovated and are market rate. And everybody in those two four-family flats currently are all white. And every unit that CDC renovated on the block, currently, all the tenants are Black. So it is interesting to look at those dynamics culturally on our block. It feels very much like a Detroit neighborhood in terms of the culture of porch hangouts, barbecues, music, community, it feels like... it feels like the neighborhood should, I guess? Because I think there's been some very intentional slowing of gentrification. And I can go into it more, but there, I do have an interesting perspective on how I view the white people who have moved on to the block that I'm trying to battle in my heart. We can get there. But that's a... that's a broad, in terms of housing and gentrification, of where we are currently from when you were here.

**T:** Cool. So it's good to see everybody's still there. And yeah, I guess, something that Billy had said before that kind of speaks to what you were saying, Christopher, about the vibe, I guess, is that what you mostly cared about, Billy, you said, 'Are people going to be good neighbors?', like, less worried... I think that there was a lot of anxiety, we were talking about the optics of you know, at the time you two [Christopher and Kori] being some of the only white folks on the block worrying that, you know, your whiteness is going to beget more whiteness, and all of the problems that come with that, in terms of gentrification. Billy, you were saying, your focus was, are people going to show up and... and be a neighbor? It sounds like CDC has facilitated that, but I'm curious what you think about that now? Has that focus been like, maintained?

**B:** Yeah, I think we have a lot of good neighbors. It's a great question, 'are you going to be a good neighbor?', because I don't think... I don't want to be next to a neighbor, who I'm afraid is gonna shoot me, whether accidentally or purposefully. And I also don't want to necessarily be next door to a neighbor who is going to, whether purposefully or intentionally, tear apart a culture because they're more focused on the cost of raising their property values, and not worried about indirectly tearing apart a community that they may not even recognize as a community because they're only focused on the Zillow number. And what I've started to learn is, that's different than racial dynamics as well. So all that to say is yeah, good neighbors, I think we do have a lot of good neighbors and I do give CDC a lot of props for for that. And, yeah, I don't, I don't say the 'g-word' very much anymore. I was all about the 'g-word'.

*<laughter>*

**B:** And I remember even before I moved to Detroit, I was like, 'gentrification is terrible! Ahhh! Let me focus all of my energy on destroying this terrible thing!'. And I felt it in my guts, and I was concerned about my participation, not because of the lightness of my

skin color, but because of my occupation as an artist. Dude, I don't know, since the last time we talked, I just...*<makes noise of ambivalence and laughs>* I got no real, clear, clear views on it anymore. Or, like, it's, it's become so complex. The forces at play are so complex. And I've seen many different reasons why people have lost their house, I've seen many different reasons why our neighborhood has been propped up and supported in some ways, and also not in other ways. So I will say, I will try my best to be as clear minded and reflective, and bring whatever historical perception I can to this, but as far as my understanding of gentrification, as a larger movement, I just, I am a gentrifier. And I don't really understand what... what it is anymore.

**T:** Mmhmm... I think that's a super interesting zone for that conversation because it's like, yeah, it's a mess. And I appreciate you...you saying that and bringing it up, because I think it crosses across all those boundaries. I don't even know how to articulate what I'm trying to say just yet. So I'll let y'all do it. But that might be a good time actually, for what did... what did you want to say about that earlier, Chris? Are you down to come back to it?

**C:** Yeah, yeah. So it's-- so I'm, I'm a very extroverted individual, very friendly, eye contact all the time with anybody who is outside on the block, waving to... it doesn't matter who you are, you're driving? I wave at you. I see you, you see me, I smile. Unless you're a new white couple moving in next door to this four-family flat where I lost some good neighbors because their building got sold. So I realized, like, I have this somewhere deep-rooted angst and sadness about the neighbors that I've lost, and I'm reflecting that back on the new tenants that all happen to be white. And that looks very much like these people have lived here for six months to, some of them even two years, and I don't know their names yet.

Whereas, you look at anybody else who's moved in that are not in those two family flats, I've tried to learn their names very quickly. And so there's, there's this, like, I don't know what it is in me in terms of like, my holier than thou, but I am... I am shunning the new white people on the block. And I don't give them any grace. And so I've been trying to work through that. That's like a past six month process trying to work through and I've been introducing myself to the newer people on the block, but I still don't know all of them. And there's people that have been here for over two years now like that.”

**T:** Yeah, that... that totally helps crystallize where I was trying to go based on what Billy said about, you know, the 'g-word'. You know, I've reflected on my own, my own discomfort around that a lot as someone who's... who's an artist, who's a young, you know, white person who's lived in urban places, who is, you know, a mid 20-something complaining about gentrification while I live in, like, a downtown, like kind of hip area, where I was just living, and also having that holier than thou feeling that I think is something that we're hitting a lot kind of like racially across topics as white people, like awake, or whatever you want to say.

So maybe, this is just a theory I want to throw out mostly for Billy, since you brought up the thing with the 'g-word', maybe your really specific case of your block and having this

organization that's invested in the community, invested in property, in preserving something and supporting people who are already of the culture that's present, there's hope for a broader movement and focusing more on almost like community defense, like, defense sounds like such an aggressive word, but like, preservation, rather than kind of trying to fight this big process that isn't in a lot of people's individual control. Does that make sense?"

**Kori (K):** "Yeah, I see...I see gentrification as less of a evil thing and more of like, a force. Like, it's not neutral, but it's not always bad, either. And our friends, I mean, everybody that we talk to, you know, like, yeah, there's going to be, we've heard, honestly, not a lot about people being upset about specifically gentrification. But we've also heard like, oh, people are excited about these new restaurants, people from... grew up in this neighborhood are excited about having new restaurants and excited about having, you know, this Grand Avenue being renovated, and like the coffee shop that went in. And you know that we look at it, and we're like, oh no, that's bad. That's gentrification. And like, that's not necessarily how people who live here see it.

You know, there's going to be a diversity of opinions, but I've encountered that a lot that people are excited about new businesses coming in. Yeah, I am glad that there is... I've started to think less like 'the coffee shops are bad' and more, if we're going to focus our energy, it needs to be on kind of like you said, like, how do we keep people living here, instead of just moving people out? So like, yes, new businesses are coming in, but like, how do I like, help my neighbor with his, you know, when he's behind on his taxes? Like, what's my responsibility in that situation? And how can I, you know, talk to my city council person, about, like, rent caps and stuff like that? I've been thinking more about those things and less about, like, you know, the coffee shops and restaurants going in.

**B:** Yeah, I remember when coffee shops were the symbol of gentrification. And I just have to continue to be honest here. I've lost all perspective. <laughs> You know, I, what do I mean by that? I think I was more passionate about the conversation the less people in my neighborhood I knew.

**K:** Hmm

**B:** The more I was able to have conversations with people in my neighborhood and get to know them, and get to know the things they like and don't like, then I was less passionately involved with conversations with people who didn't live in the neighborhood, and who were really concerned about the idea of gentrification, but weren't having any of those conversations. It can really easily get into speaking for communities and speaking for people and we start to walk into the 'giving voice to the voiceless' area. And then the next thing you know, people who are... have means are executing decisions on behalf of a lot of people. And that is all under this conversation of this big umbrella of the word gentrification.

And then we start to have symbols like the coffee shop, or the hipster or the poor, Black, old neighbor. And now we start trafficking in that language. And then, like you said, like,

there's a lot of emotions that can start flying, but they don't actually touch down in the lives of a neighborhood. And so for me, I was... that was my perspective. Because then I had all these emotions and I didn't know where to put them and meeting new people is hard sometimes. And meeting new people across cultural divides is really hard sometimes. And trusting people from across the cultural divide is, takes time. And what is built in that trust is actually, for me, that the answers are there. Because we get to see oh, how do people really care about their neighborhoods?"

**K:** Yeah, I'm yeah, I'm less interested in talking about gentrification, more just than just talking to my neighbors about what they want."

*<music fades in under narration>*

**TRW:** "Thanks again so much to Billy, Christopher and Kori, for being vulnerable and talking with me. You can hear that whole conversation in the archive, along with one featuring another CDC related project focused on urban farming from 2015. You already heard a lot of where I went from there, first to Toronto, and then Montreal, where I would also return many times since, down through Vermont, to New York City then Philly and Baltimore, and then-- against my original vision-- to Lexington, Kentucky.

When planning out this trip in the spring of 2015, I showed the draft map to a friend of a friend who said, 'oh, you're messing up, you're not going to Lexington'. I was like... why? And he said I absolutely had to meet his friend Greg, who was quote, 'a dude version of you, but like more hardcore'. I guess I was curious enough to add the stop and I had a ball with the last folks you'll hear from today, and this season, the Kentucky Workers League.

Individual introductions are omitted here, because I was not able to reach everyone for consent. I think that their reflections on forming an organization, building affinity and friendship in our movements, and rooting our action through meeting needs are as important now as ever. We talked after moving their stuff out of a temporary office space over really good food. Here's part of that conversation."

*<music fades out>*

*<radio static bursts>*

**TRW:** "So maybe the logical place to start is with one of one of you two, Greg and Will, about kind of the origins, the origin myth of Kentucky Workers League. So how did it...how did this all happen?"

**Greg (G):** "Well, Kentucky actually has a really long and, like, rich history of workers organizing, especially like in Appalachia and in the east, and especially like, a particularly like radical strain. I mean, up until the 70s and 80s, mine workers were like destroying service mine equipment, and performing sabotage. I think for... Will sort of, like, went abroad and sort of found models, but I think, you know, there was this moment of... where we looked around, and all of our friends had shitty jobs where we

were being, like, constantly exploited in really terrible ways. And were pretty crushed. And, you know, rather than, like, share weird memes about it on Facebook, at a certain point, we decided that we would try to do something about it.

**Will (W):** “You know, I would give Meg credit, really. I think she was one of the catalysts for our organization coming together. She had just had this like, terrible job at Amazon, which was like pretty bad. And Greg says, I went ‘abroad’, by ‘abroad’ he means I went to Pittsburg.

*<laughter>*

**W:** The Paris of Appalachia.

*<laughter>*

**W:** And I have some contacts in Philadelphia, and in Beaver County, Pennsylvania, just outside of Pittsburgh, and the three of us, Greg, Meg and myself and some other comrades who are no longer involved with the organization, we were all kind of thinking about, you know, like, kind of everybody that we know is working in service or retail jobs. It seems like that people have a problem that's like not an individual problem with having a dead end job, it's a kind of structural problem. And so a lot of our cohort are at least some college education and are downwardly mobile and our like, 'one weird trick' we wanted to do was find a way to combine that cohort with people who are coming from, you know, long term working class backgrounds.

Initially, we weren't thinking like we want to start a socialist organization. All of us at that first meeting were at least on like some level, like some kind of socialist, and it wasn't until later when we were in touch with a group in Philly called Philly Socialists that was doing kind of their, like mass organizing and their service programs like through their, like actual socialist organization, rather than being like, 'okay, so like we're the socialists were like, going to go to like, you know, all the different activist meetings and meetings in town and try to like recruit people to our socialist organization from the other activist groups', we decided we wanted to go out and organize the unorganized. And that's kind of the founding myth. It was a little bit more touch and go than that for about a year and things like got kind of ugly, but it's been really fruitful to see it blossom over the past really just like, eight months or so.

**TRW:** So, um, so serving some of those functions as a union of the otherwise non-unionized? And I also saw a little sign on front door about Rock Daniels...

**Unknown Speaker:** “That’s you!”

**TRW:** Great name.

*<laughter>*

**TRW:** From what I gathered from the flier, what's what's going on with Rock Daniels?

**G:** Sooo, like about a year ago, the first time that we were going out and fliering in order to let folks know about our solidarity network, Will and I went down this street called Grand Avenue and there's this woman that had this beautiful dog and was like, hey...

**W:**...six beautiful dogs.

*<laughter>*

**G:** Right. We didn't know about the six beautiful dogs at the time, but she was just sort of like, having her own, like, it was very obvious that she was like, super comfortable and that everybody on the block knew her. And that it was like this, this kind of constant block party. And so she came out to meet us and see what we were doing. And her name was Alex and we told her about the solidarity network, and that we sort of helped folks in individual fights with their boss or landlord by, you know, adding more weight and strength to their side. And she was like, 'oh, I'll definitely need this'.

And she took our number and, and then, you know, it was a year later almost, when she like called me one morning to say that she woke up that morning, she and her son to dudes on her roof, ripping it off. And so basically, she lives in sort of like a quote unquote, 'up and coming' part of Lexington on a street that is made with row houses that were built for workers in the early 20th century that is now being rapidly gentrified by this man, Rock Daniels, he bought something like a dozen houses on the block in just the first four months of 2015.

And he had no interest...most of the houses were abandoned, but two of them had folks in them. And rather than go through the process of formally evicting anybody, and like waiting the legally required amount of time, he just felt like he could intimidate the folks on the block into leaving. And so the family across the street just felt like they-- they just up and moved in the middle of the night after Rock knocked on their doors and-- but Alex, Alex wanted to fight. So she called us, we spent several weeks to sort of try to meet as many folks on the block as possible, we had several meetings in the church down the street.

Eventually, we ended up blockading her house for two days, which prevented Rock's crew from working on it and actually started him to go through the legal process of evicting her, which bought her enough time to find another place to move on her own time on her own schedule as a single, you know, as a single mom. And also allowed her son Desmond to finish school at the school that he was... he had started out the school year, which was like her big main concern when she contacted us. And then, you know, what's also interesting about that, too, is that, you know, all of these people have sort of, like, come out of the woodwork to attack Rock. And I think we also look a lot stronger going forward. You know, it's like very, very clear that like, even though we, you know, as far as we're concerned, we met our goals, we won our campaign, we don't really

have any further business with Rock. We're deeply, deeply embedded in a part of his psyche.

*<laughter>*

**W:** Yeah, there's been some... he's like, kind of personally harassed some of our members in public since that time. Present company, actually, I think, like, almost everybody around this table at this point, except for Ben's got out of that, but...

**Unknown Speaker:** "That's what I get for not leaving the house."

**W:** Well, and somebody's got to watch the cats.

*<laughter>*

**W:**The... I think, what's something to keep in mind about our organizing model and a kind of concept from guerrilla warfare, really, that I like to keep in mind is the idea that revolutionaries are kind of I mean, like, the people are like the sea that like we're swimming in, right? Like we can't, like we're like fish, we literally can't breathe if we're not in touch with the people.

**TRW:** Yeah, so just in the last couple of minutes that we have cause I want to respect time. It's a really broad type of organization and a broad type of organizing that's, like, part disaster management in situations like that and part proactive. What advice would people have for people in other communities or even in your own who want to start doing this type of work but maybe don't know how to start? Or resources also, like what resources did you access?"

**G:** Look outside of the, like, weird carnival of activists folks you already know. I mean, if we had... if we had only networked with the like, liberals that we work with and, and our friends we would still be five folks in the living room, but the fact that we like decided to very intentionally like remain outward facing is what enabled us to grow incredibly fast. And much faster than I think any other organization in town in terms of active membership, and um, we have like, no staff person and we have no, like, grant money. And that's a function of the fact that the people we meet, we meet a need that they need fulfilled."

**Unknown Speaker:** "You know, a lot of people in your area might try to redirect you to like, the closest like, 'oh, well, here's a, you know, like a free clinic where you can go to to, like, get legal help', or 'I know, this little group that like specializes in, like, you know, looking into the law for you'. You know, sometimes, like, the law's not on your side, sometimes the law is not on your schedule. And if you're able to rally a group of people together, you can change that dynamic entirely."

**Unknown Speaker:** "For me, it's, you know, I come from a smaller town where there is no radicalism at all. Like, there's, you know, it's Georgetown, Kentucky, where there's a

Toyota plant, and like, the Union, the UAW has like zero ability to get into the plant. It just doesn't exist there. And I'm ...you know you're from a smaller area, and you feel like you're the only person with any remotely leftist leanings. And you know, the biggest piece of advice is just don't lose hope. It will happen, eventually, you will find like minded people, sometimes in very surprising places. It does happen eventually. It took me forever, since high school to find a group like this, and I'm like, wow, they're nice and also dedicated activists who I can learn a lot from. So..."

**W:** You know, we view this as a long process. We borrowed from our comrades in Philly, that we're in a kind of 40 year party building process, like, you know, like, we don't think that over the next five years, we'll be able to like put together like a socialist organization that can, like, herald the like Glorious Revolution or anything like that. Like we view this as like, a kind of arduous like process of just like meeting people where they're at. And so, you know, if you're out there despairing and you want to get something going, there's no reason to be like, upset because it's not, you know, you have all these urgent feelings of like needing to do something just like, take your time and figure out what you need to do."

*<radio static bursts>*

**TRW:** "Thank you so much one more time to all the folks you've heard from today and in the rest of the season before. I want to also take this opportunity to thank the people who made this trip possible in 2015 through crowdfunding, and by illuminating the web of connections that brought me to all these conversations.

*<music fades in under narration>*

Thank you, especially to Michael and Marianne, two comrades in Spokane, who entrusted their car to me and let me put 5000 miles on it. Thanks again to all of the guests this season, who took time to talk with me again, and bring this idea to life. And thanks to all of you for listening, for your messages, for sharing the show, and everything else. I hope that this has helped inspire, agitate, and improve your practice, whether you're activist-curious or a seasoned pro, looking to make a change or somewhere else entirely.

Again, I will be including all of the 2015 interviews as an unedited portion of my extensive archive, including photos and the original blog posts from the trip over the coming months. You can find those and follow for updates at [praxis radio dot com slash archive](http://praxisradio.com/slash/archive). That's p-r-a-x-i-s-r-a-d-i-o dot com slash archive."

*<music fades out>*

**TRW:** See you down the line."

*<radio static bursts>*

**Unknown Speaker:** “But the--the center has great podcasts.

**Taylor:** Yeah, this sounds good... I know right? Yeah. NPR....”

**Unknown:** Yeah, liberals. Liberals all...”

*<clattering noise as recorder is bumped against and shut off>*

**END**