



★ FORTRESS ON A HILL

Ep 66 transcript

Tue, 6/2 11:18AM • 1:29:21

SPEAKERS

Danny Sjursen, Chris 'Henri' Henrikson, Kevin Zeese

Danny Sjursen

All right. Hey, listeners. Another great episode ahead of us today. You may have noticed that I've been mentioning it every week that are Interview guests game is just totally up. I don't know if it's the pandemic or picking up buzz or I've just made a lot of friends and the quote unquote capitalized movement. But we've had some awesome folks and and we've really been bringing on a variety of sort of activist intellectuals straddling both lines, and today is really no exception to that. We have Kevin zz are from popular resistance. And this is a new site that we're going to talk about that's that's really picking up, I think, a lot of readership in the sort of alt left and really also libertarian media space, which is just so vital. I first came across Kevin, not only through his willingness to, you know, publish a lot of my work, especially some of my longer and historical work over at popular resistance, but also just the site in general. Especially In the wake of sort of TruthDig going away of the temporary or permanent dinosaur, popular resistance has really been important to me personally, but much more importantly to the wider sort of movement and the media space. We first kind of went digitally quarantined face to face at an Assange free Julian Assange visual that some of you may have seen a couple of weeks back and our sort of complimentary banter and his just wide ranging analysis was largely what made me think of having you on Kevin. So So thanks very much for that, for the sort of formal background for folks who don't know who he is. You know, Kevin zS is a public interest attorney attorney who has worked for economic, racial and environmental justice since graduating from George Washington Law School in 1980. I think we could add to that list of activism as well. He co directs power Resistance org, which is building an independent movement for transformational change. I think that's accurate. He co hosts clearing the fog radio, which airs on react radio, progressive radio network and other outlets. He's recognized as a leading activist in the US in the series Americans who tell the truth. Kevin was an organizer of the occupation of freedom Plaza in DC in 2011. He serves as president of well, just a

laundry list of elements that he's involved in but President of common sense for drug policy, a co founder of the drug policy Foundation, now known as the Drug Policy Alliance, and we are going to talk about militarization of the police and the connections between domestic and international policy. He's also a co founder of health over profit for everyone, which seeks to put in place national improved Medicare for All. Couldn't be a better time to talk about that. Then here in the pandemic exposed. Health detritus, that is America. He's an advocate for internet freedom and a leader of the campaign for title to net neutrality. He's also one of the organizers of we are Cove point which seeks to stop fracking at a gas export terminal in Southern Maryland. He also advocates for election integrity and other important aspect of what's going on today, and co founded true vote Maryland, which led a successful campaign to end the use of paper paperless voting machines in the state. Additionally, a co founder of come home America, this is really key. He brings people from across the political spectrum together to work against war and militarism in all its forms right and including the Empire coming home. He served on steering committees for the Chelsea Manning support network as well as on the advisory board for the courage Foundation, which supports Edward Snowden and other whistleblowers. He has been active in independent and third party political campaigns for some time now serving as well. Press Secretary and spokesperson for Ralph Nader and oh four. And as a senior advisor to Jill Stein in 2016. He ran for the US Senate in 2006. And in fact, is the only person ever nominated by the green, libertarian and populist parties of Maryland, which Kevin, I think means that you either have broad appeal, or you are just mostly hated by Democrats and Republicans, but I like maybe both. So Kevin, we're super excited to have you. Thanks for taking the time and this is just going to be great.

Kevin Zeese

That was a long bio.

Danny Sjurzen

Well, you know, Kevin, no one has ever accused me of being brief. And as someone who has edited some of my work or seen it edited, I think I think you know, despite Well,

Kevin Zeese

thank you for that. I appreciate it. I love your work. So I'm happy to be on your show and talk with you about all these issues you want to talk about and whatever you want to cover. We're happy. I'm happy to talk about

Danny Sjurzen

Well, great, we definitely will go kind of wide ranging. And I'll start with a couple of things. So you know what strikes me about that bio that long bio isn't just the impressive resume length of which I truly hardly scratched the surface, you know, as I did my research, but what strikes me is the breadth and scope of the issues that you've advocated for sort of a theme. As I mentioned, our recent guest invitees has been sort of certain common nexus between intellectual and activist, and you certainly fit that mold. In particular, we've lately had some excellent historians on the podcast, but you know, reading about you and getting to know you, in a sense, it seems that your activism probably has a history unto itself. So if you'll forgive the cliched opening, I'm wondering if you could briefly provide, you know what history geeks like me think is the most vital part of any issue, the backstory, the backstory to your life's work

and journey. And where there are aspects to your upbringing and or pivot points in that progression that led you to some of these broad sets of issues and dedication to actually, you know, do something about them.

Kevin Zeese

Well, um, I grew up in, you know, as a teenager and in the 60s and 70s, which was a time of a lot of activity. I wasn't I was in I went to protest, anti war protests and anti racism protests in Egypt. There wasn't a leader organized or anything along those lines. I remember my first protests where I played any significant role was when I was in college at University of Buffalo. We took a bus trip to Boston during the school desegregation battles. There were pretty violent battles. And my role in that was to be a security person, which meant I was in the perimeter of the protests and had the pleasure of being attacked by Boston Police on horseback. And those police those horses are pretty big. So I was free a while experience but it just showed me the lengths to work. The government will go to fight against anti racism in that case, but I've seen it also in environmental protests in economic justice and anti war protests. So it's really an over the years, I've decided to work on a variety of issues, because what I've discovered is that issues are first of all connected, that when you talk about race, it affects environment as environment races, we talk about economic inequalities, incredible racial differences about war, people who are drawn into the military because of the economic draft, very high percentage of people of color compared to the population and the countries we attack are black and brown countries. And so there's a racism and so on every issue you could go through and pick out the relationships I really believe that a movement of movements is the is a critical thing. factor in our success. Some of the most successful projects we've worked on, like stopping the Trans Pacific Partnership, which was the largest corporate trade agreement in history, President Obama was talking to 600 corporate advisors, but negotiating the agreement in secret. One of the great quotes was his Trade Representative, the ambassador for for trade. So the reason we keep the secrets because people know is it wouldn't pass. That was a really interesting anti democracy state. We got to keep it secret because people oppose it. So we that was a five year campaign. And I think it brought together people from labor, environment, health care, pharmaceuticals, economic racial, I mean, people all these issues were impacted by this massive corporate agreement. And really, it was the movement of movements that was created around that that was what led to his success. It came to the point that someone like Rob Portman who had been a tradesman under George Bush, he's a senator from Ohio had to come out against Hillary Clinton, who was the secretary of state under Obama, when the treaty was being negotiated, had to come out against it. He just couldn't find support. Obama kept pushing it up to the last minute. He was even planning on pushing after Trump was elected. But before he was inaugurated during the lame duck session, but the opposition was so great. He had to back down Finally, I think that his pushing the TPP throughout the 2016 campaign is one reason why Trump succeeded because people saw the impact of NAFTA. And so that TPP would have been even worse. And so that movement of movements concept is one reason why I work on some of the issues. The other issues. One thing that Ralph here taught me, which he works on a whole range of issues as well, is that, you know, issues have their moments to make progress. And then they have almost when they're when they're stopped and if you work on one issue, you You'll find yourself making progress and stopped. But if you have multiple issues, you can switch to another issue and keep pushing forward. Because these issues are connected. You make progress on that other issue, you often dislodge the blockades of the issue you

were blocked on. When I worked on drug policy, I went to law school wanting to be a lawyer who believed in individual rights and the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and public interest lawyers working for the public interest and that was my kind of headspace going into law school. I wanted to work on criminal defense was where I thought I'd work. So I told the professor in charge of setting up internships and he assigned me to NORML, which is a national organization for reformed marijuana laws. And in doing that, I started out responding to letters from prisoners saw the racism in the prison system, so the impact on individuals and families and communities realize this is a much bigger issue than many people realize. At the time, marijuana legalization was very unpopular, we would get death threats. at normal. I became normal as chief counsel and national director in that era. And I found even there that this simple issue of marijuana legalization was tied to so many others the Colombian drug war, drug testing the workplace, the use of the National Guard and military and law enforcement on the spraying of herbicides in Mexico in Kentucky and Tennessee and other states. Mass incarceration, racism, economic impacts so many issues in this simple, seemingly simple one issue of marijuana legalization, then you get the whole medical side of it. medical use of marijuana, or some people thought was a you know, a front for legal adult use. When you got into that issue. You saw the real impacts in people's lives, dealing with a range of serious illnesses for which pharmaceuticals are not always very good or have serious side effects. And so, we've gone from getting death threats when I was working there, to the point now where we have 65% support for adult use and 85% for medical marijuana being legal. And so it's an amazing transformation. It's great to actually see that kind of success. So, everywhere I've worked on every issue I've worked on, I've seen connections to other issues. And I've seen that no one person makes a difference, but you have to bring people together. And it's creating that kind of more movement mentality. And I found that in the drug policy issue, when we started to link, mandatory sentencing, medical marijuana forfeiture, foreign policy issues, legal marijuana, all these issues together. And people started to think as a movement, that we really started to have victories and I think that was a critical part of why we made some progress. Finally, the United And those issues? I'm not sure I'm answering your question. I'm kind of rambling on a bit, but I hope that gives you some sense of the way I approach these issues.

Danny Sjurson

Oh, absolutely. You know, I, personally, I think I took what's a fairly conventional journey for a lot of veterans who end up in the anti war movement, which is, you know, I didn't start out linking these things, you know, it was more slow. I was so deep in the beast that it started out as, Oh, like, these wars aren't working. And so that was, that's what I was concerned with. And then it was, well, maybe these wars aren't really a you know, shouldn't be fought in the first place. Maybe they are unethical and and then it kept growing until eventually i've you know, I personally started to see Wait a second like the war is at home in the wars abroad. And I really liked your use of the marijuana issue there because it is one of those seemingly rare but maybe not so rare, even for pessimists like me, although that's a fair term. But you know, it's one of those rare victories, right? Which which happened, and maybe we don't even notice them. Because you're right. I mean, there's been such a sea change on that issue. I can't even imagine how that must appear to you from the start. So, building on sort of all that awesome personal and professional context, I'm gonna dig in specifically to the foreign domestic thing. You know, I'm super impressed by your consistent linkage, as you mentioned, the domestic to the international in all American systems and policies, and I think systems being the key word. It's frankly refreshing. I

mean, there's a lot of talk these days about what I think the kids call intersectionality. Now, obviously, I'm just playing a curmudgeon there because whether in you know, academia where we use interdisciplinary as our kind of preferred term, or activism, you know, the sentiment the strategy is clearly vital to success and also just basic respect for the collectives. However, in practice, there are still far too many folks that are sort of stovepipes in their pet cause or, or even more so method of advancement of Horse here. I'm thinking of the academics who increasingly write books discernable only to each other, and then turn into pumpkins if they show up at a rally, like their students, right? Oftentimes, unfortunately, not all of them. So as a follow up, maybe you can provide just a little bit more detail of your take on the concept specifically, how you've seen it progressed for you over the years, and why you've linked foreign and domestic policy across your work and analysis.

Kevin Zeese

A lot of boy, a lot of issues in that. First before I get to the foreign and domestic agenda, I think is really important. We just say this on how movements progress is something that I've also learned over years of experience and learning, not just their experience, but from reading and understanding the history moves on and we've Margaret Flowers and I was my co director Margaret Flowers. She's a doctor and I'm a lawyer we called Red poppy resistance. We've put together in movement school how social transformation occurs. Go to popular resistance org. On the top, you'll see school it's a web based school aid classes with lots of reading materials. And you want to read those eight video classes each an hour long. And it really goes through how movements succeed. And there's a lot we can talk much more about that I think it's really important right now, because we're going into a a decade, the 2020s, especially with the COVID virus and the economic collapse. But even before that, we saw this 2020s over a decade of transformation because there are so many crisis issues the country is facing from our never ending wars, to inadequate health care to poverty and housing issues, education issues, whole range race issues is incredibly crisis levels now, and as a result, we are going into a period of potential significant change but to do so, we have to really be conscious of what we're doing and what we're facing. And that's why I did this school on how social transformation occurs. On the foreign domestic issue, you know, one of the groups I work with is unique, the United National anti war coalition and their view of war is stop the wars that abroad and stop the wars in home. Because wars abroad, we see these never ending wars that started after 911. We see foreign policy that goes back almost to the founding of the country that's based on militarism, first, and in the manifest destiny of taking large chunks of indigenous or all indigenous land and large chunks of Mexico to create the lower 48. And that was long time wars for the Italian economy and manifest destiny as really given birth to us Empire which is the largest empire in global history. We have at least 800 military bases, probably 1200 military bases and outposts. Hard to count them because the government doesn't really like to let those know brings out the best guests that are 12 to 1300. military bases in outpost. They put that in historical perspective. Rome, England when they're at their peak of Empire had less than 40 military bases. So we are an empire bases like no other. We have military forces in almost every country of the world. It's a massive part of our federal budget. And as a result, more than half of our discretionary spending goes into the military. It's one of the trillion dollars, we include the Pentagon and the other agencies that are part of it. And so that spending has an impact domestically, because while we, while the Congress will always say yes to war funding, without any question of how do we pay for it, they will always say when it comes to health care, how do we pay for it when it comes to free college? How do we pay for it? And

so they throw up the fear of debt when it comes to necessary economic and Social Services at home. But when it comes to war, military spending, the Pentagon asked for money in the Congress gives them more. And there's no hesitation about giving more money. So that's one aspect of the domestic and international relationship. Another aspect of it is militarization. You know, we have a program in the federal government that supplies military equipment to police. And so over the last 30, I'd say since the 70s. Till now, we've seen the police militarized in incredible ways there were never a SWAT team, as that is something that's relatively new to the US police experience, but now it's the norm. SWAT teams, almost every police jurisdiction has them. These are military units that even serve search warrants. They're aggressively used, and we see this military gear. Now that's so common among military, militarized police throughout the country, even even using tanks I in urban areas, and so the violence of the police has become outrageous, especially in black and brown communities. We see way too often, killings of people from communities of color that just are reprehensible. And when the videos are seen people are shocked by them. It's just become so common and such a major issue of our times. And so we have essentially a war at home. I know in my city of Baltimore, like many cities, cities are very segregated. And we I'd say Baltimore's hyper segregated we have what's called the white I that goes down the center of the city and along the coast of the Chesapeake. And then we have the black butterflies that east and west coast, east and west portions that cities that are neglected, under invested in and have 40,000 abandoned houses and people in those communities are lacking jobs lacking the income and the not lacking in police. Police are there to essentially keep people in those black butterflies. So they don't invade the white L. And I that's true in many cities, police are used as an occupying force in poor and communities of color. And they're used as a force to keep those communities separate from the wealthier neighborhoods. So we have a war home that we have to face up to. And I think this militarization issue is one that we have to confront. And I think we're gonna see the end of us empire in this decade. Some of the signs of a failing Empire. We are willing to do our job as citizens of empire to end the US Empire in the way it's least disruptive to the world and to the people united states, because it's it's going to end empires doing. No empires ever survived. And there's lots of signs, lots of scholars believe the signs are in place right now for us Empire to be in its fading glory.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

So building on Danny's question and your comments about police brutality and militarization. I find that there are a few examples of the link between Imperial and domestic policy that are more clear and crucial than policing. It seems that both police brutality and militarization have continued unabated in the era of the Coronavirus. The death and murder investigation of Mr. De Berry, in addition to other deaths involving law enforcement since the virus has has been out there have reminded us that while while some can afford to be in quarantine Working Class and certainly people of color have had to expose themselves more than others not just to the virus, the virus but also continuing to be exposed to police violence. Alongside that, there have been numerous law enforcement related anniversaries recently. I'm thinking of the 50th anniversary of the first SWAT team mission by the LAPD integrating Black Panthers. Kevin, I'm sure you're very familiar with it, which we did six people and began the era of police militarization as we know it, shortly followed just a bit bit later by the Kent State massacre that saw four innocent students dead at the hands of the National Guard. So, Kevin, how have you viewed police brutality and militarization in our current time of coronavirus? Do you see any change possible in this era, possibly from some of the newer recipes that have been making some bigger And as far as

advocates for peace and anti militarism, where do you think the focus should be when it comes to critically advocating for good habits and police officers?

Kevin Zeese

Great, great points. And I think really good points about COVID virus era, because both on international and domestic fronts, as you pointed out, the militarization continues. It's it's kind of shocking to the world that the US is escalating the economic wars that we call sanctions, the illegal unilateral, coercive measures against countries like Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Iran, Thailand, they're all in health crisis that were denying them access to medicines is just really very bad example for the United States. I think in this COVID crisis era at home, it's going to be we've seen in New York City for example. 84% of those arrested for violating stay at home. org And the six foot and six foot rules and the not wearing masks have been black. Incredible pictures of white police going to white neighborhoods in New York handing out face masks, while in black news, they arrest people for not wearing face masks. And so the racist racist police enforcement has been very obvious during that time. And I suspect that this COVID virus, you can see also in the response to the militarized protests of these on a right wing protests in Michigan, where the protesters ran dish weapons and even go into the statehouse, with weapons. You don't see police really pushing back well against that and allowing that to go on. And so there's a real interesting conflicts, there are some consistencies and the racism this virus This COVID virus has really magnified so many of the issues of inequality, class warfare, racism, domestic militarization, lack of access to health care, all these issues have been magnified. These are all problems that existed. But with the COVID virus and the economic collapse, they're all being made brighter for everybody to see. I think that's gonna lead to significant change. We asked potential change, I see great potential for change. It's been really kind of striking. There have been several hundred Wildcat strikes since March in the United States barely reported in the media. Of course, those militarized right wing protests open up the account, they get a lot of attention because that's consistent with the goals those who want to get the economy and profits rolling again, but those are those who are frontline workers who are facing risk risk at work and not provided with protective gear. Not for With hazard pay, they're actually going on strike them in hundreds of strikes now. And they're all range of kinds of work. It's not just the service workers, you have the food providers, you have fruit growers, transit workers, a whole range of workers have been going on strike. And we've also seen rent strikes people saying that they can't afford rent and food and so they're not going to pay their rent and urging rules protect renters from having to pay rent during this crisis and avoid addiction during this crisis. And at the same time, there's now a general strike campaign, which popular resistance is helping the organizing of popular resistance that org you'll see a slider at the top of the page about how you can participate in a general strike. It's a campaign that on a monthly basis, people will do a day of strike as well as support the rent strikes and support. The Wildcat strikes that happening so I see a lot of activity even in this time of People being required to stay home. People being very creative in protesting on a whole range of issues and doing in a way that is safe regarding the spread of the virus. This most of the protests, the more progressive one, but all sorts of activity potential including calls to the incarcerated people, our jails, we have so many people in prison in the United States. Now with 4% of the world's population, we have 25% of the world's prisoners, and half those prisoners are nonviolent offenders. Many of those are not convicted. They're in because they couldn't pay their bail is cash bail system that's caused a real hardship for poorer communities, and people urging for a release of prisoners to prevent the spread of COVID. The death

trap in these prisons we're going to research shows that probably 100,000 prisoners will die of COVID. So there's a cause for that. So I do see a lots of possibilities. My view is that this comes From the people, the reason we've seen a few district attorneys elected who are stopping the prosecution of marijuana and sometimes other drug cases, and are prosecuting police officials, is because people have organized for it. People have craved the political environment for it. And so I don't see it coming from Joe Biden or Donald Trump, potential for future change. I see potential for future change coming from the people leading from below. And that's why the general strike campaign is so important. It's something that's new the United States the idea of a general strike. And it's obviously difficult during the time of COVID and economic collapse, but it's also essential, and it's because it's a campaign it's going to grow, you will get more skilled at it. And I think by October of September, October, November, when the 2020 elections at its peak, you're going to see these general strike campaigns really grow. Then after the election, whoever's elected is going to find the country difficult to govern, because people are going to be demanding a whole range of issues, like improved Medicare for all, like raising wages, like a basic income. There's a whole range of issues that are reaching approaching fruition. We just need the people be organized to demand it. And if we do that, I think amazing decade and transformation that will go down in history like some of the previous decades, we've seen the 1930s 1960s major changes to happen.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

it would be wonderful to see that kind of change. I don't honestly know where to place myself in whether or not I see that there if there is a potential but I, I will mention that already. We've seen law enforcement become more brazen. The one example I'm thinking of this is that during the trial of Michael Ross field in each East Pittsburgh at the tail end of 2019 that the police actually use dump trucks filled with gravel and police barricades to block the streets during the trial, given the local with local was responsible in there. So I'm I'm expecting police wise I think things are gonna end up being worse than better over the long run. But...

Kevin Zeese

Conflict...conflict is part of change. You know, unfortunately, that's an unfortunate reality. I mean, when the conflict heightens that just sharpens people's understanding of the issues and and so yes, I'm sure some police will respond when they start to see their colleagues prosecuted for violence they used to get away with but the changes that's not going to be in the long run, that kind of activity is not going to be acceptable, public will in the end will not put up with it. So I just see. Yes, there will be conflict but we change and that's why we did the popular resistance School, you know, I mentioned the website and on top of the pages of school because we want people when we see this transformation happen, our experiences that it's not one leader that does it. It's a movement that's led by multiple leaders. And so to have multiple leaders who we get educated about how they can make progress, and we cover on a daily basis, movements, and so we try to keep track of we've done this since occupy we started organizing occupy in 2011. We started doing it then and we've continued since then, you know, it's very interesting during occupy which was a national uprising. The number of set the percentage of the population involved in occupy at its peak was one 10th of 1% of the population point 1%. a tiny amount of people and yet we saw the FBI, Homeland Security Police Departments all having conference calls each week. Why don't we do it optimally? How do we do it they sent infiltrators into occupy

encampments. They use violence against occupying campus, they were so panicked about it, point 1% of the population. Since then, while we're not all is easily measured now, because it's not longer people living in encampments, what we've seen is a whole series of fronts of struggle advance. You saw the Black Lives Matter movement, the fight for 15 movement, the climate justice movements, in blocking of pipelines and infrastructure for fossil fuels, debt strikes, and a whole range of we estimate that about 1% of the public so 10 times more, about 1% of the public now is involved in popular movements and they were during occupy so we've grown a great deal. And that's pretty typical of how movements develop and, you know, we've set up popular resistance Because we want people to be able to know what's going on when it comes to movements. We don't expect the corporate media to cover it. And so we cover it. And you can sign up for a free Daily News summary, cover about 15 articles a day, you get about four or five lines in your email about each articles as RV are turned on by you click on get the full story. And then we urge people to be the media, because one of the big battle funds that's why you're this kind of podcast and you're writing Danny so important is because one of the big battle fronts is the narrative and the corporate media and the bipartisan Washington politicians in Washington z on their narrative, and they're doing their best to block us. The way that we win is by putting our narrative out and each of us has to think of us ourselves as the media. We all have networks of people we talk to by email by social media by Coalition's and if every day, we take an article or two from the video. digest of news on the media on the on the on the on the popular movements and spread that word, we are creating the narrative. And that has an impact we can overcome the corporate media, if we work together to do it. So, eye movements grown a great deal since occupy and the issues issues have heightened to the point of crisis. These are the ingredients that lead me to feel confident that the 2020s are going to be a decade of transformation. So if we work together to do it, we can make it happen.

Danny Sjursen

Yeah. Can I like a lot of what you're saying, regarding sort of, yes, there's gonna be some violence and there's going to be resistance from the powers that be. And I think one of the things that's always been striking to me about, you know, my study of, you know, broad movements and social justice in American history is that one of the advantages, it's, it's, you know, tumultuous and dangerous, but one of the advantages of situations like that Today on a general strikes and, you know, activism in general is that push to the limit, it sort of forces, whether it be law enforcement, or just government power in general, to sort of expose itself, right, eventually have to overtly make a choice I am or I am not willing to take violence, you know, on some level against this movement that I might otherwise sympathize with that my own mother might support. And that strikes me. And it does seem as you talk about, you know, race and policing that some of the change, not all but some of the change may well come from our sort of internal colonies, right, folks of color who experienced the police in a different way. And you mentioned Baltimore, of course, what most Americans know about Baltimore comes from the wire and of course, you know, I was a fan I thought it was a great show. But one of the interesting things about the wire is, you know, you can watch five seasons and the the characters in sort of You know, the drug game in western East Baltimore. I mean, they never really go to the inner harbor except in like one episode, and there really aren't any white folks that they interact with that aren't police. And, and it strikes me I'm not from Baltimore that Well, those sorts of folks don't experience that part of Baltimore at all. And so there's this idea of sort of two Americas. And

Kevin Zeese

that cut. Go ahead, please. This is a lot of truth in that. And as I was just as loud truth in that for every city, we have our inner harbor, but other cities have other areas that are the wealthy, Central Park of New York, you know, and versus the the poorer parts of New York and every city has this, I think, division. It's a very sad reality. One thing I just want to say, as you were talking, I was thinking about this. When you start to study how movements succeed, you realize that, at some point the security personnel the police and other security personnel will start to divide. And they will start to support the movement. And that's really when you're starting to getting close to victory. And I've seen that multiple times. In fact, in the drug issue, I remember when, when a lot of former police narcotics agents formed a group called Law Enforcement Against Prohibition, that work to end drug prohibition because they saw how it was so bad to the police. And so divided when you start to learn how to pursue movements, what you do is a review of the various groups that are impacted by whatever you're working on you. It's a spectrum of allies, you find people who are with you, people who are somewhat with you, people are neutral people who are partly against you, you want to move everyone a little bit more toward your position of being on your side. And so you actually target your actions in order to divide the opposition and build your case build your support because the reason movements win Because of the mass movements, fringe, women's fail, mass movements when and mass movements seek to seek to get people from the power structure to join them. And that means not just people from law enforcement, but people from business owners, media representatives, the duopoly, the corporate political duopoly, the political parties, you want divisions in there. And so when you when you're organizing a movement, and you start to actually think about it in a conscious way to try to accomplish an objective, you're strategic about it, and you organize actions in order to pull people from those power structures to the movement. So your movement grows, and there and the opposition divides.

Danny Sjurson

Absolutely. And I agree that there there is something afoot in terms of, you know, agents of the Empire starting to divide. For the first time, really in the last couple of years. I've noticed I can't even really find all that many military folks. I'm talking to professional military guys that I know, who are willing to defend the the broad contours of the empire in any real way. I mean, they may say, Oh, well, we can't retreat or this or that, or you know, at the margins, but there's not really a lot of like, professional soldiers are just at the point where they're saying, Okay, I'm not going to bother to really defend this. And, like you mentioned with that happening in law enforcement, and there is always that, you know, Daisy and the rifle barrel moment right where the the soldier or the cop refuses to shoot. So, you know, pivoting back to the foreign and domestic connection, something I really want to talk about, and it really does relate to the drug war. We're told by the mainstream media and by the government, mainly, that what's going on in Venezuela is directly related to this drug war, right that somehow, you know, Nicolas Maduro gangster drug, you know, trafficker is responsible for every, you know, heroin overdose on the street in Staten Island, where I'm from right where we have an epidemic. And so turning to Venezuela specifically because I know you have some expertise here. One of the things that jumped out about to me in your remarks at our joint Assange visual, were the stories you told about your role and protests on this. On this concern, you know, particularly surrounding the embassy to the Trump team's flagrant support of the unelected and demonstrably unpopular one wide Oh, coup attempt last year in Venezuela.

instructively

Danny Sjursen

I think for our listeners, that all went down before the latest mercenary madness, you know, the former Green Berets of, you know, I can't remember the name of the silver core or whatever, and you're like, Guys, I would not want to sit down and have a beer with right. And my own sense as you likely saw my latest column for the American Conservative is that as absurd as it was in many aspects this aborted coup. I think we dismissed At our kind of collective peril, you know, due to it being wholly consistent with Uncle Sam sort of past imperialism in the region, and also that it reflects so many of the broader aspects of what's, you know, a not so new but new American way of war that we see developing right, the use of contractors and proxies. So I've labeled the Venezuela debacle more of one of foreboding and farce. Admittedly, though, I do a better job in the piece of the deep backstory, right? Because that's kind of what I know, then the immediate one, so I was hoping maybe you could sort of do two things for us. Frame what happened in the context of the last several but particularly last couple of years in Venezuela, and then you know, sort of respond to my knees and thesis regarding what it pretends if anything, and do tell me if I'm way off, because I'd be delighted, frankly, if this is more of a one off than a reflection of, you know, past and present proxy war.

Kevin Zeese

Now, this event, as well as a long term effort by the United States over multiple presidencies ever since Chavez was elected in 1998, and became president now. Now, the US is wanting to take back then as well as well always been a US controlled state, up until that time had been a major source from oil for oil since the 1920s. And the US oil companies profited tremendously from it. The election of Chavez was a rejection of us domination. 2002 coup attempt by President Bush led to Chavez being taken out of office for two days until the people came back and immediately demanded his return, he was returned to the presidency and became more radical after that people pushed him you'd be more radical than he had been. He'd been more cautious. But after that coup failed, he got more radical President Maduro who took his place after Chavez died, he was elected by a slim margin, then reelected again recently in a very legitimate election, despite what the corporate media says I was there for that election, then as well as one of the best democracy run in the world. It's a much more real democracy The United States is so called independence. Well, dictatorship is just obscene if you know the reality. And as well as as 95%. Registration rates 20%. They make sure that voters have voting machines that make sure that people wait four or five hours in line like they do in the United States to vote. It's much more efficient, and they have voting machines that are foolproof as far as fraud goes, because they're both like tronic bout and a paper ballot that's reviewed by the voter then put into a ballot box and what they do that no other country does in the world, is they on election night, at every polling place. They do a selection of 54% of the machines, random selection 54% machines, and they count the paper balance. For each of those machines in public. They show the public Media opposition, all parties are totally open. Here's the ballot, they show it, they count it. And if the vote count and the electronic count match, then the electronic count is good. If not, they count every ballot by by the paper ballot. So that's a and it starts with voting starts with a fingerprint and enter the fingerprint. So you

know, there's no fraud in a paper ballot. It's a very clear election, and the US knew they were going to lose that election. So they tried to create a boycott of that election, but it didn't work. We still had a turnout that was about equivalent to what the United States says, For our presidential races, which is low for that as well. But it was still equivalent to that. And there were more than 200 election observers from around the world for that election. And they unanimously agreed it met all the standards of democracy under international law, so quality as well. And that's just part of the story about and as well as democracy has much more to say about it. It's really goes down to the grassroots level and developing directly Democracy, not just a representative democracy, which is a fantastic evolution I'd love to talk about, but we probably don't have enough time to go through all those details. As far as as far as this recent, it was a farce this, this recent attempt in the US was clearly involved as much as pence says there was no direct involvement. Well, that's that's a nice code for there was indirect involvement. But they have multiple bases in Colombia where these these these mercenaries are being trained. There's no way the US was not aware of that. There's a DEA agent who was one of the people arrested in this event. There were two former US paramilitaries arrested the event is absolutely no way the US did not know about this. In fact, the US probably funded it. In fact, you know, Guido's name is on the contract and if the lawyers for you, so record that organizers are actually suing quite Oh for payment. So it's just as a farce in that way but it's not a farce is a serious effort the US is not giving up us is escalating its economic sanctions, which are illegal, unilateral, coercive measures illegal under us international law, but they are causing terrible problems and then as well 40,000 deaths in two years, according to the Center for Economic and Policy Research. 40,000 deaths caused by us sanctions, because we're pharmaceuticals are not able to come into the country. That is why one of the strongest pharmaceutical manufacturing markets in Latin America before the sanctions but because of the sanctions, they were unable to get the precursors, or some of the pharmaceutical drugs, and half their pharmaceutical industry had to close. And so it's just a real devastation, but the people of Venezuela are Not giving up. They're rallying around Maduro. He's getting more popular. He's doing an amazing job of creating more than 3 million social housing units, 3 million units of housing, each failing about four people. That's 12 million people that free housing. In the midst of this economic war. 12 million people have a population of 32 million in free housing. Even in the midst of the economic war. They provide 6 million boxes of food, food and kitchen utensils each month to households again for four people warehouse, oh, that's 24 million households. 24 million people getting those boxes of food and other supplies. What was the US reaction, US reaction to sanction those involved in providing those supplies? That's the craziness of the United States sanction people were brought in providing food in Venezuela. And so but euro is actually more popular. Now than he ever was. And that's because he has stood up to the United States people rally when I was in Venezuela, even people who oppose Maduro, from a left perspective, would not criticize it because the most important thing was to stop us imperialism. They did not want us domination. As far as the drug charges go, even the DEA his own maps on how drugs come the United States show that Venezuela is a minor player. In that the fact that event as well kicked out the DEA in 2004. And since that time, they've increased their seizures of drugs, because the was really focused more on regime change. And on drug enforcement in countries like Colombia and Honduras, where the US is really in control and allied with those governments. Those are the real drug producing and drug shipment countries. In fact, the brother of the president of Honduras who was put in place by the Obama Clinton regime as a coup d'etat hit the brother was convicted US federal court for drug trafficking and the President was mentioned multiple times in that

case for being involved in the drug trafficking. So the real criminals when it comes to the drug issue are the US closest allies, Honduras, and Colombia. Venezuela is doing its best to enforce the drug laws and is a minor player in drug shipments. That's a totally false charge. But it's so bizarre for the US to put a bounty on the head of President Maduro and other leaders in that country. \$50 million bounty on President Maduro said 10 million on other people and other other other leaders. So it's going to invite the kind of soldiers of fortune that we saw in that last farce. But make no mistake about the US is behind this, will you escalate this. And again, I also didn't tell you that as well and people are so deeply educated again. US imperialism, I was so impressed by the deep education. I've been in as well, twice in the last couple years. One of the times I went to a number of rallies in support of Maduro, they were just massive. Hundreds of thousands you couldn't see beginning to end. They were so, so massive. And at the same time, Guido announced a protest, we tried to find his rules, he could even find them. Most of them were canceled because he's gotten less popular since that time. Now one of the most amazing experiences I had was going to their most popular TV show. This is a five hour weekly show one one night a week, five hours. This show goes for and it's a political show. It's a mixture of Saturday Night Live. It's a mixture of music and dance, and political commentary. It's led by the person who's the head of the National Constituent Assembly, and he does in the shuttling The show we saw taped. He had three Bolton boards up each board had postcards on it. He went through each postcard is a political story. And he reviewed each political story and discuss it with the audience. So this is the most popular show in Venezuela. And it's a deep show. And they do these songs that are about Bolivarian process and support for the people. They have dances like there's a whole section of military members of military and they're dancing. It was just it was just an amazing thing. The next day we went to the, to our hotel restaurant, all the waiters knew we work with everyone who's seen the show. And they made us all to have individually recognized us and they also want to install solving we were but that's the kind of public education they have. It's a multi level process and political education so that if the US were to come into Venezuela, in a military way, us would be defeated Not only does Venezuela with 200,000 In person military, as well as National Guard and police, they have more than three and a half million people trained and armed as civilian militia to stand up against an invasion. So if the US or Colombia or Brazil were to come in, they'd be standing up to civilian militia that would include teenagers to grandmothers armed and trained to fight the movie a bloody defeat for the US and its allies. On top of that, Russia and China are allied with Venezuela Russia has provided Venezuela with anti aircraft weaponry to prevent aircraft attack. And they've also been us has threatened to do a naval blockade. They Russia's threatened to put ships in Port Venezuela, and China has also invested in so if you go into Venezuela, knighted states, you're not just fighting Venezuela, you're fighting Russia and China as well. This becomes a regional and potential global conflict and the terrible effects for the United States to think they can easily go into Venezuela and steal their natural resources, and they have a lot of natural reserves. Number one in gold, number one in diamond, number one in oil reserves on all three, they're number one, they have number five and gas worldwide. They have vast resources of minerals that are essential for electronics and weapons versus I would think that the US really wants one anything else. And so they have a lot of natural resources, but they will not allow their country to be taken over by the United States. Again, they've experienced that don't want to go back to back to the past, which is so devastating.

Yeah, it's,

Danny Sjurson

it's so interesting what you're describing, because there's such a gap. And this, I think, is something that popular resistance helps fill. There's an enormous gap it appears from what the official government immediate narrative is of like, what life's like whether it's in Cuba or in Venezuela, and then like what international observers and all these other groups and then just citizens see it as and then that's a huge thing and something else that jumps out at me is how counterproductive American policy in Venezuela ultimately is. Right? And so obviously, it would be a massive bloodbath for everybody if the United States attempted something over. I mean, and you mentioned these militias. I mean, fishermen pulled some of these, you know, mercenaries out of the water, which I think is so instructive about what you're saying, and also a little bit inspiring. And, and, you know, you look at the last time the United States backed like an embarrassing coup, the one you mentioned in 2002, right, where, you know, he was sort of saved. You know, Chavez was after a few days out of office, you know, in the six years after that nine countries in Latin America nine elected left leaning and foreign policy independent countries and governments presidents and and it's like, it makes you wonder what the endgame ultimately as for Washington and who's piloting the ship, because it seems so apparent to anyone who just basically does any reading that this hasn't worked. I mean, I guess it's worked if the goal was to hurt the people event as well, but it has not achieved any sort of political reorientation towards the United States.

Kevin Zeese

Well, you know, President Bush was had his eye off the ball in the Middle East, I mean, in Latin America because he was focused on Middle East. And I think that allowed for a lot of the progress. You talked about the the rising left left governments that took power during his administration, but President Obama was the President Obama was an excellent Empire president. He really is much more effective than president bush or certainly President Trump was devastating and terrible for the US Empire, I think in this but President Obama regained a lot of that progress, a whole variety of means were used, whether it was the legal approach the legislative approach as far as knocking The Labour Party out of out of office in Brazil, you know, and keeping Lula in jail, or whether it was, you know, just you could pick each country and go through it. But you're seeing a rising tide again, in Latin America, a strong undercurrent in the countries that the US has taken back are in conflict. And if the people get the power, they will return those left governments and Venezuela is so key because if Ben as well as stands up and succeeds against this onslaught, that began escalate under Obama, and then is escalating more under Trump, if they succeed is gonna be a symbol to other countries. And that's really one of the major reasons why us is not giving up is they can't have the symbol of a country succeeding in breaking from us Empire and doing well on its own. That symbol is just too dangerous now, it plays in a geopolitical sense because Russia, China, Iran, and other countries are coming to the aid of Venezuela when they're under attack. nited states because we're going through an age of ending of us unilateral domination and us hegemony to an age of multilateralism, not just the major powers, but also smaller countries joined together. And so I think it's a much more interesting future internationally, and much more democratic future and nationally, when dollar diplomacy is weakened, received, and we can constantly now as USA spread sanctions to cover one third of the population in the world, countries are now joining with each other to fight against us sanctions, final ways around Wall Street and creating

their own tools for trade that doesn't include the dollar and so it's very self defeating for the United States. When it keeps attacking with attempted dollar domination. It's just not it's just not working. And then the US military is so bloated and so weighty that our country, the economy just can't handle it anymore. And with this coven crisis and global economic collapse, it makes it even more difficult. The US military funded and you mentioned some people military turning against the military. Well, that COVID outbreak and this is this is not there was just that one recent example in Vietnam and you know, where the captain The ship was forced was was kick was was fired, and the troop the shipmates all stood up for him. And by the time I bring him back in the system, amazing mess of the troops saying no, to the political, the military leadership, it's just and that's just one example you're seeing COVID is a big problem in the Navy. And that's because it's not built for preventing outbreaks. It's built for everyone sleeping close to each other, eating together, and that's a kind of a maiden Helfer virus. It's gonna mean viruses spread rapidly. So the US military is very deep problems. And us gi problems around the world as countries unite against us attempted domination, even Europe is starting to break, even Europe. Now the attempt to divide Europe and Russia, that's starting to falter. You saw recently with a massive military exercise that was going to be against Russia that was cancelled because Johnny said, No, we can't you can't use our country for that. You saw that with the efforts of trying to stop the pipeline from Russia to Germany. Again, it's going forward. So even with even with all that you're seeing divides now, the US really sees the big threat is China. And that's why they're trying to use COVID to escalate conflict with China. This nonsense story that the virus started in the lab which has been disproven and disproven and screwed we have an article on popular resistance today about that, in fact, the escalation of conflict with China is a response to China becoming the global power through its Belt and Road initiative. That goes That connects China, with Europe through Middle East and through Africa through Russia. And that is the future of the economy. And us is very afraid of that. Because that will be what drives the economy in the second half of this century. And the US is doing its best with this COVID virus to really turn the world against China. But I'd be surprised if it works. China is very smart and how it handles these crises. And they handle the virus at home Well, and they're also just increased their funding to the World Health Organization while us has cut back. So China is rising in the face of us mistakes.

Danny Sjursen

Yeah, this is totally vital. And so as we sort of, you know, get ready to close out I want to transition using some of your points. I mean, I think you're pointing out some of the obsolescence of some of the key tools of Empire, right? Whether it's, you know, you can't measure you can't fight a pandemic or climate change with an aircraft carrier or a tank and You know, even NATO and some of these old alliances are, are showing themselves as a little bit obsolete as theirs as they're taking an independent road almost like you wonder if there'll be a new non aligned sort of movement that takes on the mantle even stronger than it did you know, at Bandung and 55 this is all important. And then one of the other things that strikes me as potentially obsolete and I'm outing myself a little bit here is the duopoly because you mentioned how Obama kind of waged a counter offensive after Bush left and specifically in Latin America. And so you saw the coup in Honduras. And, of course, the remarkable citizen resistance that still ongoing to that coup, but, you know, he supports that coup, the madness in Brazil that we're Of course, seeing with bolson arrows, you know, deadly farcical response. Obama sort of did come back, you know, and, and it makes me wonder how different say a Biden president would be on

Empire right on the course. systemic issues. And so let me ask you and of course, I know that I'm setting you up for attack. Because, you know, recently my gambling on Biden foreign policy articles stirred up as I suspected, and probably hoped to provoke a bit of a shitstorm. And I figure if the polite Emperor that you mentioned uses that particular cuss word, then it must be permissible for all of us.

Kevin Zeese

Oh, bye, bye, bye, bye bye is architected Empire. I mean, he was, of course, chairman of Foreign Relations Committee. He did more to push the Iraq War than Bush, it was terrible. He only allow generals and admirals who supported the word testify. Those who oppose or were not allowed to testify. He was much more than just vote for it. He shepherded through that false weapons of mass destruction, war and the damage that caused so he's an architect of Empire. He will not be a good I mean, but Biden has been on the opposite. Almost every issue I've worked on my whole career. He's also an architect to the drug war. The crazy drugs ours off See poses still opposes marijuana legalization even now, he was terrible on student debt. So even in bankruptcy, students are stuck with that on issue after issue Biden is about the worst of all democrats and so I can't see anyone who's really votes based on issues to vote for him and the only way you can vote for Biden's if you just voted against Trump. I think a lot of people will do that. But that's I think a wasted vote in my view is this election is too important to waste your vote on Trump or by night. I'm working with the Howie Hawkins campaign on hawkins.us is the website and that's the leading Green Party candidates are one of the founders of the Green Party was the first candidate ever run on the green New Deal. And so in 2010, he's an anti imperialist. He is a labor organizer. He's a retired teamster is the vice presidential candidate Angela is a walker is also a working class candidates of two working class candidates running I think that's the place to put your effort. Because history shows, throughout US history, we've had this corporate two party system where the biggest businesses support the two parties. But we made progress on a whole range of issues, from slavery to union rights to voting rights for women, civil rights for blacks, eight arm so the traditional way, what's made us win as people throughout our history is not electing the president. It's creating mass movements, combined with third parties that did not win, but put issues on the agenda. And that combination of third parties putting issues on the agenda, putting the issues of the movement on the agenda is what's created a lot of transformational change. And I think this year is too important to waste your vote on Biden who is silent on the coat COVID crisis was no ideas for the economic collapse. Terrible on climate change terrible on you pick the issue he's not and then Trump is the worst president my life. How can you vote for either one of those two? It's It's a choice of two Wall Street, corrupted politicians, when we have crises that we're facing need to build a movement and get our movement issues into the agenda through a third party campaign, so that's why I'm supporting Howie Hawkins re party.

Danny Sjursen

Yeah, this is, uh, this is so important, and I think a good place to sort of close out, you know, you, you sort of, you knew where I was going with it. And you gave the exact answer that I was hopeful for. And and I think the most important thing you mentioned, you know, despite the fact that there is really sort of a civil war brewing right, within the left, if you want to call it that, you know, anything that divides, Chris Hedges and Jimmy Dore and Noam Chomsky and Cornel West is a significant thing. But the point you make is valid and the one that I don't hear enough is the one you just made, which is that on any of

these major social issues that you mentioned, from slavery to civil rights, you name it. Nothing was ever given to the people right? Kennedy didn't. Ted Kennedy didn't give civil rights to African Americans he was forced, and Johnson was forced and Lincoln was forced by the abolitionists who no one remembers were considered crackpots. And they were a tiny, tiny group at first. These people are

Kevin Zeese

usually about the abolitionists, when they were 20 years of abolition parties before the republicans before Abraham Lincoln. And during the abolition party era. They were called spoilers, because they spoiled it for the Whigs and the democrats who were the two slavery parties. they spoil it because they they support they hurt the Whigs, which were the democrats of that era. They were more the anti Mexican War party, but they were still pro slavery. So we're called spoilers today. We're not spoilers. We are the ones that are on the right side of history. We are the ones pushing to confront climate change, to confront inequality to put in place public health measures including single payer Medicare for all The National Health Service, were the ones actually putting forth the agenda as needed. We're not spoiling it, we're saving elections.

Danny Sjursen

And it's that movement of movements that you're talking about that either will or must bring down the duopoly or transforms it irreparably. And I think that's what you're doing over there popular resistance. So if you can, you know, tell the listeners how they can support you. And no, I just think we need to really direct people in your, in your way,

Kevin Zeese

the mostly, most of us have come to conferences, and participate. We have a daily digest, where you get Daily News reports, and you can pick up the stories that interest you and share those with other people so you can break the barrier that they're trying to put in place, the corporate corporate media and the algorithm and you know, all the efforts to suppress our views. break that barrier by getting a daily digest and sharing it. We also weekly newsletter, one, one The newsletters you can see on the website was about the 2020 elections and why we have to work outside the duopoly build the movement, support third parties go through the history, market fires. And I go through the history of how third parties combined, the social movements make change. So you understand that history where you can do it there. You can also take on go to art movement, school, how social transformation occurs, and prepare yourself to be a leader of this coming, transformational decade. And so populations that org provides all that stuff for no charge, you'll make a donation, that's great. But the most important thing is for you to participate in being a political moment that's multitudes. Lots of leaders becomes an unpredictable force becomes a dominant force that the government cannot ignore or stop and so just participate popularizes that org, get involved.

Danny Sjursen

And thanks so much, Kevin. Do check out the site, podcasts, you know everything that they link to the school. Thank you for giving us your time. I'm in what we know is just crazy moment. And I really hope we can do this again, thank you for everything you do, personally for me and much more importantly for just all the activists on all the levels out there. It's been a pleasure, man.

Kevin Zeese

Great, thanks a lot. Keep up the great work. Thanks. Thanks a lot.