

2023-05-12

## HARD NEWS ON FRIDAY

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, **organized** citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."  
**Margaret Mead**  
<https://leandroherrero.com/the-missing-word-in-the-famous-margaret-mead-quote/>

### DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

- I ACCESS to THE THREE WEEKLY CALLS via the Internet
- II ACCESS to OTHER CALLS SUPPORTED BY 2013 Rainbow Roundtable
- III OPENING MEDITATION; HOUSEKEEPING; LINK TO PODCAST
- IV SATURDAY HISTORY CALL – NOTES, REFERENCE MATERIALS

### I B B S RADIO - ACCESS TO THE THREE WEEKLY CALLS <https://bbsradio.com/>

DAY	B B S Station	TIME	PROGRAM	CONFERENCE CALL	HOSTS
Thursday	#1	6 pm Pacific 9 pm Eastern	A Night at the Round Table	None	Panel Members Guests Callers welcome.
Friday	#1	6 pm Pacific 9 pm Eastern	Friday Night Hard News	720-716-7301 Pin Code: 353 863#	Rama, Tara Callers welcome.
Saturday	#2	1:30 pm PT/ 4:30 Eastern	History of our Galactic World & NESARA aka The True History	720-716-7301 Pin Code: 353 863#	Rama, Tara callers welcome.

**NOTE: 2<sup>nd</sup> CONFERENCE CALL # for both Friday, Saturday**  
**605-313-5166**  
 Pin Code: 353 863#

### ADDITIONAL HELP FOR LISTENERS

#### B B S LISTENER TOOLS

**B B S RADIO STATION 1**  
 A Night at the Roundtable  
 Friday Night Hard News

**B B S RADIO STATION 2**  
 Saturday History Call

#### LISTEN ON LINE

CLICK ON **AUDIO ICON**



CLICK ON **AUDIO ICON**



#### LISTEN BY PHONE

**1-631-359-9353**  
 [NO code needed]

**1-804-220-6484**  
 [No code needed]

#### CALL IN TO INTERACT

**Only during live calls**

**1-866-627-6008**  
 Direct: 323-744-4831

**1-888-429-5471**  
 Direct: 323-744-4841

#### ACCESS CUSTOMER SERVICE

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 1-888-710-8061

Direct Line:  
 1-323-744-4828

#### FREE PHONE APPS

- [Free BBS Radio Android phone app](#)
- [Free BBS Radio iPhone and iPad app](#)

#### B B S ARCHIVES

- go to [www.bbsradio.com](http://www.bbsradio.com)
- In **Search** box, enter the name of the required program;
- scroll down to the heading **TALK SHOW PROGRAM ARCHIVES FOR PODCASTING.**
- Find the table listing the dates. Click on required date.

## II ACCESS TO OTHER CALLS SUPPORTED BY Rainbow Roundtable

NAME OF CALL / HOST	WEEKDAY / TIME	ACCESS POINT	TELEPHONE NUMBER
Aboriginal Moabite Nation Call Grand Goddess Lillie	<b>Wednesday</b> 6:00 – 7:30 MST	Telephone Only	<b>1-605-472-5406</b> <b>PIN 402-493#</b>
<b>Abundance Call</b> Caroline Oceana Ryan	<b>Every 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday</b> <b>5:45 PM PT/ 8:45 PM ET</b>	<b>Telephone</b> <b>ZOOM</b>	

To be notified: email <https://www.ascensiontimes.com/the-abundance-group>  
Scroll down to the sign-up sheet and enter the requested info.

<b>Ascension Call</b> Cheryl Croci	<b>Every Sunday, Monday</b> <b>9 – 10:30 EST</b>	<b>Telephone Only</b>	<b>1-425-436-6260</b> <b>PIN 9467 441#</b> Call Cheryl for # in your area
<b>Ashtar Legacy Calls</b> Fran Pearre	<b>Every 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday</b> 5 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday – no call <b>9:00 – 10:00 pm EST</b>	<b>Telephone</b> <b>VOIP/ H D</b> <b>via Skype</b>	<b>1-717-908-1834</b> <b>PIN 980 339#</b> Call is free; LD charges are not <b>1-717-908-1834</b> <b>PIN #980 339#</b> <a href="https://www.freeconferencecallhd.com/hd-conferencing/">https://www.freeconferencecallhd.com/hd-conferencing/</a> Click on VOIP button and enter info as requested

To access past ALC calls, go to [Ashtar Legacy Teleconferences \(ashtarontheroad.com\)](http://ashtarontheroad.com)

## III ARCHIVES: provided by **B B S RADIO** **RAINBOW ROUNDTABLE**

### ARCHIVES: B B S

- Go to [www.bbsradio.com](http://www.bbsradio.com)
- In **Search** box, enter the name of the desired program;
- scroll down to the heading  
**TALK SHOW PROGRAM ARCHIVES FOR PODCASTING**
- Find the table listing the dates. Click on desired date.

### ARCHIVES: Rainbow Roundtable

- Go to <https://www.rainbowroundtable.net/>
- **WRITTEN**
  - Go to **"Archives"** tab: See NOTES on RHS
- **AUDIO**
  - Go to **"Archives"** tab: See AUDIO on LHS:  
Included are both BBS podcast + Conference Call Links

### III OPENING MEDITATION; HOUSEKEEPING; ACCESS TO PODCAST; MAYAN CALENDAR

**A. Opening Meditation:** Rainbird

**B. Mayan Calendar / Record of Days:** Rainbird

- Go to <https://www.spacestationplaza.com> – to locate specific days & lots more information: on the home page, you can find out what your Mayan signature is; while there, look and see where the wave – the birth wave - began

- to learn about the Mayan Calendar, Go to <https://www.spacestationplaza.com> which will link you further to [www.lawoftime.org](http://www.lawoftime.org) website for further information.

**PLEASE LISTEN TO THE PODCAST TO HEAR THE ENTIRE DISCUSSION OF EACH DATE**  
**Also note: This is not a 3<sup>rd</sup> dimensional calendar!**

[www.Spacestationplaza.co](http://www.Spacestationplaza.co) Click on the tzolkein – it's on page 2 of the link.

<b>12<sup>th</sup> Friday</b>	<b>8 CAUAC</b>	<b>Blue Galactic Storm</b>	<b>Visionary</b>
Working with creating transformation for others; gift of possibility of freedom. Let go of fear, illusion of separateness			
<b>13<sup>th</sup> Saturday</b>	<b>9 AHAU</b>	<b>Yellow Solar Sun</b>	<b>Healing</b>
About our rise to Christ consciousness; embrace the gift of unconditional love, our god self			
<b>14<sup>th</sup> Sunday</b>	<b>10 IMIX</b>	<b>Red Planetary Dragon</b>	<b>Artist</b>
Working with beginner energy: work is about creation, trusting in the Universe; clarity of mind-			
<b>15<sup>th</sup> Monday</b>	<b>11 IK</b>	<b>White Spectral Wind</b>	<b>Visionary</b>
About cocreation of heaven on earth; truth in all matters; remember our unity with Spirit; Spirit works through us			
<b>16<sup>th</sup> Tuesday</b>	<b>12 AKBAL</b>	<b>Blue Crystal Night</b>	<b>Visionary</b>
Participation in our abundance, learning from our dream time. Let go of self-judgment			
<b>17<sup>th</sup> Wednesday</b>	<b>13 KAN</b>	<b>Yellow Cosmic Seed</b>	<b>Healing</b>
Our work is openness to life; harmony seeking; 13 is the promise of change! Embrace the possibility of change			
<b>18<sup>th</sup> Thursday</b>	<b>1 CHICCHAN</b>	<b>Red Magnetic Serpent</b>	<b>Warrior</b>
Wave of Chicchan – ASCENSION Day! About remaining open to change; distinguishing between body and soul; the guidance is for equanimity			
<b>19<sup>th</sup> Friday</b>	<b>2 CIMI</b>	<b>White Lunar World Bridger</b>	<b>Warrior</b>
A new moon: 1:53 ET – about being the world bridger, about forgiveness. Let go of that which is no more, belief that life is a struggle!			

#### C. Housekeeping:

- We are asking to **have more people contribute**, as some of the regular, long-term donors are stressed and stretched: **any and all small amounts are helpful and very welcome.**  
Re **T & R**: Their full-time, life-time commitment is to be tuned in to what is really going on behind the scenes of the artificial world we see around us. They don't ask for anything but they do require food, a home, gas for the car, and access to BBS Radio in order to compile and distribute this information to the world.

- Donations via Paypal button on the **homepage** [www.rainbowroundtable.net](http://www.rainbowroundtable.net)

#### **B B S RADIO:**

- The radio programs are supported by us, the listeners.
- The THREE radio programs cost \$300 each week.
- The mailing address for those who do not like paying electronically:

## B B S RADIO

**B B S RADIO**  
**58 N Marshside Place**  
**Spring, TX 77389**

Please put "**Attention Don**" on the envelope  
And note inside: "for Thursday,  
Friday AND Saturday calls"

- All BBS archives can be accessed **FOR FREE** by everyone.
- NB: TO BE FOUND AT [www.rainbowroundtable.net/archives](http://www.rainbowroundtable.net/archives)
  - **AUDIO ARCHIVES** (BBS Radio Podcasts plus Conference Calls) **and**
  - **PROGRAM NOTES** (downloadable and printable **PDFs** )

## OTHER FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

**FOOD MONEY:** VIA PAYPAL OR See the PAGE ON [www.rainbowroundtable.net](http://www.rainbowroundtable.net)

Rama has a pride of Paschats + 2 inside kitties + 2 HUMANS = up to 13 in total

### Financial Requirements

**WEEKLY**  
**B B S RADIO/week**

**\$290 this week + \$290 for last To finish out this week and last week! !! THANK YOU SO MUCH!**

### PERSONAL

Gas, food, etc

Bills

Miscellaneous/Other

\$100.00

\$200.00

\$496.00 To finish car & a new tire

**HAS TO BE PAID ASAP! !!**

Need \$1400 in total

Caroline setting up a GoFundMe

### MONTHLY

**Rent - \$1,150 / mo**  
**Total**

### CONTACT INFO

- Please notify Rama when sending something [koran999@comcast.net](mailto:koran999@comcast.net)
- Mailing address for checks, money orders, etc  
Ram D Berkowitz  
PO Box 280  
Santa Cruz, NM 87567

**EVERY \$5 HELPS - ALL GRATEFULLY RECEIVED**

**PLEASE MAKE AN ATTEMPT TO DONATE THIS MONTH**

**THANKS TO ALL FOR THEIR HELP . . .**

- Remember you can book a session with Mother, as well!

**\*\* [www.rainbowroundtable.net /page/donate](http://www.rainbowroundtable.net/page/donate) \*\***

- Your donation supports an account set up for Tara & Rama with Beneficial Farms Community Supported Agriculture in Santa Fe, NM
- They continue to appreciate each & every donation received for food.
- Please continue to go to [www.rainbowroundtable.net](http://www.rainbowroundtable.net) and link to their Paypal account: choose **family and friends option so Paypal takes off no fees.**

**FREEMART: SUPPLEMENTS.** This account helps Rama & Tara; it's the source of their supplements

The returns also help [www.rainbowroundtable.net](http://www.rainbowroundtable.net)

<https://www.shopfreemart.com/tarram>

a/c # 7000

- Freemart is a private shoppers club; it's **FREE TO JOIN.**
- all the products have much to offer, so take a look!
- check out the heading called **READ MORE: lots of** good information

**FREEMART: NUGEN COIN:** <https://www.nugencoin.com/tarram>

To help Marshall and support him by signing up under his name:

<https://www.nugencoin.com/marnor>

**TO GET HELP, Call Carolyn [Rainbird] or Micah**

Carolyn's E-mail: [lightenergync@gmail.com](mailto:lightenergync@gmail.com)

Micah's E-mail: [thegreenalchemist@gmail.com](mailto:thegreenalchemist@gmail.com)

CALL THEM FOR HELP WITH REGISTRATION/ISSUES RELATED TO NUGEN COINS

**Access to this week's Podcast**

<https://bbsradio.com/podcast/hard-news-friday-may-12-2023>

**NOTE AGAIN: dial 1-631-359-9353 to listen to BBS Radio TV Station 1.**

**TO LISTEN TO CALLS ON THE PHONE: 1-631-359-9353**

**RAMA, TARA**

**[R,T]**

**T:** explaining all the financial affairs that are happening  
in total: \$590 for BBS & \$1900

- putting Helen in the Circle of Support
- also, mother of the landlords – joining her partner who passed about 3 weeks ago

**R:** took a walk and got some great pictures of what's happening in our solar system: the 5<sup>th</sup> Dimension is being anchored here . . .

**AUDIO: 2023-05-11 Entering the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth: Exploring the Fifth Dimension**

**7:39** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYcz9BC4Rmo&ab\\_channel=AuroraRay](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYcz9BC4Rmo&ab_channel=AuroraRay)



**CONFERENCE CALL**

**# 764** <https://fccdl.in/E1a6ID6dKH>

**FOR THOSE FOLLOWING THE DISCUSSION JOHN AUSTEN AND OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS  
PLEASE LISTEN TO THE CONFERENCE CALL AUDIO! ! !**

**RGM:** asking if it's worth putting more \$ into the car: the car they saw is \$4000 and is in Albuquerque

**T:** \$1400 min to repair the car this time – ET has reduced the labour costs -

**MG:** thinking it's better to find a newer vehicle – maybe with \$1400

**T:** no

**COR:** Rama needs a car – can't do without it!

**RGM:** go for \$8000 and that gets you \$6,000

**COR:** time to ask for abundance ! ! ! not just bare needs . . . [idea Catherine Ponder's books]

**Margie:** Some cos from TN etc will drive it up to the door!

If you got a good deal -

**T:** will

The KOS will know where to find the man handling the money that was tied in with NuGen

**RB:** asking for help to understand the new \$ system being promulgated . . . NFT

**ANSWER:** Call Micah! ! !

**T:** about D Day for raising the debt ceiling is June 1<sup>st</sup>

have no intention of raising the debt ceiling as they make a lot of money if it crashes! ! !

**COR: I have already created it! It is done! ! !** (say this when you have imagined what you are asking for) Which means it already exists and nothing can stop it from happening! !

**MG:** more news about Nugen today – looks like it will all go through and will get the \$

we are owed! Everything will be x 1.3 (better check!)

someone called Fasil is a crook – came in and took all of John Austen's work called NuGen Universe, which started out as FreeMart -

Fasil may have been planted in to destroy this work – however M send message on the Nugen Discord Chat – Basi has no idea who is involved in the 165,000 investors !

**Chin:** how do you turn ?? into cash for the bank a/c???

A number of responses

**Chin:** tells a story about the cousin coming to visit, taking cousin to the beach and finding the penny with 1999 on it – which is the year of his first date with his wife! ! !

**Chin:** talks about the man called Fasil and what he's done . . .  
and lots of other stories . . . .

**B B S RADIO**

**AVE SACHE**

**AUDIO: Era of Peace      Patricia Cota Robles**

**VLOG 322 - MOTHER MARY AND THE MYSTICAL MONTH OF MAY**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afspO09v7i0&t=15s&ab\\_channel=PatriciaCotaRobles](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afspO09v7i0&t=15s&ab_channel=PatriciaCotaRobles)



**AUDIO:      YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GAIA (THE ONE FROM BEFORE THE FOLLOWING)**

**2023-05-03 KRYON 2023 ❄️❄️❄️ A Love Story [YOU WILL BE THE FORERUNNERS] 30:15**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AY-46r2kEQ&ab\\_channel=SpiritualAwakening](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AY-46r2kEQ&ab_channel=SpiritualAwakening)



**MOTHER / ALCYONE**

**[M/A]**

Greetings in the Light of the Most Radiant One! In the Office of the Christ and only in the Office of the Christ, we invoke the loving energies of St Germain and the Violet Flame! ! !

**Greetings, Children of Ra!**

Kryon was saying it like it is: The Shift is happening in the cells. It's the greatest time to be here; at the same moment, it is a challenge!

- And we all know why we showed up at this time. Let's say everybody knew how intense it's was gonna get – we're there! And it is about this transfiguration of us and all of Life.
- It is already taking place: this concept of NOW, this right here – nowhere else but now!

That is as reality and 5D – it's a challenge to stay in this now moment. We grant you: the wisdom to know how deep it was gonna get- it's deep and what's happening is all of life is responding to the clarion call that was put out a long time ago.

- And right at this particular Now moment, She can say the solar flares [are] only going to expand our awareness of how big this story is.

It's about love, all its forms. Hmm

- What is it like to have the consciousness of a planet, without the ego to go with it?  
It's this cosmic dance we chose to step into, as The Shift continues to go on.
- We can only say things are moving at such a bigger rate of speed, that She has no words, except to say "Enjoy the ride!" We created this story for ourselves; it's the greatest adventure!
- It's not about death; it's about eternal life. These temples need not go through the disintegration process some might call 'death', but it's about feeding the cells –

What comes from the sun? What Mr Keshe talking about the plasma, the gold dust

- at this moment this planet is receiving torrents, tsunamis, of gold dust, every single moment now! It's the greatest show in the galaxy - Earth:
- Earth is the center stage and [we] wouldn't want to miss this show! This is it and it's not about the grandiose stories on the transmission box. It's about what is happening in here (and points to Her chest) - this is the biggest dance, the biggest adventure, to go in here!
- As we were to take a journey to see what's inside this living temple of all that is - this is where the plant medicines come in, as Gaia and Vyamus have taught the wisdom keepers who keep the sacred council fires
- the spores, mushrooms, we are just saying - right now all of life is extending its hand or paw, as it were, to join in the cosmic dance of what's unfolding ,.

Running out of words, so to speak – it's just the Oneness of all that Is, it's in every moment, it's - hum!

- Reboot time!

**T:** yes it is – and we've been patient haven't we?

**M/A:** Yes. The planet is re-booting itself, and local systems are doing the same

- As we tune into that Oneness, it has a resonance that reverberates throughout the cosmos it's like the sound of the bell – just wait for the Sound, the Oneness all the answers [arrive?]

She thinks events unfolding right now, as accountability is on the table –

- if we can say: there is this story that's unfolding at the moment of how all the old ideas ideas kept us in a place of . . . like it's not future tripping or the past tripping: it's right now.
- This character used to listen to Stephan Dasket "On the farm" Monday Night Class – in the 60s
- it's about this oneness, this NOW moment: and staying in the NOW moment, not drifting anywhere else

**T:** Remembers him [S Dasket] going over the rainbow - wonders if the program is still going

**M/A:** Yes it is [still going] in some form; may not be like it was when She was there in '77, yet The Farm is still going.

- The farm that is right here, right now, with all of us – these seeds that Patti spoke of in the heart are blossoming, and moving. This is how we change this story

Right now, what we see on the world stage - as it was once called, "The Pack of Lies" - about the Matrix that seemingly we are still going through - another topic for another time.

- We must fly – the Wizards' Councils are calling.

**Both:** Greetings in the Light of the Most Radiant One – Kadoish, Kadoish, Kadoish

Kodoish, Kodoish, Kodoish Adonai 'Tsebayoth  
iliah iliahu iliahu  
Yod Hey Vod Hey  
YHWH

Holy holy holy is the Lord God of Hosts  
Illumine Illumine Illumine  
Yod Hey Vod Hey of the Living Everlasting Light  
The Revealed Name to our Father universe of the  
Living God behind all Creator Gods



**Rama Returns:** has been in the Wesak Valley

- those energies of Wesak and Buddha's birthday are still going on, going on, going on: they repeat several of the mantras which are bringing in the energies right now
- a glorious time to be alive and at the same time: Blaze the Violet Fire!

**Send more love**

**AUDIO: astonishing the accomplishments of Democracy Now**, even though the Koch Bros serve on these boards.

## **DEMOCRACY NOW**

**2023-05-12** <https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/headlines>

**2023-05-12 As Title 42 Ends, Asylum Seekers Face Inhumane Border Conditions, New Restrictions & Fast Deportation**

[https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/title\\_42\\_ends](https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/title_42_ends)

**2023-05-12 U.S. Sanctions on Venezuela & Cuba Fuel Migration Even as Biden Restricts Asylum Seekers at Border**

[https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/migrants\\_venezuela\\_sanctions](https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/migrants_venezuela_sanctions)

**2023-05-12 "Shock & Surprise": Serbia Reels from Two Mass Shootings, Demands Stronger Gun Control**

[https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/serbia\\_disarmament](https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/serbia_disarmament)

**AUDIO: 2023-04-17 Economic Update: Today's Medicare for All Battle with Dr. William Bronston**

[https://www.democracyatwork.info/eu\\_todays\\_medicare\\_for\\_all\\_battle\\_dr\\_william\\_bronston](https://www.democracyatwork.info/eu_todays_medicare_for_all_battle_dr_william_bronston)

[S13 E16] **New**

[Direct Download](#)

In this week's show, Prof. Wolff discusses US deaths from Covid, poverty in the US labor force, US and Canada cooperate against immigrants, US warfare vs China's peacemaking, Amazon profits from cutting back on "free" shipping. In the second half of the show, Wolff interviews Dr. William Bronston, advocate for single-payer health care in the US.

### **Timestamps:**

- 00:00 - 01:28 - Intro
- 01:29 - 03:15 - COVID deaths
- 03:16 - 06:04 - Poverty in the US Labor Force
- 06:05 - 09:36 - US and Canada cooperate against immigrants
- 09:37 - 11:01 - US warfare vs China's peacemaking
- 11:02 - 14:42 - Amazon profits from cutting back on "free" shipping
- 14:43 - 15:51 - Announcements
- 15:52 - 30:23 - Interview with Dr. William Bronston

**SEE BELOW FOR THE TRANSCRIPT OF THIS SHOW . . .**

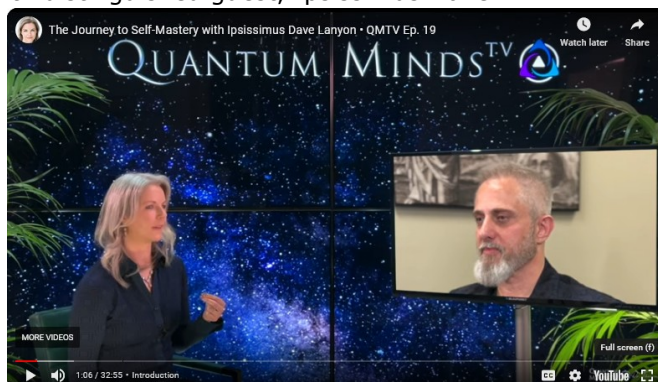
**AUDIO: 2023-05-04 The Journey to Self-Mastery with Ipsissimus Dave Lanyon •**  
**QMTV Ep. 19 32.55 min**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTvVailP\\_j0&ab\\_channel=Dr.TheresaBullard](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTvVailP_j0&ab_channel=Dr.TheresaBullard)

I'm honored to share this next episode of Quantum Minds TV with distinguished guest, Ipsissimus Dave Lanyon. In episode 19, we explore the fulfillment that comes from finding true spiritual community, navigating the negative ego's challenges, and the transformative power of commitment. Join us to discover the secrets of making conscious decisions and investing in the development of your soul and being.

#### **Chapters:**

[00:00](#) Introduction  
[05:30](#) Commitment, Our Ego, & Free Will  
[12:14](#) What is a Mystery School?  
[19:12](#) Investing in Yourself, Inner Growth, & Abundance  
[27:10](#) What is a Lineage?



#### **Dr. Theresa Bullard-Whyke**

Bio: Dr. Theresa Bullard is a Ph.D. physicist, author, speaker, international teacher with the Modern Mystery School, change-agent, and the world-renowned host of Mystery Teachings on Gaia TV. Throughout her life-long journey, she has discovered innovative ways to weave together her education as a Ph.D. Physicist, with her life-long pursuit of understanding spirituality. Dr. Theresa uses modern-day quantum physics with powerful, time-tested techniques to harness consciousness, bringing a truly fresh, mind-expanding, and powerfully altering approach.

Learn More: <https://www.TheresaBullard.com>

#### **Sovereign Ipsissimus Dave Lanyon's Bio:**

Sovereign Ipsissimus Dave Lanyon has devoted decades to walking and leading others along the path of initiation with the Modern Mystery School. He has received the highest initiation in this tradition, granting him the keys to the lineage and anchoring the vision and mission of the Mystery School for its tens of thousands of members worldwide. He is one of the most inspirational men and embodies true divine masculinity and leadership.

**Closing: Enshallah! Namaste!**

## INFORMATION RELATED TO THE NOTES

**2023-04-17 Economic Update: Today's Medicare for All Battle with Dr. William Bronston**

[https://www.democracyatwork.info/eu\\_todays\\_medicare\\_for\\_all\\_battle\\_dr\\_william\\_bronston](https://www.democracyatwork.info/eu_todays_medicare_for_all_battle_dr_william_bronston)

***Transcript has been edited for clarity***

Welcome friends to another edition of Economic Update, a weekly program devoted to the economic dimensions of our lives and those of our children. I'm your host Richard Wolff.

In today's program, we're going to be talking about a number of particularly medical issues—the impact of covid deaths in the United States [and] who was affected. We're also going to be talking about poverty in the United States, about the problem of immigrants—as they are being held back by the leaders of the United States and Canada—military strikes by the United States, and the contrast between that and the global activities of China. Finally, we'll be looking at Amazon's free delivery which is going down the tubes and then we'll have an interview with Dr William Bronston, a leading physician with the struggle for a universal single-payer health system in the United States.

So let's get busy, we've got a lot to cover. Covid deaths in the United States have been studied now systematically state by state across the 50 states of the United States with a report issued in the very important British medical journal called The Lancet. In this study one reality is hammered home—that the income, class, racial and educational inequalities of the United States were made worse by covid. In other words, covid deaths are higher among non-whites than whites, among poorer people relative to richer people [and] more among the poorly educated compared to those with much education and more among people who voted for Donald Trump than among people who didn't. Put all of that together...think about it—the United States doesn't have a medical insurance system that covers everybody more or less equally. We may believe abstractly in one person one vote or all men created equal...all non-men likewise. Whoa, but when it comes to the real rubber meets the road taking care of peoples' health—we're not equal. We suffer unequally, we die unequally and we will again unless the lesson in The Lancet about who took it on the chin from covid is understood.

My next update has to do with the civilian labor force here in the United States. Poverty in the US labor force...it currently numbers about 166 million people. A bit more than half of the American people are in the American labor force. I wanted to look in to how they're doing in terms of their wages—not all the noise of the daily news coverage, if there really is much of that, but what it really amounts to and I don't have the time to do a comprehensive thing—but I narrowed it down to give you an idea. Ten percent—the bottom 10% of wage earners in the United States—that's 17 million people—are earning an average of \$12.57 an hour. So, I did the arithmetic—I multiplied that hourly rate...the bottom 10% of our people—17 million wage earners—I multiplied them by 40 hours a week—if they can even get that regular a job—50 weeks a year—if they can even get that regular a job. That would earn them about \$25,000 which turns out to be the poverty line for a family of three. Well, if it's a family of three, one of whom is earning \$12.57, well that works out to just shy of 50 million people in the United States trying to live—many of them children—on a poverty level wage. One of the richest countries in the world is condemning 50 million people to abject poverty and if you think about the millions more that don't have a job—for a hundred different reasons—who are living on that amount of money—or less—then please keep in mind the Elon Musks with their tens of billions and the Bill Gates and the Warren Buffetts. All the folks...the people who live on more than they can possibly spend side by side—often a few miles away—from the 50 million people. Those of you who take religion, ethics, and morals seriously—don't you have a problem here? Don't the rest of us in the US right now?

Then there was the meeting, a very few weeks ago, in Canada between Joseph Biden and Justin Trudeau of Canada. Here's what they told us and again the ethics...the morals...they can't allow immigrants into their respective countries, they said. There's no room at the inn it turns out—for the poor families from Guatemala and Honduras and Mexico and Costa Rica. No, no, no—they have to be kept out. These two great leaders—

they were figuring out how to do it but we know of course what's really going on. These two "great" leaders... they're pandering to anti-immigrant feelings. That's the nicest way of putting it.

Let's take a look at those...shall we? If you keep immigrants out, you're supposed to be believing that that keeps out low-wage desperate people (which it does) and that they, therefore, will not be able to fill all those jobs washing dishes...washing the cars...doing the poorest lowest paid work in the society. There is some of that—that happens—if you keep out immigrants because they start at the bottom (most of them) but you know capitalism has a way of dealing with that. As wages go up—because you've kept out the poor immigrant—you think nothing else changes? Don't be naive. Capitalists are very clear that the wages at the bottom in this country...if they go up...pose a problem for their profits. That's why they're so eager to pay immigrants low wages. That's why they are so eager to not pay the immigrant at all— knowing that the immigrant families are afraid to go to the police and complain because then they might get looked at as immigrants and deported. So, if wages go up because you've kept out the immigrants—the way Biden and Trudeau are busily doing—capitalists are going to see that as a problem. You know what they do when the wages go up? They respond in one of two ways. They either move the job out of the United States—so instead of bringing the poor person here to work at a low wage you move the job to where the poor person already lives. Then you can pay him the poor wage...can't you? If that doesn't work—you replace the worker —with wages going up—by a machine...a computer...a robot... artificial intelligence. Capitalism treats workers that way. If you can't get the wage bill down by cheap immigrants, go to where the people who are poor already live or replace them with a machine. The problem isn't immigration. The problem is a system that works this way and that's the message of this program or tries to be.

I want to also to update a contrast. The United States is now busy militarily in the Ukraine, in China (around Taiwan in the South China Sea), and recently with renewed bombing in Syria. Seriously?...and the contrast— over the same period that these events are happening—the People's Republic of China brings together the warring groups within Islam...the Shiites on one hand, the Sunnis on the other...Saudi Arabia on one hand, Iran on the other...in a peace agreement—exchanging embassies, promising to get along with one another so we have less military conflict. The United States leaders may dismiss all of that. They do want to hide the difference, don't they?...but the rest of the world isn't missing it. Not at all...they're focusing on it and it would only be naive of Americans to misunderstand that.

And naive is another thing I want to end these economic updates with today—this has to do with Amazon... Amazon came up with a clever ploy a few years ago...free delivery. It was clever. Why?...because on a mass basis—the way Amazon is set up—they could afford to do that more cheaply than any of their competitors who are smaller and cannot take advantage of what we call the economies of scale. Now that they've done that they've established a massive reliance on the delivery system associated with Amazon. They confront— like we all do—the declining problems...the problems are not declining...the system is declining and that makes a lot of problems. One of them is inflation and another one is rising interest rates and in that situation where everything becomes more expensive, everybody is on desperate urgency to try to cope. People do without medical care...dilute their medicines... switch from better products to cheaper products...from better food to less good food...from adequate clothing to not so adequate. We all accommodate. We all struggle. How do corporations...and capitalists...struggle? Well, if they have to pay higher prices, if that begins to squeeze their profits, well then they react in the way a capitalist always does.

Here's what Amazon is doing. It's cutting back on the free delivery. You're going to have to start paying extra if you want fast delivery otherwise you're going to get slow delivery...there'll be extra charges...there'll be delays...there'll be special circumstances...they'll be those who get it and those who don't. In other words, capitalists are in a position most of us aren't—they can squeeze us. So Amazon is following in the path of, you know, the big oil companies. When they train the American people to no longer stop at a gas station and have somebody come out and service your car...no no no...you get out and you service your own car and we pay you nothing. We save on paying the young man or woman trying to work through high school or college and working at the gas station. Isn't that how we did it?...or the airlines over the last two years who now charge you if you burp during the flight or if you need the toilet or if you need to put a suitcase up above you. Come on...we're watching Amazon follow the path of other leading capitalist employers in using the

inflation as a timely occasion and excuse to squeeze the rest of us. It will hurt. It will cost. Each item is little but the accumulation is as devastating as anything else coming down the pike.

We've come to the end of the first half of the show. Please join me to listen to an important interview with Dr. William Bronston when we return.

Before we move on I want to remind everyone that Economic Update is produced by Democracy at Work, a small donor-funded, non-profit media organization celebrating 10 years of producing critical system analysis and visions of a more equitable and democratic world through a variety of media like the long-form lecture series I host called Global Capitalism, designed to help others understand current economic events and trends so they can explain the impact and effects capitalism creates across the globe to others. Global capitalism is available on our website [democracyatwork.info](http://democracyatwork.info). There you can also learn more about everything we produce, sign up for our mailing list, follow us on social media, and support the work we do. Please stay with us. We will be right back.

Welcome back friends to the second half of today's Economic Update. I am both proud and excited to bring to the microphones and cameras today's guest, Dr. William Bronston, a physician who has a remarkable reputation and history that I want to share with you. Before that, since I know him, let me welcome Bill to our program.

WB: I'm exhilarated Richard, thank you, sir.

RDW: Okay. Dr. William Bronston is a specialist in psychiatry and child development. He's famous for organizing medical personnel into unions and for helping mobilize parents in a federal class action suit for crimes against humanity...a suit brought against the governor and the State of New York for their administration of the infamous Willowbrook institution that I'm sure many of you have heard about. His new book, *Public Hostage, Public Ransom: Ending Institutional America* tells that Willowbrook story and links it to today's struggle for universal single-payer health care instead of the disastrous Medicaid system. For the last many years, he has been working from his home state of California for a truly Democratic medical system in the United States.

So let me jump right in...What is the status right now—because I know you're deeply involved in it—of efforts to bring a Medicare for all program to the United States?

WB: Richard, the situation is critical because the fascist elements in this country—the Republican Party and the capitalist system—are driving aggressively, fiercely to try and make it impossible for there to be a truly publicly funded, publicly accountable democratic health care delivery system. We do not have a health care system in the United States. We have a medical service system that's a wealth transfer operation. You cannot buy health—it's not for sale. Our whole notion of medical care and health care has to do with ending illness—not promoting wellness. The objective here is fundamentally inimical to the commodity basis for which medical services are currently grounded and have been grounded for over 100 years and fought for fiercely by the capitalists...by the oligarchs...by the pharmaceutical cartels...the hospital cartels...the insurance industry in order to make it massively profitable and to monetize suffering and death—end of life situation.

So that's kind of what the situation is right now and there's a massive effort supported by the Biden Administration to further privatize Medicare without people knowing that they're being shifted into a system where they will be trapped in narrow networks...will be refused services without any real capability of altering that even with sharp appeals. It's called ACO REACH and my organization, the Physicians for a National Health program, has been battling that tremendously, you know, in the last few months but it's upon us right now and it's a turning point in the history of health service delivery in the United States.

RDW: Is this part of the old issue—been around for a long time—that says that preventive care is more important than curative care but because curative care has got the profits built into it we don't do what is the more important way to go.

Have I got that right or is there a mistake there?

WB: I think that there's something more profound that's at issue—that's hard to really grasp—if we had a true healthcare society there would be a much more profound democratic community and sense of each other and relationship between each other in society. That's what the oligarchs cannot tolerate. They can't tolerate a unified caring progressive mass public in order to essentially need and obtain and access well-being. It's not just...it's not just prevention...it's not just savings...it's not just the hundreds of billions of dollars that would be released back into the economy—that would come from a universal healthcare system—it has to do with a blocking [of] democracy...blocking the capacity of the people to understand the commonality of their needs and their issues and their activity politically in the society. I don't know if that makes sense but that's my understanding of the situation. It's cultural and it's deep and it's fierce.

RDW: I've always wondered how Americans understand and tolerate the fact that almost every other advanced industrial country and many countries beyond that group have in fact chosen to do much more in the way of a national funded healthcare system than the United States. What is that about?

WB: Again it's tremendously deep. I think first of all that our system—which has been in operation for close to 100 years of commodified medical care—has resulted in a profound conscious and unconscious universal fear and insecurity in the general population. All of us have no idea what's going to happen to us if something goes wrong and there is an enormous stigma in something going wrong in our society. If you're sick or disabled in some way that puts you in a whole different category of status in terms of caste relationships in the society. I think that people in this country are so isolated, so alienated, so incapable of identifying with the commonwealth of their brothers and sisters of the rest of us in society that it cripples us from being able to challenge the barbarity of the commodity monetized system of illness and death in our society. It paralyzes people. People have no grasp. They have no confidence that they—as a solo individual in a solo society—can challenge the system. It's just unimaginable to them and they feel that because something's wrong with them that they have a legitimate basis of having to pay to get better. I mean it's the profound disease in our society you know, is monetary dependency.

RDW: Tell me, did the pandemic change anything? Was that horrible experience—and I don't mean to imply that it's over since I understand that it isn't—but has the period since early 2020 changed anything in the balance of the struggle for and against a nationally-funded universal health support system?

WB: The impact of the pandemic is absolutely breathtaking. We lost, you know, a million people or more. People lost their jobs and with their jobs being lost, those of them that had medical coverage of some sort through their work lost all that. That exposed the enormity, first of all, of the lack of a competent massive public health capacity to respond to a situation like that because everything is commodified and the public health system has been defunded since the 1980s. Since the Reagan Administration, there's been a replacement of clinicians with administrators and so you have a situation that's compounded the illness and essentially ravaged the general society and only magnified the inherent fear and insecurity that's already there. It exposed the fact that there was no ground of a well-organized, government-driven, publicly-driven intervention system in the society. So it was...it was an enormous rip-open of the wound of the medical delivery system and of the fragility of health care. It also impacted our morbidity and mortality statistics so that now we're about 39th or 40 or 41st in the world in terms of death and sickness in all areas as a result of the impact of that disease...only uncovering the already fragile situation created by the diversity of our society because obviously people of color and people in poverty are the ones who die first...die earliest...get sick first...get sick longest...you know and so the situation here is...it's barbarous. It's barbarous and somehow we have to figure out a way to move the public to change this monstrosity.

RDW: You know there's a recent article in the British medical journal, The Lancet, that systematically goes through and demonstrates state by state across the 50 states how the covid disaster killed more people at the lower end of the income...more people who are non-white...more people with less higher education...I mean clearly reaching the conclusion which is listed in the article that the covid disaster worsened the already serious income, economic, racial, and other disparities of American society. It is a sharp lesson. It's of course interesting that it had to appear in a British journal but that's the way things like that go.

WB: Let's look at the reality. The reality is that it only essentially accelerated the effort on the part of the oligarchy to privatize the system and to drive it home...they don't care about illness and death if illness and death are not profitable. I mean profitable in the billions of dollars then it doesn't matter. The medical delivery system now is so currently alienated. The workforce is so essentially reduced and shrunk down as a result of people leaving the field because essentially they're forced by corporate ownership of the delivery system to live with a computer between them and the people they're taking care of so you don't really get an eye to eye contact with your nurse or your doctor or your dentist that's really meaningful. There's no relationship there that comes between the general public, the patient population, and the delivery system. That has to be changed.

Then we're dealing with a debt pile that everybody is suffering that is absolutely astronomical and in any universal system we must buy out, negotiate and buy out all the medical debt that people are burdened with right now. It's fundamental. We need to change the workforce. We need to expand it. We need to make it culturally competent. We need to distribute it by virtually globally budgeting all health professional education so that we can assign the students whether they're sociology students or psychology or doctors or nurses or dentists or med techs to urban and rural deserts that exist now—where there's inadequate coverage...where people have to go to a large medical center...a huge carbon footprint area—in order to get services rather than getting them in their home and in their streets the way we used to when we were younger. I'm 84...so you know...I remember when my mother would call my pediatrician. He would come to the house and take care of me and I would immediately get better before he got there you know and so that has to be reestablished. We need to re-democratize by mobilizing neighborhood assemblies and partnerships with the local public health system and an expansion the state level of public health services and public health domination of the management of the delivery system in order to address these issues. That means savings, investments, and prosperity beyond our imagination. The question is can the people essentially build up the courage and the unity around a model which I've tried to establish—which we can talk about later—in order to address this transformation that has to happen.

It is a revolutionary liberating agenda for sure.

RDW: I wish we had more time...we don't...a quick final comment from you...we have socialized many things in our society—our parks that everybody goes to and that we fund collectively, our schools, our roads, our harbors, our mail system—what is the anxiety about socializing something as important as the health system? But we don't...Bill, I realize the clock is bearing down on me. This is a question I'm going to bring you back to answer...so save your answer. Thank you very much for sharing both your medical history, your medical expertise, and your insights into the current crisis of this country. Really—it's a pleasure having you here. I hope my audience shares with me the appreciation for your work, your insights, and as always I say to my audience, I look forward to speaking with you again next week.

***Transcript by Barbara Bartlett***

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2023-05-12 <https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/headlines>

Biden Administration Adds New Obstacles to the Right to Seek Asylum as Title 42 Expires May 12, 2023



Title 42, the Trump-era pandemic policy that was used to expel nearly 3 million asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border without due process, was lifted Thursday just before midnight after three years of enforcement. Thousands of migrants have been stranded across the southern border hoping to be processed and allowed into the U.S. But many will likely be blocked, as the Biden administration begins implementing what immigration rights advocates have denounced as another ban on the right to seek asylum under domestic and international law. A new policy announced this week would force the majority of asylum seekers to request refugee status in another country before reaching the U.S., or face quick deportation. The ACLU and others are suing over the rule. Another directive requires asylum applicants to make their appointments on a Customs and Border Protection smartphone app that asylum applicants say is riddled with software bugs and raises serious concerns over privacy.

At the San Ysidro border crossing in California, hundreds of asylum seekers have been sleeping on the ground under trash bags and foil blankets — with many reporting they’ve not eaten in days. This is Hashmatullah Habibi, an asylum seeker from Afghanistan who said Thursday he and his family have nowhere else to go.

**Hashmatullah Habibi:** “Oh, I’m just hoping and praying that today they take us in, because if they don’t take us in, then my future and my family’s future is in doubt, because we escaped from darker place, dark side, and we came here for a better life. And if they don’t take us in, the situation will be more awful for us, because we cannot go back and we cannot come in. So, it’s like dying situation.”

U.S. Customs and Border Protection has detained some 28,000 migrants at its border facilities in recent days; meanwhile, the number of asylum seekers attempting to cross into the U.S. has topped 10,000 a day as people continue to flee violence, extreme poverty and the impacts of the climate crisis. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on Thursday warned migrants arriving at the border of even harsher consequences.

**DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas:** “If anyone arrives at our southern border after midnight tonight, they will be presumed ineligible for asylum and subject to steeper consequences for unlawful entry, including a minimum five-year ban on reentry and potential criminal prosecution.”

### Ex-Marine Who Choked Jordan Neely to Death Surrenders to New York Authorities

May 12, 2023





The former marine who killed the beloved street performer Jordan Neely surrendered today to face a charge of second-degree manslaughter. Video shows Daniel Penny held Neely in a chokehold for 15 minutes on a New York City subway train on May 1, leading to Neely's death. Penny was questioned by police shortly after the killing but was initially released without charge. Meanwhile, protests continue in New York demanding justice for Jordan Neely. This is Celina Trowell, an organizer at VOCAL-NY.

**Celina Trowell:** "But we need accountability, and that comes from the mayor and the governor, because his death is on their hands for legitimizing that type of murder."

### Israeli Air Raids on Gaza Continue, Death Toll Tops 30 as Gazans Describe Terror of Nonstop Attacks

May 12, 2023



Prospects for a ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad have faded after a lull in fighting. Israeli warplanes have resumed bombing the Gaza Strip, and Palestinians fired hundreds of long-range rockets into Israel and toward illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank. A 70-year-old man was killed Thursday when a rocket crashed into the Israeli city of Rehovot. At least 31 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli assaults, including children. This is Melina al-Hindi, a 39-year-old mother living in Khan Younis.

**Melina al-Hindi:** "We feel unsafe, even at home. We go in and out of the house, but we are afraid. One could be going down the street when a rocket hits, never to return. We don't know what will happen to us and to our children. ... This situation in Gaza is not normal. It is terrifying, beyond anything you can imagine."

### Sudan's Warring Military and Paramilitary Agree to Protect Civilians and Allow Aid



Warring parties in Sudan have signed an agreement pledging to protect civilians and allowing for humanitarian aid to safely reach them. The Sudanese army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces failed to agree to a ceasefire as talks continue in Saudi Arabia. Since fighting broke out on April 15, more than 600 people have been killed, at least 18 of whom were humanitarian workers. Over 700,000 people have been internally displaced.

### **Former Pakistani PM Imran Khan Released on Bail After Top Court Rules His Arrest Was Unlawful**

May 12, 2023



In Pakistan, former Prime Minister Imran Khan has been released on bail on orders from the Islamabad High Court after Pakistan's Supreme Court Thursday ruled his arrest was "invalid and unlawful." Khan is accused of multiple corruption charges, and his arrest has sparked widespread protests. At least eight people have been killed and some 2,000 arrested in the ensuing violence. As Khan's supporters prepared to march on the capital, police issued an emergency order banning gatherings by more than four people.

### **At Least 7 People Killed in Protests Against Guinea's Military Government**

May 12, 2023



In Guinea, protests against the military government resumed Thursday, one day after activists said at least seven people were killed and dozens injured in demonstrations across the country. The military took control over the West African nation after a 2021 coup and has been slow to transition leadership back to a democratically elected government. This is a resident of the capital Conakry.

**Conakry resident:** "If it continues like this, it won't be good. I don't like demonstrations. We like peace. These protests are really tiring, and we are exhausted."

### **U.S. Scraps COVID-19 Vaccine Mandate for International Visitors as Public Health Emergency Ends**

May 12, 2023



International travelers arriving in the United States will no longer have to show proof of vaccination against COVID-19. The requirement was lifted as the U.S. government on Thursday formally ended its public health emergency in response to the pandemic. Last week, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 is no longer a global health emergency. COVID-19 has killed more than 1.1 million people around the U.S., though that's widely believed to be a significant undercount. Globally, there have been nearly 7 million officially reported deaths. The true death toll is unknown, but the U.N. estimates at least 20 million.

### **U.S. Judge Strikes Down Federal Law Banning Handgun Sales to 18-20-Year-Olds**

May 12, 2023



A judge in Virginia has struck down a federal law prohibiting the sale of handguns to 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds, ruling the ban is an unconstitutional violation of the Second Amendment. The Justice Department will likely ask the judge to put the ruling on hold while it appeals the decision. The gun control advocacy group Everytown Law said Thursday's ruling will put lives at risk, adding, "Not only are guns the leading cause of death for U.S. kids and teens, but research shows us that 18- to 20-year-olds commit gun homicides at triple the rate of adults 21 years and older."

### **Texas Lawmakers Vote for Bill Banning "Glock Switches," Against Increasing Age of Purchase to 21**

May 12, 2023



In Texas, the state House of Representatives on Thursday approved a bill banning devices that can turn handguns into fully automatic firearms. The devices, commonly called "Glock switches," are already illegal under federal law. Texas lawmakers did not advance a bill that would have raised the age to purchase a semiautomatic assault rifle to 21. This came as high school students across Texas walked out of classes Thursday to demand new laws preventing gun violence. Their protests came less than a week after the mass shooting in Allen.

## SCOTUS Backs Transgender Guatemalan Woman Challenging Her Deportation

May 12, 2023



The Supreme Court has ruled in favor of a transgender woman from Guatemala who is challenging her deportation. The justices unanimously backed Estrella Santos-Zacaria, who now has another chance to argue for her right to asylum as she faces persecution back home. Santos-Zacaria fled to the U.S. after being raped as a young teenager and threatened with death because she is transgender.

## SCOTUS Sides with California Law Seeking More Humane Treatment for Farmed Pigs

May 12, 2023



The Supreme Court sided with a California law that seeks to breed pigs more humanely by banning pork sales from farms where the animals are kept in confined spaces. The pork industry, which challenged the law, argued it infringed on individual state regulations where producers are based. Writing for the majority in a narrow 5-4 ruling, conservative Justice Neil Gorsuch said, "While the Constitution addresses many weighty issues, the type of pork chops California merchants may sell is not on that list."

## 2023-05-12 As Title 42 Ends, Asylum Seekers Face Inhumane Border Conditions, New Restrictions & Fast Deportation

[https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/title\\_42\\_ends](https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/title_42_ends)

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#### [Pedro Rios](#)

director of the American Friends Service Committee's U.S.-Mexico Border Program.





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The Trump-era Title 42 policy has come to an end, but the Biden administration has instituted what human rights advocates say amounts to a new asylum ban. We get an update from the San Ysidro border crossing near San Diego, California, where hundreds of asylum seekers have been sleeping on the ground under trash bags and foil blankets, with many reporting they've not eaten in days. Pedro Rios, director of the American Friends Service Committee's U.S.-Mexico Border Program, says Biden's anti-asylum policies are "reconfiguring the concept of asylum to a point where it no longer offers the promise that it did post-World War II."

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**AMY GOODMAN:** We begin today's show at the U.S.-Mexico border, where the pandemic policy known as Title 42, which was used to expel nearly 3 million asylum seekers without due process, was lifted Thursday at midnight, three years after it was implemented by Trump. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas announced the change while warning migrants of harsher consequences if they attempt to cross into the United States.

**DHS SECRETARY ALEJANDRO MAYORKAS:** Let me be clear: The lifting of the Title 42 public health order does not mean our border is open. In fact, it is the contrary. Our use of our immigration enforcement authorities under Title 8 of the United States Code means tougher consequences for people who cross the border illegally. Unlike under Title 42, an individual who is removed under Title 8 is subject to at least a five-year bar on reentry into the United States and can face criminal prosecution if they attempt to cross again. ...

We are conducting dozens of removal flights per week, and we continue to increase our removal flight capability. We are increasing our efficiency and reducing processing times at the border.

**AMY GOODMAN:** As Title 42 ends, thousands of migrants have been stranded across the southern border hoping to be processed and allowed into the United States. This is a Venezuelan asylum seeker near the San Ysidro border crossing in California.

**VENEZUELAN ASYLUM SEEKER:** [translated] We got off one train to take another. The situation is challenging. All of us who are here are from Venezuela. Many migrants are in the same situation. It is difficult and complex. Every time they put more and more obstacles in our way. We will continue to move forward.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Most of the thousands seeking entry to the United States will likely be blocked, as the Biden administration begins its implementation of what immigration rights advocates say is another ban on the right to seek asylum under both domestic and international law. A policy announced this week would force most asylum seekers to request refugee status in another country, like Mexico, before reaching the U.S., or face quick deportation. The ACLU and others are suing over the rule. Another directive requires asylum applicants to make their appointments on a Customs and Border Protection smartphone app that asylum seekers say is riddled with software bugs and raises serious concerns over privacy.

Meanwhile, migrant detentions at the U.S.-Mexico border are hitting record highs as Title 42 ends. Border Patrol authorities said Wednesday they detained a record 28,000 people.

For more, we go to San Diego, which is near the San Ysidro border crossing in California, where hundreds of asylum seekers have been sleeping on the ground under trash bags and foil blankets, with many reporting they haven't eaten in days. We're joined by Pedro Rios, director of the American Friends Service Committee's U.S.-Mexico Border Program.

Welcome back to *Democracy Now!*, Pedro. Can you talk about the situation as of midnight last night? But, of course, this has been building up.

**PEDRO RIOS:** Thank you, Amy.

Yes. What we are seeing on the ground is that there are many people who are wanting to seek asylum, and as they cross into what is known as the enforcement zone, which is between the primary and the secondary border walls, is that they are essentially being left there. And Border Patrol is not providing — is not abiding by its national standards to ensure that they have safety, that they get food, that they have plenty of water and shelter. At this time, what we see is, on a rotating basis, at least 400 people, asylum seekers, with many children, who have been abandoned in this location until — and waiting until Border Patrol picks them up.

**AMY GOODMAN:** So, can you talk about how the Biden administration is dealing with this? And talk about what people are telling you on the border, what they understand has changed.

**PEDRO RIOS:** The Biden administration is dealing with this very poorly. Essentially, it's placing even more obstacles for people that are fleeing harm, by placing bans, by ensuring that people don't have a way to seek asylum, by forcing people to have to cross through these inhumane ways, and, furthermore, ensuring that they are hungry, that they are thirsty.

And when we speak with migrants on the ground, they tell us that they have no other options. They have tried using the CBP One application on their phone, and oftentimes it just doesn't work for them. There aren't many opportunities for them to present themselves at a port of entry to seek asylum, and, therefore, they have been forced, especially under the application of Title 42, to seek other, more dangerous ways of attempting to cross into the U.S. to turn themselves in to U.S. authorities to seek asylum.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Pedro, you tweeted video of a CBP readiness exercise at the San Ysidro border, that you said was meant to normalize violence as an acceptable response to people seeking asylum. Can you explain?

**PEDRO RIOS:** CBP, so, Customs and Border Protection, especially under Trump, and then extended under President Biden, have conducted these readiness exercises, where they have several hundred CBP agents that go out at the port of entry, they close many lanes and, for sometimes up to 45 minutes, will hold these exercises. It's a show of force that use sound grenades — they use mock grenades, as well — where they are meant to demonstrate the violence that they would use if there were a large group of people attempting to cross at that point at the port of entry. That has not occurred in many years.

But what it does is, it's a form of collective punishment, because it makes it so violence becomes the acceptable form to respond to people that are seeking safety from harm. And it also conditions other border crossers to blame migrants, asylum seekers, from having to wait even more time at crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. This is something that we should not tolerate. It's not something that should be acceptable as a response to anyone who is seeking safety from the extreme migration patterns that they have been a part of and they have experienced over the course of attempting to seek safety in the United States.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Over the last month, Pedro, about a hundred asylum seekers have been stuck in a kind of open prison between San Diego and Mexico. Can you lay out the human rights standards for people seeking asylum at the border and whether that Customs and Border Patrol is seeking these standards when they hold people there with no food, with hardly any water? Community organizers like yourself out there all day and night trying to hand out food, baby supplies, charging phones, etc.

**PEDRO RIOS:** Yeah. So, to describe the scenario, we have people that have crossed into the U.S. in the space known as the enforcement zone. This is between the primary and the secondary border walls. These are 30-foot-high walls where they are intending to present themselves to Border Patrol agents to say, "I fear for my life. I want to seek asylum." Border Patrol has to comply with national standards that say people need to be provided with basic food, with water, with shelter, and kept away from harm.

What we are seeing on the ground at this moment is that there are anywhere between 400 to 500 asylum seekers, including many children, who are kept in that location. Border Patrol has pushed people into that

location. They have — sometimes they will take their shoelaces away from them. Sometimes they will move them into that location. And that is essentially an open-air area without any way of receiving any food, with the exception of civil society that has gathered there and has been providing hot meals for them. What we saw a couple days ago, for instance, is that Border Patrol provided a single granola bar during the entire day. How is that possible to do that to children, especially those that are very little, who don't know anything about what's going on at the moment?

And what we are seeking is for the Border Patrol to comply with these standards. These are standards that were developed back in 2015 after months-long conversations, that they need to comply with basic human rights of ensuring that people under their custody are kept in safety. We are not seeing that happening at this moment at the U.S.-Mexico border in San Diego.

**AMY GOODMAN:** You're in California. In Texas, the Department of Public Safety and military were seen placing razor wire along the Rio Grande River in Brownsville to reinforce the border. Can you talk about the walls that President Biden said he wouldn't be building, but what's happening there?

**PEDRO RIOS:** What we are seeing is that there are several locations where President Biden is moving forward with building border walls. And these border walls resemble Trump's border walls in terms of the features, such as the height, the type of material that is used. But sometimes they're being branded under another name. In Texas, they are being called "levee walls," but they mirror the same exact type of prototypes that President Trump at the time was proclaiming as completely unclimbable.

In San Diego, for instance, in the Friendship Park area, he is proceeding with building two 30-foot border walls that will completely decimate the experience that families have had when they arrive at Friendship Park and are able to meet their loved ones, albeit divided by the primary border wall, but at least have that experience. The visual landscape will be transformed by National Guard in — that is there, will be completely destroyed.

And it's something that we are asking President Biden to stop building Donald Trump's border walls. But we don't see any type of leeway in that direction. And we're hoping that civil society continues to lift their voices against these 30-foot border walls that are completely destructive.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Can you explain the harsher criminal consequences for those who cross, which means profit for the private detention centers, the jails along the border?

**PEDRO RIOS:** So, for individuals now, after — post-Title 42 era, individuals that cross without inspection, who want to seek asylum, could be banned from doing so for five years. And this is something that we have not ever seen in terms of the decimation of what the promise of asylum was, that no person should be turned away and placed in greater danger. If someone is banned from seeking asylum, it absolutely ensures that that person likely will face harm, either in their home country or in another country.

There are the third-country bans that we are seeing, what we are now calling "the Biden bans." If someone did not seek asylum in a country that they transited through before arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border, then it's likely that the United States will prevent them and block them from seeking asylum in the United States because they did not seek asylum in a third country that they passed through.

All of these anti-asylum measures are reconfiguring the concept of asylum to a point where it no longer offers the promise that it did post-World War II, where countries around the world were turning people back, and people were dying as a result of not having safe harbor in other countries that should have accepted them.

**AMY GOODMAN:** And can you talk about what is happening now? I mean, this is not just happening along the border. We're broadcasting from New York. Mayor Adams has talked about possibility of putting migrants in a shuttered prison, have already shipping people out of New York City who were brought to New York City, to places like Newburgh, New York. This is happening across the country, in Chicago and other places. What do you demand the Biden administration do at this point, Pedro Rios?

**PEDRO RIOS:** That's correct, Amy. And so, what we are seeing is that President Biden is placing resources to further militarize the border by sending 1,500 troops to the border. We don't know what their function will be just yet, except that they're saying they will be having administrative tasks. But they do then add to the National Guard troops that certain states like Texas already have at the border. And this addition of additional military troops just paints a picture that migrants will not be welcomed with dignity, but, in fact, they will be welcomed with extreme force, that they will be turned away.

And jurisdictions in other states, such as New York, should be receiving many more resources to expand the shelter services, to ensure that civil society has the means to transport people, to place asylum seekers in safe houses, at safe places, in safe shelters. We're not seeing the same commitment or dedication from the Biden administration to support those border counties and other states, like New York, to have the resources necessary to provide the support and help that asylum seekers need at the moment.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Finally, Trump just said he would — if he were president again, he would separate families again and also engage in the largest deportation of migrants in history. But before him, President Obama was dubbed the "deporter-in-chief" by his own immigrant rights allies. Of course, that was the Obama-Biden administration. Is Biden continuing, do you think, this policy, that has gone from Obama to Trump through right now to Biden?

**PEDRO RIOS:** I think President Biden is, unfortunately. And I think this is — it's not specific to the Republican Party. What I have been able to see and how I qualify this is that both the Republican and the Democratic Party just have never known how to properly center human rights for people that are seeking safety in the United States. In fact, it becomes a political football, where the harsher you can be on border issues, the less protective you can be to migrants means that that is a way to project their political campaigns and their political goals, undermining the premise that people should be treated with dignity and respect. And that's what we are seeing now under the new Biden transit ban, under the continued construction of 30-foot border walls at Friendship Park and elsewhere, and just the rejection of treating people with dignity as they are seeking safety in the United States.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Pedro Rios, I want to thank you for being with us, director of the American Friends Service Committee's U.S.-Mexico Border Program, speaking to us from San Diego, California.

Coming up, a group of House Democrats are urging the Biden administration to lift sanctions on Venezuela and Cuba, which they say are driving people to leave their homes and head to the United States out of economic desperation. Stay with us.

[break]

**AMY GOODMAN:** "Be Reasonable," performed by Barbara Dane in *Democracy Now!*'s studios in 2018. The legendary singer, activist turns 96 years old today. We'll be posting an [extended interview](#) with Barbara Dane on our website today. Check it out at [democracynow.org](https://www.democracynow.org). Happy birthday, Barbara Dane!

## **2023-05-12 U.S. Sanctions on Venezuela & Cuba Fuel Migration Even as Biden Restricts Asylum Seekers at Border**

[https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/migrants\\_venezuela\\_sanctions](https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/migrants_venezuela_sanctions)



## Topics

- [Venezuela](#)
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- [Cuba](#)

## Guests [Francisco Rodríguez](#)

Venezuelan economist and a professor of public and international affairs at the University of Denver's Korbel School of International Studies.



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## Links ["The Human Consequences of Economic Sanctions"](#)

The number of asylum seekers from Cuba and Venezuela is expected to grow as the Trump-era Title 42 asylum restriction ends. A group of House Democrats are urging the Biden administration to lift sanctions on the countries, which they say are driving people to leave their homes out of economic desperation. We speak with Venezuelan economist Francisco Rodríguez, author of a new report for the Center for Economic Policy and Research, "The Human Consequences of Economic Sanctions."

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**AMY GOODMAN:** This is *Democracy Now!*, [democracynow.org](http://democracynow.org), *The War and Peace Report*. I'm Amy Goodman.

As Title 42 ends, officials say they expect to see more asylum seekers from many countries, including Cuba and Venezuela. On Wednesday, a group of 21 House Democrats urged President Biden to lift sanctions on both countries, calling them failed and indiscriminate, and adding that, quote, "experts widely agree that broad-based U.S. sanctions — expanded to an unprecedented level by former President Donald Trump — are a critical contributing factor in the current increase in migration," unquote.

Well, for more, we go to Francisco Rodríguez, a Venezuelan economist, author of a new [report](#) for the Center for Economic Policy and Research titled "The Human Consequences of Economic Sanctions." Rodríguez is a professor of public and international affairs at the University of Denver's Korbel School of International Studies. He headed the Venezuelan National Assembly's Economic and Financial Advisory Office under the late President Hugo Chávez.

We welcome you back to *Democracy Now!*, Francisco Rodríguez. Can you lay out what you feel how these sanctions connect to the migration to the United States from Venezuela and Cuba?

**FRANCISCO RODRÍGUEZ:** Yes. Good morning, Amy. Thanks for having me on the show.

Effectively, there is significant evidence, surveyed in the [report](#) that I just authored, as well as in other academic studies, that economic sanctions have an adverse effect, a major adverse effect, on living conditions in targeted countries. Some of the studies find that the imposition of sanctions by the U.S. leads to a decline in income per capita of up to 26%. That's the equivalent of causing a Great Depression. Another

study found increases — or, declines in life expectancy of between 1.2 and 1.4 years. That's the equivalent of the mortality effects of the COVID pandemic.

So, when sanctions are imposed on a country like Venezuela and like Cuba, they lead to a major economic contraction. In Venezuela, GDP per capita has fallen by 72%. And this has generated a massive exodus. Almost 25% of the population has left. And many of them are trying to make their way to the border and trying to enter the United States. So, definitely, we have economically induced migration in both of these countries, and there's a strong contribution of economic sanctions. In the case of Venezuela, sanctions have targeted the oil industry. The oil industry produces 95% of the country's foreign currency revenue. So, if the country can't sell oil, it can't import basic goods, it can't import food, it can't import medicines. So living conditions deteriorate markedly. And that's why people want to leave.

**AMY GOODMAN:** So, the Biden administration has said it's willing to lift some sanctions against Venezuela in exchange for steps taken by Nicolás Maduro's government, such as not banning opposition candidates from running against him. But most of the sanctions that Biden inherited from Trump remain in place. Your response? And talk about how the humanitarian crisis is increased at home, as well, in Venezuela by these sanctions.

**FRANCISCO RODRÍGUEZ:** Yeah. Well, I think that that response is basically making vulnerable Venezuelans, those who are more oppressed by Maduro, pay the cost of the sanctions. So, to say we're going to lift sanctions, which are hurting Venezuelans, if Maduro takes steps toward democracy, well, Maduro is probably not going to take those steps, and the people who are going to pay the cost are the Venezuelans, and more vulnerable Venezuelans. And you've seen huge deteriorations, huge increases in levels of malnutrition, of mortality, both adult and child mortality in Venezuela. You've seen deteriorations, a decline in wages, where wages have fallen below \$5 a month.

And all of this, I must stress, is driven by a decline in oil revenues. So, Venezuela's economy shrank by 72% in the same period in which oil revenues declined by 93%. And while the cause of the decline in oil revenues — I mean, there are several causes. I'm not claiming in any way that sanctions are the only one, but there's research showing that sanctions have a major effect on oil production. Sanctions — the imposition of sanctions in August 2017, in January of 2019 and February of 2020 is, in every single instance, associated with accelerations in the rate of decline of oil production. So it's clear that Venezuela doesn't have the foreign currency revenue that it needs in order to keep its economy working and feed its people, and a great part of the responsibility of this lies on U.S. economic sanctions.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Can you also talk about how last year London's High Court ruled against Venezuela's President Maduro in a \$1 billion gold battle? What effect does that have?

**FRANCISCO RODRÍGUEZ:** Yeah, yeah. Well, it has a significant effect, but it's symptomatic of a broader problem, which is that one of the reasons why the Venezuelan government has been unable to deal with the pandemic and unable to deal with the recession is that it doesn't have access to its international funds. And those funds, it's barred from access to them not just because of sanctions, but because of the decision of the United States and the United Kingdom to recognize the government of Juan Guaidó, an opposition leader who claimed that he was the legitimate president of Venezuela.

And the U.S. and the U.K. broke completely with diplomatic convention when they did this. Typically what governments do is that they recognize the government that has *de facto* control over the territory, even if you don't like it, because you realize that that's the government that you need to engage with. So, the U.S. recognizes many dictatorships around the world. It recognizes the government of North Korea. It recognizes the government of Iran. But it decided to recognize the Guaidó government, and so did the U.K., therefore handing it over control over assets such as the international reserves of the Central Bank, which is what Venezuela needs to address its economic crisis.

Venezuela made a proposal to use those resources in the Bank of England to buy vaccines in the midst of the COVID crisis, but that was rejected because the court is trying to clarify whether — well, what will be the

result of that suit, which is a lawsuit between the Central Bank board that was appointed by the Maduro government and an alternate Central Bank board that was appointed by the Guaidó government.

We have a similar problem in the International Monetary Fund. Venezuela did not have access to the funds to fight the COVID emergency that were created by the issuance of special drawing rights at the International Monetary Fund, and that's because the U.S. has blocked recognition of the government that has control of the territory, which is the Maduro government. It's insisted that the legitimate government — even though the Guaidó government has already been dissolved, it's still insisting that the Maduro government not have access to the resources that the IMF approved for all countries to be able to fight the pandemic.

So, the U.S. spent 25% of GDP in dealing with the pandemic. Latin America spent less than 5%, because it didn't have access to the same resources. Venezuela was able to spend less than 1% of its GDP, because it was unable to tap the resources that the international community had created and allocated to deal with this emergency.

**AMY GOODMAN:** We don't have much time left, but your [report](#) also not only looks at sanctions against Venezuela, against Cuba, but Syria, and what that meant especially with the earthquake that just hit.

**FRANCISCO RODRÍGUEZ:** Yes. The result surveys 32 studies, of which 30 find negative consistent effects of sanctions on indications — on indicators ranging from GDP per capita to mortality, life expectancy, living conditions in general.

In the case of Syria, we have seen also very significant negative effects. And, in fact, sanctions have interfered with earthquake relief. Earlier in the year, GoFundMe actually suspended any attempts — any account requesting the raising of funds for Syria earthquake relief. And that was as a response — it's a phenomenon known as overcompliance. It's not — the U.S. claims that there are humanitarian exceptions, and it puts humanitarian exceptions in the regulations that it publishes, but the reality is that the exceptions are so vague and so hard to follow that most financial institutions say, "We're not going to take the risk of getting into trouble, and we're not going to process transactions for countries like Syria."

And therefore, you see that — and you see this systematically across the board — the humanitarian exceptions are not effective. And in the case of Iran, for example, you found that the medicines that were not available in Iran during the periods of sanctions, out of 73 medicines, 70 of them were in the OFAC exemptions list, but it's still the case that no bank would process the transactions, given that the country was a sanctioned country. So, sanctions impede the access to funds that are necessary to cover humanitarian aid in cases of emergency relief, such as those of the Syria earthquake.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Francisco Rodríguez, I want to thank you for that very quick analysis of the effect of sanctions, from Venezuela to Syria, Venezuelan economist. Thank you so much for being with us, from the University of Denver, speaking to us from Aurora. He headed the National Assembly's Economic and Financial Advisory Office under Venezuela's late President Hugo Chávez. His new [report](#) for the Center for Economic Policy and Research is titled "The Human Consequences of Economic Sanctions."

Coming up, Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan has been freed, after his arrest sparked mass protests and a number of deaths. Stay with us.

### **2023-05-12 Former Pakistani PM Imran Khan Freed on Bail After Days of Mass Protests over His Arrest**

[https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/imran\\_khan\\_protests](https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/imran_khan_protests)



## Topics [Pakistan](#)

- [Protests](#)
- 

## Guests [Mohammed Hanif](#)

journalist based in Karachi and former editor of the BBC Urdu service in London.

We look at the political crisis in Pakistan as the Islamabad High Court on Friday granted two weeks' bail to former Prime Minister Imran Khan after his arrest sparked mass protests. Paramilitary forces arrested Khan on corruption charges, but Pakistan's Supreme Court later ruled his arrest was "invalid and unlawful." Khan served as prime minister from 2018 to 2022, when he was ousted from office in what he called a "U.S.-backed regime change" plot carried out by his political opposition. Mohammed Hanif, an award-winning writer and journalist based in Karachi, says the corruption accusations are part of a larger power struggle in the country, pitting the extremely popular Khan against the country's establishment, including the military. "Elections are due, and they want to keep him out of the election race. Either they want to disqualify him or put him behind bars," says Hanif.

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**AMY GOODMAN:** This is *Democracy Now!*, [democracynow.org](http://democracynow.org). I'm Amy Goodman.

We turn now to Pakistan. Earlier today, the Islamabad High Court granted bail for two weeks to former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, whose arrest earlier this week sparked mass protests. On Tuesday, paramilitary forces arrested Khan on corruption charges, but then, on Thursday, Pakistan's Supreme Court ruled his arrest was invalid and unlawful.

Khan had served as Pakistan's prime minister from 2018 to 2022, when he was ousted from office in what he described as a, quote, "U.S.-backed regime change" plot backed by his opposition. He's now blamed the military. Supporters of his political party, the PTI, say the latest charges are politically motivated and part of a broader campaign to silence Khan.

In an attempt to quell the protests, Pakistan's police issued an emergency order earlier today to ban gatherings in Islamabad. Pakistan has also suspended mobile broadband and blocked access to social media apps, disrupting the lives of millions. Meanwhile, human rights groups accused Pakistani forces of using excessive force on supporters of Imran Khan who have taken to the streets in recent days. At least 10 protesters have been killed. Nearly 3,000 Khan supporters have been arrested.

We're joined now by Mohammed Hanif. He's an award-winning writer and journalist based in Karachi. He's the former editor of the BBC Urdu service in London, where he's joining us from today.

Welcome back to *Democracy Now!*, Mohammed Hanif. It's great to have you with us. Explain what's happening. Why was Imran Khan arrested? And now why was he released?

**MOHAMMED HANIF:** I think they've been trying to arrest Imran Khan for quite a few months now. The main purpose is quite obvious. Elections are due, and they want to keep him out of the electoral race. Either they want to disqualify him, or they want to put him behind bars. That seems to be the obvious purpose, because he was just thrown out of the government a year ago, and since then, he has been on a warpath. And that's not new. Almost every single prime minister in Pakistan's history at some point has fallen out with the Army, which is considered to be all-powerful in Pakistan. But what Imran Khan has managed to do is that he's managed to polarize what's called establishment in Pakistan, which is the higher judiciary and military itself.

So, people are hoping that after they put him behind bars, maybe manage to throw away the key, and that's where he will stay. But he was there under arrest two days, and then the Supreme Court, the chief justice himself, called him, said, "I'm really happy to see you," then, from a lockup, put him into a state guesthouse,

asked him to basically invite his friends over and have an easy night's sleep. And then, today, he appeared in the court again, and he was granted bail, so now he's a free man to move.

So, basically, what Imran Khan has managed to achieve is — which no other politician has, I think, in the past — is that he has managed to polarize the establishment itself. So, they don't quite know what to do with him, because they put him behind the bars. And as Imran Khan has warned, "If you arrest me, the country will burn." And the country did burn. And now they've released him, but there are dozens and dozens of cases against him, some very flimsy, some substantial. And I think they will probably go after him again.

**AMY GOODMAN:** He seems to be extremely popular throughout Pakistan. Can you explain who his supporters are? And just give us the overall political landscape, why at this point they arrested him.

**MOHAMMED HANIF:** We keep hearing that he is extremely popular. And the interesting thing is that he's popular amongst people who basically used to be a bit apolitical. In every democracy, there's a chunk of people who actually hate politics. So, there were lots of haters in Pakistan who did not like the way things were going. And they're usually middle-class people, a lot of them. They're people — lots of women who were politically disengaged, lots of young people who were not interested in politics or just hated the idea of these all politicians who have been running the country.

These are also the same people who love the Army. And when Imran Khan came into power, it was a quite well-known fact that he was groomed by the Army, he was supported by the Army. While he was in power, he said repeatedly that he and Army, they were on one page. In fact, he's basically confessed that he was a puppet for the Army, that everything that he did while he was in power, he did because Army told him to do so. But when he was thrown out the power after a no-confidence vote, he went on a warpath. So, all these people who were supporting him and supporting the Army, now they have turned against the Army.

So, look at it like a lover's quarrel. And those quarrels can be very, very bitter, and sometimes very violent. So, that's why we saw what we saw in Lahore. The Army commander, who basically controls Lahore and, in a way, is kind of, you know, sort of probably more powerful than any politician in Lahore, his house was ransacked, set on fire. It was looted. So, Army is probably just beginning to realize that they have created something that they cannot control anymore.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Imran Khan described the coup that replaced him as U.S.-backed regime change, but then seemed to shift and blame the Pakistani military. Can you explain the dynamic there?

**MOHAMMED HANIF:** A fun fact about Imran Khan is that he can say something today, and he can say the completely opposite tomorrow, and his supporters would still love him. So, he's a man that you cannot accuse of — that he's contradicting himself, because that is not his weakness. That's almost his strength.

So, when he was removed, he did say that it was a U.S.-backed conspiracy. Then he's changed his mind very many times. Then he said that it was Pakistani generals who were traitors who betrayed him and betrayed the country. He has called them all kinds of names. And since then, we keep hearing — you guys probably know this better — that he's been hiring lobbyists in Washington, D.C., to kind of — to smooth things over with the United States establishment. I don't even know if they're interested or not.

But, as a Pakistani, one thing that I found a bit scary in the last few weeks is that there's this dude called Zalmay Khalilzad, is I think his name, who kind of first tried to liberate Iraq and then Afghanistan, and we both know what happened there. So, any time —

**AMY GOODMAN:** Was the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan.

**MOHAMMED HANIF:** Yes, he was. And then, before, I think, was involved somehow in Iraq, as well. So, every time we hear his name, we hear mass murder, basically, of a world class. So, he is somebody who's been campaigning on his behalf. I have no idea whether he's a paid lobbyist or just because he's out of a job and he's looking for another cause, another country to save. So, I would only, as a citizen, say that God save Pakistan from Zalmay Khalilzad and the likes of him.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Do you fear a military takeover in Pakistan now, or would you say that's already happened?

**MOHAMMED HANIF:** I think Pakistan is in such a big economic mess right now. I mean, 'til last month, and even now, people are standing in long queues just to purchase, you know, flour for — to make their bread. And things are so bad that — they haven't been so bad in a long time. And Army, what a move, then, if they knew that they could handle the country economically, and which they — which they can't. Things are as desperate as they can be. So, they're kind of — they are trying to run things, but it seems that they can't anymore.

And if they resort to brute force, which they have done in the past, I think we will get into probably a much bigger mess than we are in right now. And I think probably Army fears that, too. So I don't think there will be any direct takeover by the Army. They will try to do what they've been doing in the past. They will stay — they will stay on the sidelines, and they will try to run things. But increasingly, it seems that they are not able to do what they've been able to do in the past.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Mohammed Hanif, I want to thank you for being with us, award-winning Pakistani writer and journalist based in Karachi, former editor of the BBC Urdu service in London, speaking to us from London.

## 2023-05-12 "Shock & Surprise": Serbia Reels from Two Mass Shootings, Demands Stronger Gun Control

[https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/serbia\\_disarmament](https://www.democracynow.org/2023/5/12/serbia_disarmament)

### Topics [Gun Control](#)

- [Mass Shootings](#)

### Guests [Ljiljana Smajlovic](#)

Serbian journalist, former editor of *Politika*, the oldest daily newspaper in the Balkans, and a columnist for *Nedeljnik*, a political weekly magazine in Belgrade.



### Links [Politika](#)

- [Nedeljnik](#)

We speak with Serbian journalist Ljiljana Smajlović as Serbia reels from a pair of mass shootings that left 17 people dead, incidents that spurred mass protests and demands for stronger gun control. In light of the massacres, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić vowed to completely disarm the country. More than 6,000 unregistered guns and weapons were turned in after the government announced a month-long amnesty on illegal weapons. "People are stunned. Their sense of security has been taken away completely," says Smajlović. She notes the shock of the mass shootings is providing a rare opening for the opposition to attempt to weaken the ruling party, which has been in power for more than a decade.

### Transcript

This is a rush transcript. Copy may not be in its final form.

**AMY GOODMAN:** This is *Democracy Now!*, [democracynow.org](http://democracynow.org), *The War and Peace Report*.

We end today's show in Serbia, which is reeling from a pair of mass shootings that left 17 people dead. On May 3rd, a 13-year-old boy, a student, went on a rampage at a school in the capital Belgrade, killing eight students and a school guard. It was Serbia's first mass school shooting. The following day, a 21-year-old Serbian man shot dead eight people nearby.

The shootings shocked the country and led to quick calls for sweeping gun control measures, and Serbia's President Aleksandar Vučić vowed to completely disarm the country. More than 6,000 unregistered guns and weapons have already been turned in, after the government announced a month-long amnesty on illegal weapons. Nearly 300,000 rounds of ammunition have also been surrendered.

We go now to the Serbian journalist Ljiljana Smajlović. She is former editor of *Politika*, the oldest daily newspaper in the Balkans, also is a columnist for a Belgrade political weekly magazine.

We welcome you back to *Democracy Now!*, Ljiljana. Thank you so much for being with us. Can you first lay out what happened, and then the country's response, the population? In fact, there's about to be yet another anti-gun mass mobilization in Belgrade today.

**LJILJANA SMAJLOVIĆ:** First time, you know, their sense of security has been taken away completely. So, what they're thinking now is, "Is my child safe at school?" This other mass murder happened in a sleepy little suburb of Belgrade. They're wondering, "Can we still meet up, play with neighbors and walk home afterwards?" So, there is this shock and surprise, and something that's never happened before.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Last week, after 17 people were killed in the two mass shootings, including eight children, tens of thousands of people joined protests against gun violence in Belgrade, demanding top government officials resign. This is a protester.

**SLOBODAN SEKULIĆ:** [translated] It is tragic that so many kids killed by their peers were buried in a short period of time. This is a low point. We are already used to what happens in Texas, but there, weapons are openly purchased. And here, where do they get the firearms? It is a disaster.

**AMY GOODMAN:** This is the Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić speaking last week at a news conference in Belgrade after both mass shootings.

**PRESIDENT ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ:** [translated] Everyone who has a weapon, and that's around 400,000 individuals — and I'm not talking about hunting weapons — will have to go through revision. And after, there won't be more 30,000 to 40,000 of them. We'll practically conduct a complete disarmament of Serbia. For owning an illegal weapon, penalties will be much more severe, almost double. ...

Of course, even that will not be enough for the small number of weapons that will remain. For hunters, who are usually more disciplined, and for everyone else, we will conduct biannual and annual exams of gun owners, including medical, psychiatric and psychological evaluations. If deemed necessary by the authorities, a substance-use test will be conducted within 48 hours.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Let's see if we have Ljiljana Smajlović back. And if we do, it seems like Serbia is mobilizing against gun violence much faster than the United States. You've had two mass shootings. We have, on average, at least one a day in the United States. Explain what's happening.

**LJILJANA SMAJLOVIĆ:** What's happening is that we have a political hegemon in power. He has been in power for over 10 years. He has a majority in parliament. He is a hands-on president. He's also the president of the ruling party. So, when he promises something, when he says he's going to move on something, he moves on it, and people know that he can deliver.

So, the protests, the mass opposition protests that we've had a couple of days ago — and we're expecting another major protest tonight — these protests are not so much against his measures. People, by and large,



approve the measures that the president has announced. People are surrendering their weapons en masse. He just announced today that 9,000 weapons were surrendered, which is more than had happened in four previous campaigns of this sort, where people were asked to turn in their unregistered weapons, and there will be no consequences if they do.

But the protests are really the protests against this long-serving president who is being accused of being a dictator. And he truly, politically, is omnipotent. So, the opposition sees this crisis of people's sense of security as a good opportunity to try to dislodge or destabilize the government and exhort some important political concessions. They want several key people in the government, that are known as personal choices of the president, to be fired. They want two of the most popular political stations to lose their broadcasting licenses, at least for national frequencies, and only to remain cable companies. So they have huge demands, and they figure that this is a good moment to try to win some concessions from a very strong and stable — otherwise stable, government.

**AMY GOODMAN:** You are, to say the least, a global observer. You've seen what's happened in the United States, and then you see what's happening in Serbia. How are the mass shootings in the United States perceived from there? And this immediate crackdown on guns, especially illegal guns, on the streets of Serbia, like we haven't seen in the United States ever?

**LJILJANA SMAJLOVIĆ:** We are a society that's just as deeply polarized politically as the United States. So, we used to look at the United States and say, "Oh, that happens there because they have all those weapons, and they have these, you know, open carry and all this." But we also felt that we were better and that this kind of thing could not happen here. And immediately, there were political accusations. A government minister, who was forced to resign, said, "This is what comes from your so-called Western baggage." Well, the opposition responded, "No, this is what comes from Putinism, from being pro-Russian." So that was the debate.

But, by and large, people approve of restrictive measures, and they cannot understand that the United States is unable to do anything about their problem. So, people are saying, "OK, this has not been imported from the United States. We are simply part of the big world, and these are things that happen in that outer world. And some things that are happening in the society have a lot to do with what's happening in other more developed societies."

**AMY GOODMAN:** Well, Ljiljana Smajlović, we're going to have to leave it there. We thank you so much for being with us, Serbian journalist, joining us from Belgrade, Serbia, where two mass shootings took place one day after another, one perpetrated by a 13-year-old student who gunned down his classmates and a guard in the school.

That does it for our show. A very happy birthday to Erin Dooley! *Democracy Now!* is produced with Mike Burke, Renée Feltz, Deena Guzder, Messiah Rhodes, Nermeen Shaikh, María Taracena, Tami Woronoff, Charina Nadura, Sam Alcott, Tey-Marie Astudillo, John Hamilton, Robby Karran, Hany Massoud, Sonyi Lopez. Our executive director is Julie Crosby; our director, Becca Staley.