

[Transcript] The Realignment / 407 | Cenk Uygur: The Future of the Progressive Movement in Joe Biden's (or Donald Trump's) America

Marshall here. Welcome back to the Realignment.

Hey guys, welcome back to the show. This is one of the last episodes I'm recording and releasing right before I go off on my honeymoon. So I'll be off this week other than releasing this pre-record. So I'll be looking forward to see you all on Friday again. Got a great episode today. I'm speaking with the young Turks and Justice Democrats, Shank Uyghur. Shank has a new book out. It's called Justice is Coming. Pop progressives are going to take over the country and America. It's going to love it. It's a conversation to cover everything from the nature of the progressive movement to debates around systemic corruption and injustice in American society and what, if anything, can be done about these factors. We also definitely get into a bit on whether or not people who oppose each other are acting good faith and whether or not systemic corruption is so deep that we cannot basically trust what anyone is saying. Definitely know what you think. Hope you all enjoy this conversation.

Shank Uyghur, welcome to the Realignment. Thank you, Marshall. Appreciate it, brother.

Yeah, really glad to speak with you. I was saying before we started recording that I listened to you on the radio back in America, back when I was in late elementary school and middle school. So it's always cool to catch up with folks who I'm not normally having a bi-directional conversation with. Okay, here's the deal. I read your book, Justice is Coming, How Progressives Are Going to Take Over the Country and America is Going to Love It. We've got the copy there for those watching on YouTube. Before we get into progressive politics, I was thinking a lot about the introduction and I think you and I have two fundamental disagreements that have nothing to do with public policy and it'd be a really great way to set the table by going into those. So I'll do them one at the time. Number one, I think you trust in poll results far too much and when reality diverges from a poll result, I think you attribute the difference between what a poll says and the actual realities of politics as being due to false consciousness. So I'll give an example of this. You talk in the book about how look at Mississippi, Democratic primary poll, Mississippi voters, they support Medicare for All, majority of voters like two-thirds and above, like very strong poll results. In the actual primary though, they don't actually support Joe Biden. They support Joe Biden, the Medicare for All guy, not Bernie Sanders. You then say this is due to gaslighting from the mainstream media. I don't think black voters in Mississippi are watching MSM, CBS, NBC, pick your different ones. So I'd love for you to like get into it with me. I'd love to hear what you think about this. Yeah. So all right, I'll take it one step at a time. All right. First of all, thanks for you and your parents for watching all that time. Yes, I am a bit ancient. We started Young Turks 21 years ago and then online video 18 years ago, oldest continuous running show in internet history. So that's pretty cool and I'm proud of that. And a lot of people have gone through different political transformations while we've been on air, right? The audience has, right? Different parts of the audience come in, goes out, et cetera. And so, and I love addressing all parts of that political spectrum. Now onto your substantive questions. So first of all, on the polling, it's just a scientific fact. You can get a poll that is done wrong. Of course, that's enormously possible. You can get outliers in terms of the companies that do polls like Rasmussen is a joke. By the way, they didn't use to be. They used to be a legitimate polling organization. They were run by right wingers, but they were perfectly credible, right? And how do you know if something's credible doesn't match reality? Okay, that's how you test it out. And then I don't know however

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many years ago Rasmussen probably had a change in management and they went loony right in my opinion. And so from then on, you could see, and I give them as an example because you could see, oh, they're polling no longer matches reality, right? And so, reality being the elections. So having run in a race, having supported and backed a lot of candidates, I have seen endless internal polls. And guess what? They're overwhelmingly accurate, overwhelmingly, okay? So it's a total, you know, it's wishful thinking that polls don't work. And of course, you'll notice that's what people say whenever the poll doesn't agree with whatever they're saying. They never say it when a poll does agree with what they're saying.

Now in terms of the last part that you mentioned, so this is a potential trap to this that I figured that the establishment would set for me to be honest, right? Where they say, are you insulting the Democratic voters? Because if you are, we're gonna smear you with that for the rest of your life and we're gonna pretend that you're a Trump loving Republican, right? And so, no, brothers and sisters, I've done your drug, okay? So I trusted mainstream media growing up and they led me astray. In fact, they led me to being a Republican when I was younger. And they are very economically conservative. They are, they do brainwashing that is much more sophisticated than Fox News and right wing media. Fox News is a blunt instrument. They

just tell you lies and those lies are easy to debunk. Mainstream media does this genius move where they just omit relevant facts and they go, whoa, whoa, whoa, I didn't lie. I didn't lie, right? And so were the people, good people in Mississippi tricked into voting for Joe Biden? Definitely. They were told, and do they listen to mainstream media? Of course they do. Are you kidding me? Black voters listen to watch television per capita way more than white voters do. And older voters, which tend to vote in primaries and elections much more regularly, watch television, cable news and go to mainstream media way more than anyone else does.

And in fact, if we could just get them to stop doing that, we'll win inside Democratic primaries easy tomorrow. We would win tomorrow. Our number one problem is corporate media. This is where it's cool to interview a media professional for full disclosure. I got married on Saturday night. I am still recovering. My intro question was way too long, way too aggressive, and you just gave us a really good thing. I've calmed down, broken my question up into parts, and now we could a little more efficiently get into things. So correction number one, I wasn't saying that polls aren't accurate in terms of getting to the right percentage of voters, getting the right crosstabs. I think you dispense with that critique. That's what the critique I'm making. What I'm trying to say is, I don't think it's useful to poll voters in Mississippi about whether or not they support Medicare for All up or down. Because at the end of the day, and we can get into this on a policy level, the problem of Medicare for All, and this is separate from whether or not it's a good idea, is that there are so many downstream effects from it. There's a big question of, okay, so what is going to be covered under Medicare for All? How much is it going to cost, even if it's cheaper in the status quo? How much is this being done through just a straightforward Medicaid expansion, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera? It's not like polling an issue like Ukraine aid. That's an issue, I think, which is very, very effectively able to be pulled, even when as a Ukraine hawk, it doesn't go the direction I want. Because the only real debate is, do we do the next aid package? Yes or no. So I guess what I'm

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really asking you then is, how do you think the complexity inherent to any transformation of the American medical system, is that a real thing that you could pull effectively when it comes to whether or not that support is going to transcend to Bernie Sanders versus Joe Biden?

100% I do. First of all, congrats on the marriage. Okay, so happy to hear that.

So number two is, onto the substance of it, look, a lot of issues are complicated. And I think it's a little bit of a cop-out to say, well, since this poll doesn't come out in the way that I want, that issue's too complicated for the average voter to understand. Well, couldn't I make the same argument about Medicare? Medicare has Part D. Do they really know about that? It has a donut.

Now, it's allowed to negotiate drug prices, but only 10 of them, and only one of them starting now. The rest start in 2026. I mean, you can see how it gets super complicated, right? And so yet, we pull Medicare and Medicare always pulls it like around 77%, right? Always between 75 to 85%. It is enormously popular. So we get a good sense that people actually don't just like it. They love it, right? So by the way, when we say, oh my God, how can we pull off this crazy Medicare for all? It's so complicated. We do it right now. It's called Medicare. We just expand it.

It's Medicare for all. I did it. Okay. And by the way, every other developed nation on earth, and tons of middle class and even poor countries have the equivalent of Medicare for all, they all managed it. Okay. And if Estonia can pull it off, I'm pretty sure we can.

And guess what? Everywhere that it has been implemented, it is so overwhelmingly popular that even the right wing dare not oppose it because they would be immediately thrown out of office. We're the only country that is brutal enough to say that if you don't have insurance, go ahead and die. We don't care. Every other country thinks that that is a barbaric ridiculous thing to say to their own citizens. I guess the kind of funny fact about this is you actually look at Brexit, one of the pro-Brexit arguments coming from the right populace, where we're going to take the savings from Brexit and pour it into the national health system.

So it's kind of a funny example of how the American and broader Anglo-political systems are not going to be completely aligned at an ideological level. So I guess here's the real question then, but I'm really getting out with the Mississippi focus. Why did black voters in your post-op go for Joe Biden? Because you know this too, the mainstream media was not pro-Joe Biden. If you've gone to the mainstream media in January, February, they would have much rather gone Mayor Pete, Amy Klobuchar, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So within that Mississippi example, let's just take your premise for a second that the voters were really just sort of mainstream media into opposing their expressed interest. Why Joe Biden and not any of the other more MSM friendly at the time candidates? No, no, the timing of that is super clear.

And so it's a fair question. And a lot of the premise is correct, but there's the critical part, which is that's not in that question, but then I'll explain that. So in the beginning, you're right, the mainstream media loves Buttigieg tells us that he learned Norwegian to read a book,

which I made the mistake of believing in the beginning. And once one person said, Cenk, are you sure? I was like, all right, he's a corporate politician. Of course, that's a lie, right? And some Norwegian reporter came and asked him a question in Norwegian. He didn't know a goddamn thing about Norwegian. So all these politicians are liars. Corporate media loves them. The bigger liars they are, except with the exception of Donald Trump, the more they love

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them. And oh my God, corporate rule is great. Buttigieg and Klobuchar are definitely your guys and girls if you're in that school of thought. And they were worried that Biden's too incompetent, too old, et cetera. And they were right. Biden finished like fourth and fifth in the first couple of primaries, got no business in this race, right? So, but what happened? This atmosphere rally and James Clyburn and Barack Obama made a decision. We're going with Biden and Buttigieg didn't have enough momentum. Klobuchar didn't have enough momentum. If they had, by the way, Clyburn and Obama would have done the same exact thing for Klobuchar or Buttigieg. They're all corporate Democrats. They all agree. And their number one concern, their house was on fire at that point, not because of Trump. They're like, oh no, Bernie might win. Bernie might win. So if the progressives are coming, Obama's always going to ride to the rescue and always going to attack us and always going to rally the corporate forces against us and then go, hey, I'm Barack Obama, you can't criticize me. Wrong again, brother. I can't criticize you and I am. And so now, by the time we make it to Mississippi, at that point, several different things have happened. One, people have gotten the sense that even though Obama didn't say it publicly, that Obama is behind Biden, right? And so that's going to affect black voters of Mississippi, understandably so, right? And by the way, they trust Obama. And why did they trust Obama? Not because they're wrong or they can't see it, right? No, because they were told all information that was nothing but positive about Obama. They were never told the information that he out of how incredibly pro-corporate he is and how he barely tried to make any difference at all and that his donors were thrilled, okay, with Obama. So given that information, I would be super pro-Obama too, okay? And so, and at that point, the second thing that and the most important thing dynamic in the 2020 election, primary election was who's more likely to win. And why? Because we all want to be Trump, right? And I want to be Trump. And I think, by the way, currently the Democratic establishment and the mainstream media are full of crap. They say there's the most important election of our lifetimes, Donald Trump's a fascist, we must beat him. And then they say, let's support Joe Biden, who's a hobbled candidate, poll just came out, 72% of Americans think he's not even healthy enough to complete the next term. Let's go in with this wounded antelope who's almost definitely going to lose. Why? Because it can't be a progressive. Okay, so why don't you tell me that you rather have Trump than progressives? Why? Because Trump actually helps corporations. He's a fake populist, Trump actually, what was his major proposal that he unveiled? Bring corporate tax rates down to a pathetic, ridiculous 15%. So bottom line is, all they see on television, all they see in the New York Times is, Bernie's going to lose, Biden's going to win, Biden's going to win, Biden's going to win, Obama loves Biden, Clyburn loves Biden, everybody loves Biden, everybody hates Bernie. They turn to MSNBC, so-called liberal alternative hilarious. And what did they see? Chuck Todd calling Bernie Sanders supporters brown shirts, Nazis, when Bernie Sanders was Jewish and his family escaped the Holocaust, some of them didn't escape, some of them died in the Holocaust, and they're calling the supporters Nazis on MSNBC. And then what did Chris Matthews say? And this is all in the book, you can see these are facts. Chris Matthews said that if Bernie wins, it'll bring on basically an ear, he implied he would bring on an ear of executions in Central Park. These are the corporate conservative monsters that run our media. I don't blame the voters of Mississippi, but they've been lied to a thousand different ways.

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I think we'll pivot to the really explicit part of the book, because I think it gets that we're kind of debating here. The one real piece of pushback here is, you said very explicitly that the effort to keep Joe Biden on the ticket is driven by fear of a progressive alternative. But if you look at who the main alternatives are, who could actually, A, force him off the ticket to the point where he just doesn't run, B, get around the Kamala Harris dynamic. They're not obviously progressive politicians. So who is the progressive politician you're thinking about who could reunify a torrent of party and manage to maintain the normalcy factor, which clearly put Joe Biden over the line in November 2020. Yeah. So there's two different issues here too. And that's a very good question. So number one, when this primary began, in a sense, it begins unofficially right when people started announcing, I wanted a very strong progressive to come in. And in fact, I talked to a half a dozen progressives to try to get them to join the race. They all said no. Marianne Williamson is the only one that had the courage to go in. And I commend her and I would vote for her over Biden in a primary in a second without, if she's both a better candidate, better progressive and more likely to win. I know, heads can explode. No, I was told by everyone in media, Biden's the only one who could win. 72% of Americans say, not him, not him. We don't even think he could finish the term. But so, but everyone in media will lie to you and say he's got the best chance of winning when in reality, he has the worst chance of winning. So now I'm at a second point in the primary where I say, well, I tried and I couldn't get big progressives to join. And the media is destroying Marianne Williamson's candidacy by framing her as a kook and never ever giving her the mic back so she can defend herself. So okay, I just want to beat Trump. I just want to, I actually do think it's the most important election of our lifetimes. So now I'm at a point where I'm ABB, anybody but Biden. And it's not because I hate the guy. It's not because of his accomplishments or lack of there and we could debate that. It's not where he is on the political spectrum. It's that he's going to lose. I apparently have this rare gift that no one else in Washington has. I can read a poll. Every poll indicates this is an absolute iceberg that we are willingly going straight into. And I don't care if we lose audience, if we lose support. I'm just gonna, that my job is to tell it like it is and to be honest with the audience. This is a near guaranteed loss. So I'll take anyone but Biden. So you would give up and convince the advantage. And I guess the one thing too, I should note when you're referring to the poll about Biden support, the poll also doesn't want Donald Trump either. So I think if you're the Democratic establishment, your basic good faith calculus is look, no one wants the status quo we're going into in November. That said, Joe Biden has done it once before. He does still have an underlying level of normalcy, which we need for our suburban base we see in the 2022 midterms. Given the way abortion referendums are really playing out, this is a fairer move to make when there's not a quite clear obvious alternative. What's your response to that articulation? Okay, so there's like four different issues in there. Let me try to remember all of them. So first of all, normalcy. Why do we want normalcy? The American people hate normalcy. They hate the status quo. They say it in every single poll. They say, give me change, give me change. And the mainstream media looks at and goes, well, I love the status quo. But 2020 wasn't a change election. 2020 was to go back to normal. Trump was the change election. 2020 is to go back to normal one. Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, look.

So here's what I let's look at the entire dynamic so that people are super clear about it.

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In 2016, people say in every poll, I hate the establishment. I don't know how much clear I need to be. I hate politicians. I hate the media. I think they're all liars. The media comes out and goes, oh, they love politicians. Let's go with the establishment candidate, Hillary Clinton. The most establishment candidate we have ever had, even though every poll says, do not give me the goddamn establishment. Okay, so I see a bumper sticker that says Meteor 2016. Ask and you shall receive. So we get a meteor. They choose the fake populace that pretends to be anti establishment because he appears to be the only anti establishment choice because the Democrats snuff out Bernie Sanders in their infinite greed, right? And you're referring to Trump, then they choose Trump in 2016. They choose Trump, right? So, okay, then they get a meteor. Yeah, he's anti establishment, but he's also an idiot, a lunatic, total loser, a sociopath. And they go, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. I didn't want that. I didn't want that. Okay, give me something else. Give me change. But not that. Okay, oh, god damn it, the Democrats. We told you in the first three primaries, Bernie. Every poll says Bernie. Bernie will easily be Trump in 2016 and 2020. But no, the media lies and says, I can't read a poll. The only person who could win is Biden. Obama says the only person who could win is Biden. So that's the only thing they ever hear. So they go, I don't panic, they say Biden. By the way, Biden then wins, barely by the skin of his teeth. He wins a popular vote by 7.5 million. And I'm proud of that. And it should be based on popular vote. And then we wouldn't have any of these conversations. But the electoral college, he only won by 43,000 votes in three swing states. So that is still the American people saying, you guys aren't getting the memo. We don't want Trump. Trump's a prick and we can't stand him. But we want change. Stop shoving this establishment down our throats. So he barely wins. And now, Marshall, do you know how many points lower he is today in polling than he was when he barely, barely, barely beat Trump? He's 15 points lower. If the guy who barely won when he was 15 points higher is going up against Trump today, first of all, the polls have him losing to begin with. But second of all, 15 points lower, that's a near guaranteed loss. And every political analyst in the country knows it, but they're either being willfully blind to it, or they think, who cares? Better Trump than progressives. So if even if Biden loses, so what, I'll still get a corporate tax cut out of Trump. So that's what's happening. 15 points lower. You'd have to be crazy to run that guy. I want to take a quick sidebar and just ask you the Mary Ann Williamson question really directly. And you convinced me that she is or was prepared to be commander in chief, which I think ultimately would be the reason why I think Trump would defeat her. And then once again, not, and not purely just like a question of like, could she do the job? But does she, would she be able to communicate a track record? Because even once again, you could criticize Biden for always different things. But like once again, Biden has the ability to say, look, I was the guy, if you want change, I was the guy who was saying, we need to leave Afghanistan in 2011. And I'm going to be the guy who actually does it. He actually does it. Mary Ann Williamson, not only is going to have difficulty projecting the ability to actually run the country during a perilous geopolitical time, she's also going to kind of lack a very distinct record. Cause so I'll, I'll just be like, totally Blake Face, Tyler LaRaza, right? You kind of make the case for me. Yeah. So I forgot to mention one thing. So if you want Biden to drop out like I do,

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go to TYT.com slash dropout. We're trying to get that petition. I, it's, and by the way, it's got a lukewarm response because everybody's so scared. The media has everyone so frightened. I gotta have my warmie blanket, even if he's going to lose. Okay. But if you're in the brave folks who say, no, we should run a real candidate. And whether it's a progressive or Whitmer or Newsome, it doesn't matter. TYT.com slash dropout. And by the way, the minute he drops out, all those guys come in right away. You want Buttigieg, you want Newsome, you want your beloved corporate Democrats, they're going to be in one second after Biden drops out. Over Kamala. You think that? Yeah. Of course. The minute Biden drops out, Kamala Harris is going to be in there. And then they're going to say, no, we have to respect Kamala Harris, only she should run. And you have a Newsome and Pete Buttigieg are going to go, oh yeah, that's a good point. And two and a half seconds later, they'll enter the race. They're never going to just let Kamala have it. And by the way, they shouldn't. That would be political negligence and malpractice. You need a strong primary to get a strong candidate. Okay. So to Mary Ann Williamson. So her progressive issues, the issues that she runs on, all poll above two thirds of the country. So they are unifying issues like paid family leave that polls at 84%. 74% of Republicans want it. Hey, do you want to give moms a 12 week break after they deliver? Conservative say yes. Progressive say yes. Everyone but corporate rule says yes. Joe Biden says, I'll pretend to say yes. And then of course I won't even bother trying to pass it. Public option. Well, you just have an option of getting public health insurance. Three quarters of the country wants it. Mary Ann Williamson wants it. Joe Biden pretends to want it and doesn't want it. This didn't even introduce it. Total other lie, right? So does that mean Joe Biden was terrible on everything across the board? No, we do not live in a binary world. Everybody always thinks, oh, if you're criticizing Biden, you think that he's the worst and Trump is the best? No, I can't stand Trump. And I don't think Biden's the worst. I think he has given us... I had it at 15%, but he did a couple of things in the last couple of weeks that I'll move them all the way up to 20%. He delivered on 20% of his agenda, which yes, guys, your mind's not tricking you. That is record breaking for a Democrat in the last 40 to 50 years. Generally, Democrats don't deliver... Obama delivered on 5% and everybody threw a party. They thought it was like the most amazing thing in the world that he actually did 120th of the things that he promised, right? So I get that Biden is better than Obama and better than Clinton and so many others within the Democratic Party. But he didn't do 80% and he didn't even try on 80%. So in terms of why you think Mary Ann is not qualified to run, she's a business owner. She's incredibly successful. She has this intense following. The reason why in your mind you feel like, well, it can't be her is because of how she's been framed in the media. She's been framed as kooky based on what? Based on what? No one ever has an example, right? And then they'll say, the crystals is the example. Yeah, exactly. They say crystals are rocks. She doesn't do any crystals. That's a total fabrication. If you said, hey, I don't like her spiritual advice, and she seems to believe in God and miracles and stuff. Hey, I'm an atheist. I say, okay, I hear you. I don't think that's a big political liability, but I hear you. But the crystal stuff

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is totally phony. She doesn't even do that. She's just been smeared with that. And if you're a right winger and you've seen how some of your candidates are smeared, you think they're not smearing outsiders from the left? No, they want corporate rule. So if there's an outsider like Mary Ann, Williamson or me or Bernie from the left, they smear us just as much if not more than outsiders from the right. And I want to be very precise. Like when I was saying the, you know, Mary Ann, Williamson is in qualified thing, I wasn't just giving my personal opinion of that, though I obviously have an opinion on that. What I was kind of saying is it seems to me a Mary Ann versus Trump general election, because you were saying she would stand a better chance than Joe Biden. I think she just ultimately is caught in the suburbs, because Donald Trump is going to be able to say weirdly enough, hey, war in Ukraine, potential Taiwan crisis, Xi Jinping, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, you've seen me be a foreign policy president. I'm actually the stable one. I'm actually the normal one. Why would you throw this to this person who just can't be seen in those environments? I think that's it. I think that's an effective Trump. Trump is at his best when Trump feels normal. And I think Mary Ann would allow Trump to position himself as normal. That is what I'm trying to say. Yeah. Okay. I hear you on that. And I understand that that's certainly the concern, right? But at the same time, if Mary Ann was running against Trump, okay, so I can make the case, A, that Trump is not any of those things, that he is 10,000 times more unstable than anyone, let alone Mary Ann Williamson. Here's a guy who thought maybe we should nuke a hurricane. I mean, the guy's an absolute moron. And so stable and in foreign policies, like, oh, you want to dismember American journalists, have at it, but make sure you give my son a lot of \$2 billion fund after we, you know, aren't in office anymore or make sure that you give me all the golf tournaments. That's the only way that I make money and shovel millions of dollars towards me. And I'll give you whatever American policies you like, Saudi Arabia. And that's also true of Russia and many other places. And if you're a right winger, and I just said Russia and Trump in the same sentence, go seek mental health counseling. I know you're going to need it because that really triggers you and you're emotional about it. I'm not the one who said that he gets all his money from Russia. Both of his sons said we get all of our money from Russia. Okay, but to be fair to them now, also Saudi Arabia, you guys must be so proud. Okay, now, if Mary Ann were the candidate, she would have somebody like me on her team who would eviscerate

Trump, who every day we talk about how pathetic he is, how he lost, he went bankrupt six times, one of the biggest losers in American business history, the most incompetent person to have ever been in public office. Now, you think, well, that's not going to work with MAGA. In fact, if anyone is MAGA that's listening or watching right now, they despise me, right? By the way, interesting that the establishment and MAGA agree. Interesting note right there. Okay. But they despise me and they say, oh, no way, but I'm not trying to get MAGA. MAGA is going to vote for Trump 200%. You have to win over the independence. And what is the strength of Trump with independence?

He appears to be strong and he appears to be a good competent businessman. He is neither one of those things. He's the weakest man in America and he's the worst businessman anyone has ever seen.

Okay. So, but Biden and his team will never tell you that. Never. Their main political strategy is, well, I love Republicans. Republicans are friends of mine. I love Mitch McConnell. I wish the

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Republican Party was stronger. I love my opponents so much you should probably vote for them. Oh, I'm the comforting guy. I'm super old. Vote for me because I'll comfort you. But remember, the Republicans are better. No, that guy's not going to win. That is not a winning strategy. Give me Mary and give me anyone else. And let me hit the son of a bitch. You politics is about positive and negative branding. And the Democrats are incompetent at it. They refuse to hit Republicans

and I'll tell you the number one reason why they don't. Because they have the same freaking donors. That's why you just pivoted us into my second fundamental disagreement. So, I talked about this with my wife and she helped me phrase this very specifically because I want to make clear I'm not saying two different things. So, let's start with the following. I think there are two different types of politicians. There are non-ideological politicians. There are ideological politicians. Let's put Richie Torres, Joe Manchin, Christian Sinema in the non-ideological camp. Not driven by ideas, not driven by bases. In some ways, I think they're driven in other ways. I think they're driven just by power and constituent services. That's one category.

Other category are the ideological politicians. And I bring up the ideological category because you spend a decent amount of time in the intro going after Utah Senator Mike Lee over his stands on climate change and that relation to the fossil fuel industry. So, here's my specific wife-moderated contention. I think you really overinflate the influence of money and politics on ideology-driven decision-making. I think Mike, knowing I have never spoken with Senator Lee, but having interviewed

most of his colleagues, having known a bunch of people on his staff, a couple of them were at my wedding this past weekend, I can tell you that Mike Lee believes what he believes on climate change regardless of how much money is entering into his campaign coffers. Now, that could be a devastating thing. I think that's actually particularly bad for the planet. But I am just concerned, I think as a progressive, you should be concerned about ascribing unhelpful outcomes of decent portions of the country, essentially to conspiracy, when actually there's actual fundamental values, disagreements. And this is also why I put aside Kirsten Sinema, Joe Manchin, and those people because I'm not going to disagree if you want those things there. Okay, now we're at a massive disagreement. Okay, so first of all, there are some ideological politicians, but they are very rare. So yes, of course, I think some progressives are, but I can prove that because they don't take corporate PAC money. So they are free to have ideology. And I can show you specific instances of them having ideology and that is not connected to donors. In fact, it's the opposite of what donors want, but it's not just left-wingers. There's also ideological right-wingers like Tom Massie's one, Ken Buck's another one. You know, you could argue half the freedom caucus is a true ideological conservatives. Okay, now those guys I disagree with vehemently, maybe even more so than I disagree

with corporate Republicans like Mitch McConnell. But at least I know the Tom Massie's of the world are honest. And that's a giant difference. Okay, the rest of politics, about 95, 98%, I don't know what the exact percentage is, but anywhere from 90 to 98% of politicians have no ideology. It's all donor driven, 100%. How can you know that? Okay, so let me explain. Okay, because it's irrelevant. So number one, I think people like Ted Cruz, JD Vance, Josh Hawley have proven they're just flagrant liars. They don't like here JD Vance, a perfect example. I hate Trump,

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I hate Trump, Trump's an idiot. Oh, I'm running. I love Trump. I would like to lick Donald Trump's boots 24 seven. I think Trump's the greatest guy in the world. Okay, yeah. Now, by the way, substitute Trump for corporate donors, and you get 90% of corporate Democrats and corporate Republicans. Okay, so Mitch McConnell raises a billion dollars and gives it to all the Republicans. They didn't get a billion dollars for not doing what corporations want. They got it because Mitch McConnell gives them return on investment. Same exact thing with Nancy Pelosi. Why do we have ancient politicians? Why does everybody look to be 98 years old? That's because corporate donors

get wonderful return on investment from proven corrupt politicians like McConnell, Pelosi, Schumer, Biden, Kevin McCarthy, you name it, they get what they paid for with a young politician. That guy might not even be a good investment. We might bribe him and he might not agree with us 100%. Now, we get to Senator Lee. Now, you say, I know Senator Lee and that guy actually is so stupid. He doesn't believe 99% of world scientists. He thinks that they're playing around with the thermometers in India and Botswana and Iceland. The guy's a blithering idiot and that he is genuinely stupid. Okay. All right, fair. But how did Mike Lee get there? There's 330 million people in the country. The guy who is a solid conservative but believes in thermometer readings does not get

millions of dollars in funding from oil and gas companies and the banks that finance those oil and gas companies. But when Mike Lee comes in and raises his hand and says, I don't believe in climate

change, I think climate change is crazy. The scientists are all wrong. I read from Bob on Facebook that climate change doesn't exist and that we shouldn't listen to facts. Okay. And what happens? Tens of millions of dollars pour in to support Mike Lee, the moron, because they don't care if he's good at politics. They don't care what his ideology is. All they care is, hey, we got a stooge here who will do exactly as he's ordered by the oil and gas companies. That's why the Senate is full of Mike Lee's. And the thing is, I really want to correct this because my contention is not that Senator Lee is stupid. I think what my contention is, is that what drives Senator Lee, but let me put it this way, the issue with climate change is that if you were to have a lab or a marketing agency and design a public policy problem that was just perfectly attuned to trigger conservatives on every single level going back to the 20th century, it would just be climate change. You have everything from top-down regulatory responses. You have the fact that there's a portion, not the majority, not the entirety, a portion of the anti-climate change activism community, but it's definitely extremist and like reeks of 1960s hippieism. So obviously, you're going to trigger on one level. You have the fact that a lot of the responses framed in governmental terms, tax increases, massive market failure, public goods, etc., etc., etc. My point is just that the reason why I think that Mike Lee is in his position is not purely because of the money. It's actually because he, in the anti-institutional, anti-trust era, think about this. You spent a decent portion of the podcast going after the media very seriously. You really believe this. He thinks the scientific community is in the same category. He thinks this is the same overall phenomenon. And I just think that reducing those, I think, dangerous. I'm not saying these are good instincts, but I think that if I talk to people on the street, like we get approached, we talk to people, if they think that the other half of America that disagrees with them, it comes down to money and that public financing will resolve that issue,

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it's not going to resolve that issue. And that's where I think my disagreement comes from. Yeah, I don't agree. And so let me explain why not. Okay, first of all, look, I acknowledge that I'm being very harsh on Mike Lee and all those corporate politicians that take bribes for a living. And mind you, they're legalized bribes. They're sellouts, they're corporate whores, but they're not necessarily stupid. And so I get it. You could have listened to corporate media, whether it's mainstream media or right-wing media, that led you to believe that all the scientists in the world are lying and they're in some sort of cahoots. I get it. It doesn't mean that you're unintelligent. So I withdraw that comment, okay?

I get one. That's all I want today. But it does mean you're wrong. I love your brothers. I'll accept that. I'll accept that. And so let me address one of the side things that you mentioned there, scientists versus the media. Well, so you mentioned that money in politics is almost a conspiracy, which I always find hilarious, right? No, it's not a conspiracy. It's out in the open. So ExxonMobil will come in and give a million dollars to a politician as an example, right? Well, where's the conspiracy? No, it's out in the open. And does anybody think ExxonMobil did it for the general welfare? Yeah, but do you think if like a renewable energy group gave a million dollars to Ted Cruz, he'd suddenly be poor renewable energy? No, because there's more money

from the oil and gas companies. But that's a good question. Because if Ted Cruz thought there was more money, overall, because remember, if he breaks from the right, he's going to cost himself a lot of money in different ways. But if he thought overall, there's more money in renewable energy than oil and gas, and the right wing was okay with it. Yes, he would go over there in one second overnight. Overnight he would change his position. Okay. So, and by the way, so with a lot of Democrats. And so in mainstream media, you'll see, oh, right wingers, Mitch McConnell,

all those guys, they're so crooks, they're corrupt. Can you believe they're taking, they're working with corporations, although they barely ever say that, right? They still love the Republicans. They're corporate media, right? But when it comes to Democrats, they're like, oh, no way. Nancy Pelosi's an angel. Joe Biden's an angel, right? And what does right wing media do?

They do the exact opposite. Oh, Nancy Pelosi's terrible, et cetera. Can you believe she's such a crook? She takes money. Oh, Republicans, no, they're angels. No, neither one of them are angels. They're driven completely and utterly by the lust for power, fame, and money. And so can you not see

that when corporations give money, I mean, let's take it one step at a time. Let me flip it on you. Okay. A corporation like ExxonMobil, we could fill it in Pfizer, any corporation, when they give a million dollars, do you think that it's for the general welfare?

Because college, gee, I happen to agree with that guy on crime or healthcare or some other issue. And I just did it for charity. Or do you think ExxonMobil thinks, hey, this is in my business interest, and I will make a bigger profit if I grease this politician?

No, I think I 100% agree with that. I think the one issue then we disagree about then is chicken or the egg problem. In the sense that I think there is a specific conservative 20th century since the New Deal era ideology, limited government, anti-regulation, skepticism of centralized institutions, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, that has easily 40% to 50% of the country agreeing

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with that ideology. And those are value systems. So I'm not going to even allege that any of those things are inherently wrong. Same thing goes on the progressive side. These are values to base that's what society looks like. I think there are cases where very specific and the less niche they are, the hardest to happen, where ExxonMobil's business interests perfectly align with preset ideology that people already held before. Therefore, my point is, Mike Lee actually thinks that climate change is a Marxist means of achieving top-down centralized government.

I actually just believe he thinks that. I think this is a like, how good faith can we take people argument? I think that's probably the key disagreement here. Okay. So there's two things there, but let's take it one at a time. Marshall, it doesn't matter, like I don't know the political tenor of your audience, but it doesn't matter where they are in the political spectrum, whether they're right wing, left wing, or in the middle. If you're saying that people like Mike Lee are acting in good faith, I think I'm going to win that argument. Okay. No, they are not. They are, their greed for power, fame, and money consumes them, and we could all see it. And so when they take the million dollars from ExxonMobil, they're not like, well, my lucky day, I happen to be against oil and gas regulations, and here I am. I got a million bucks for being against oil and gas regulations. Lucky me again, right? But as I said earlier, Marshall, but even if I'm wrong, and I'm a mean guy, and I'm these wonderfully honest, beautiful politicians with their noble, noble efforts, and I'm here, I am raining on their parade. Okay. It does still doesn't matter because Marshall, don't you get that the oil companies and the banks and the drug companies and all these other companies, they're looking for suitors. They're looking for people to raise their hand and go, I will do whatever you say. And so they're going to find even, even though the Mike Lee's of the world are not represented of 330 million Americans, they're only going to find the people that will represent corporate interests and then fund them in a way that becomes impossible

to run against them because they control the microphone. They buy all of the media in that market in paid media and the earned media that they get because they grease all the media figures, right? Media companies, I should say. So even if the youth that you said, hey, you know what, of the 535 people in Congress, okay, fine, you know, 515 of them are not Crooks, they're really honest, they're beautiful noble people, okay? But they just all happen to agree with corporate interests. Well, why do they all agree with corporate interests? Because corporate interests found the 515 guys in the country who would raise their hand and say, I will do anything for donors. And they bring those guys in. Look, Mo Brooks, a Republican deeply conservative from Alabama, gave a speech when he was running for Senate just a couple of years ago where he said, you buy chairmanship in the house for a million bucks. And he's like, Jane and Joe's citizen in Alabama where he's from don't have a million bucks. So where do we all go? He was incredibly honest. That's also in the book. And he said, we go to the people who we are regulating and they give us a million dollars basically to not regulate them and to give them everything they want. And that's the guy who becomes chairman of that committee. They are all systemically corrupt. It's not that Mike Lee's a bad guy and Ted Cruz and Nancy Pelosi are bad people. It's that the system is by definition corrupt, systemically corrupt so that it corrupts almost everyone that comes into it. And I've got to address one more thing you said earlier. So what's the difference between scientists and media? Well, where does all the money in politics go? The corruption that buys off all of our politicians? Yeah, for example, in 2022, they spent 17 billion dollars in those elections.

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Almost all of it went to media. And so there's, I forget if I put this in the book or not, but one of our reporters worked in a Washington local news station and he was going to do a story on money in politics. His general manager pulled him into the bullpen, showed him everybody working there. And he said, David, this is what money on politics buys you. So no, we will not be doing that story. Money in politics pays for all of their salaries. So corruption is corporate media's business model. Whereas scientists, some of them get funded by the government, but it's tiny amount and a tiny number of scientists. The overwhelming majority of science in the world are not funded by American government or drug companies or anything or renewable energy companies, etc. That scientists in India and Russia and Iceland have no incentive to lie at all. They're just scientists doing their jobs. There's a giant difference. That is a perfect pivot to the last section where I could stop disagreeing with you and just give you the soapbox to make the case here. Despite my disagreements with some nuanced parts, I actually really like your diagnosis of what you see as systemic corruption. In American government, if we're talking about change elections and a deep swinging back and forth across 40 years of post-Breaking politics, I think the failure of either party to translate their ability to win on an anti-system message into a sustainable government majority is the central political failure. So I think that was a good diagnosis here. So what is the progressive long-term solution to the systemic corruption? I'm going to buy your frame for these last 10 minutes. What is the progressive solution that could build a durable governing majority? Because the actual case you're making here is the progress they're actually going to take over America. My thought would be that's only going to happen if they could build a long-term political project that addresses the critique you just offered. Yeah, so I'm going to give you a lot of nuance here of things that went right and things that went wrong in the progressive movement and to get to your answer. By the way, the full answer, of course, is in the book *Justice is Coming* and you can buy it at tyt.com.com/slash/Justice. But okay, so let's try to do this as quickly as we can. Number one, the reason why we had one cardinal rule at Justice Democrats, which I'm co-founder of, was no corporate pack money is because once you get the politicians off of the corporate pack money, then they are at least honest. They don't have to agree with us. That's what democracy is for. And sometimes Democrats will get mad at me and be like, oh, I'm for a convention where the states can call for an amendment without using Congress. It's an N run around in Washington, DC. It was put into the Constitution by our founding fathers because they thought we needed that. And Democrats go, oh, well, Republicans can go to a convention too. I'm like, yeah, it's a democracy. Republicans can also vote. Yeah, that's how it works. So that's not the issue. The issue is that when we are trying to get progressives to govern, we have succeeded in one way and not succeeded in another way. So they are free of corporate pack money. They're not corrupt. I haven't seen them do anything corrupt. And by the way, again, this is not just the left. Matt Gates stopped taking corporate pack money. And what's the first thing that he did after he stopped that? Introduced legislation to get, to do campaign finance reform, get rid of corruption. Trump ran on drain the swamp, and then he didn't do anything. He didn't do anything to try to fight against corruption.

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In fact, he opened the floodgates of corruption. But all of a sudden, Matt Gates stopped taking corporate pack money and he's being honest. Again, I disagree with him on 98% of stuff, but at least he's being honest. So that's a pathway to get people into Congress. When we started Just Democrats, everybody thought we were going to get zero or at most one person in the Congress. Now there's 11 of them. So now there's beginning to be a left wing contingent and a slight right wing contingent that are clean and honest. Okay, so that's a beginning pathway. What do they do wrong? Well, the progressives that were in the Just Democrats were supposed to go and fight against the establishment and fight against corporate interests and fight for their voters. Well, that's where we ran into a brick wall because the Democrats did this strategy where they said, you're going to be mean if you say that your colleagues are corrupt. So don't be mean and they hit progressives where it hurts them emotionally. They hate not being unkind. So it totally neutralized most of the progressives that we send in there, and I'm very dispirited about that. But at the end of the day, the model still works. You get progressives to run or right wingers to run without corporate PAC money, you keep them clean and honest, and we go back to an honest politics. Now, the reason why I say progressives are going definitely what in the book is, as you saw, the demographics are overwhelming and it's not black, white, it's not gender, it's young versus old, the younger a thousand times more progressive and that army is building and building. And that's why the Republicans are on a panic. That's why they're trying to get rid of democracy. Oh, who cares who won the election? Let's do fake electors and do a coup because they know times up. The minute Democrats run a populist progressive, they will win a landslide victory that will be near permanent.

So here's the last question that ties together kind of what you said. Hearing what you're articulating in terms of how the 11 Democrats could have performed, it essentially sounds like you wish, and I'm not saying this pejoratively, this isn't meant to trigger anyone, like you wished the Democratic Party behaved much more like the post 2010 Tea Party, very much aggressively turned, like still obviously fighting Democrats, but very aggressively turned towards the party leadership and the party establishment. And I guess the thing you're going to have to convince progressives who are afraid because you're very much not afraid here is that Biden getting to 20% of whatever Democrats could achieve did not go via that Tea Party adjacent mode versus you have the Tea Party, they take the Senate in 14, you have the midterm shellacking in 2010, but ultimately in 2017, you can't actually overturn Obamacare because there's a lot of fire and a much of a do, but actually nothing, it wasn't capable of being constructive. So just close with this, why does your aggressive fighting progressive Democratic Party not turn into 2017 Tea Party that leads to nowhere but spectacle?

Easy and giant answer, which is our proposals are incredibly popular with the country, and the Tea Party proposals were not, they were not at all popular. So their issue was a style that was substance. So stylistically, in aggressively challenging their own party hats off, that's exactly what you should do. And by the way, when they did that, what did they have? They actually got a lot of gains, they pushed the overturn window to the right, they got a ton of concessions from Republican leaders and then eventually Democratic leaders, they pushed and pushed and pushed and made politics way more right wing, even though they're not at all popular. And so for example, when they wanted to get rid of Obamacare,

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that one was not overwhelming, but it was overwhelming enough about 55 to 60% of the country at that point liked Obamacare. So there, when they went to go campaign in Tennessee and in even in red states, they people came out and they were like, no, we want Obamacare. If I, if you cost me Obamacare, I have no insurance, I could die. I have this condition, right? So they couldn't win because they had terrible ideas. But should you challenge your own colleagues? Of course, you're never going to get the change. If you don't challenge your own colleagues, this idea of you go in and then you sit in line for 40 years until you're 80. And then you might influence politics at that point. That's if you're still a progressive after all that time, right? No, that is a losing strategy. That is a guaranteed losing strategy. It is not the direction they should go in. They should go in the direction of good trouble, just like the civil rights movement. But I'll end on this. There's this mythology that corporate media puts out that progressives are weak and ineffectual and they can't get anything done, right? Not remotely true, as usual, the exact opposite of the truth. No, FDR and LBJ on economic issues were far more progressive. And they got everything done. They got Social Security, Medicare, they got the Voting Rights Act, Civil Rights Act, you name it, one law after another, after another, all of them, incredibly popular laws. And they were lions. They were super aggressive. They were super strong. And they crushed their opponents. That's a winning strategy. And that's a fact. That is an indisputable fact. No historian or national media figure would dare to say that that isn't true. But now they all counsel. No, pick the weak. Pick the ones that aren't going to fight the Republicans. Pick the ones that are lap dogs because Democrats are supposed to be civil and quiet and obey authority. That's nothing but a lie. Democrats are supposed to fight for the average guy, the blue collar guy, the middle class guy, and for those families. And they're supposed to fight for them aggressively and against corporate interests. So every progressive that went in there and that now agrees with their corporate colleagues and will not call them out is doing a great disservice to the movement. That is a great place to end it. The book is *Justice is Coming, How Progressives Are Growing to Take Over the Country and America*. It's going to love it. Cenk, thank you for joining me on *The Realignment*. Appreciate it, Marshall. Great conversation.

Hope you enjoyed this episode. If you learned something like this sort of mission or want to access our subscriber exclusive Q&A, Lotus episodes and more, go to realignment.supercast.com and subscribe to our \$5 a month, \$50 a year, or \$500 for lifetime membership rates. See you all next time.