

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Prince Harry V Rupert Murdoch

This is a global player original podcast.

The people that chased her through the, into the tunnel were the same people that were taking photographs of her while she was still dying on the backseat of the car.

And those people that, that caused the accident instead of helping were taking photographs of her dying on the backseat.

And then those photographs made their way back to, to news desks.

It is no secret that Prince Harry loads the press.

We know that he blames paparazzi for the death of his mother and we know that he feels he threatened his wife and his family.

But in real terms, what we are seeing is Prince Harry prepared to go all the way to bring down a figure he has vilified, one Rupert Murdoch, who he believes is at the heart of so much of the damage that has been caused to him.

And he's taking him to court in a trial over phone hacking and over what the papers knew and spread about his life over two decades ago.

Harry isn't alone in this case.

There are others who are with him trying the case as well.

But he is the most prominent and he has the biggest potential to cause enormous damage, not only to the press and the way the press is organized and its relationship with the royal family, but even the royal family in the institution itself.

It is clear that in his cold fury, Harry doesn't care.

He wants to destroy those people and those institutions, those papers, that frankly, he hates.

There is the potential for this to become the showdown of the decade.

Welcome to the News Agents.

The News Agents.

It's Emily.

And it's Lewis.

And in a moment we're going to be hearing from John Soaple in Maryland with some...

We tracked him down.

We did.

We couldn't let him out of our sight for a whole 48 hours.

Turns out he's not doing Meet the Press this time.

He's actually hanging out at a car park in Starbucks in Maryland.

Yeah, he basically got Joe Biden to announce his presidential bid for 2024 whilst he was there so that he could run along and do us some star-spangled banner Vox pops.

The BBC's former North America editor spotted hanging outside a parking lot in some Maryland Starbucks.

Starbucks is a great place for Vox pops because the queues are so long there.

For some reason, you have to wait an awfully long time for a coffee in a Starbucks in America.

So it's a perfect place to trap people and make them speak to you.

Anyway, that is to come.

But right now, in London today, there is a hearing.

And this is Prince Harry, who is one of many claimants, but we're going to see it through Prince Harry's eyes for reasons that will shortly become clear.

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He is seeking an apology from Rupert Murdoch's company over phone hacking.

Phone hacking, obviously, that seems like a long time ago.

You remember the News of the World newspaper was eventually brought down by it.

And it had long been known as part of that, that Prince's William and Harry had also been the victims of phone hacking.

That was after a particular News of the World reporter, a guy called Clive Goodman, was found guilty of hacking royal voicemails at a trial in 2007.

Now at the time, News UK and News International and Rupert Murdoch, his businesses, said that Goodman was operating alone.

He was a sort of loam ranger and the newspaper had been let down completely by this one guy.

Now it has been the contention of some of the people who've been involved, including Prince Harry, in bringing this case forward, that that was not the case, that phone hacking was going on at other newspapers owned by Rupert Murdoch.

Namely, The Sun.

Now what is contentious about this case and the argument that Rupert Murdoch's lawyers are making is that it's basically run out of its time.

It's passed the Statute of Limitations that Prince Harry could have brought any claim against the newspaper or against the group if he'd wanted to, closer to the time that he alleges it happened.

There is a period of six years.

Prince Harry has argued that he has acquired knowledge in this time in more recent years that has helped him to solidify his understanding of the case that he can bring.

And today, in what is really just the latest jaw dropper development, we are learning that Murdoch and Murdoch's firm paid a secret phone hacking settlement to Harry's brother, to Prince William.

We don't know the sum.

It was a very large amount of money, but it was meant to make a phone hacking claim by Prince William go away.

And Harry's contention is that the royal family, senior members of the royal family knew about this.

And instead of, if you like, hauling Murdoch over the coals, they wanted to have it settled, to allow it all to go away because they just didn't want to see any royal stand trial, any royal in the witness box.

They certainly didn't want to have the lurid kind of headlines that had propelled Prince Charles to the front of the papers in his affair with Camilla.

They just didn't want to have the attention.

And so they received a payout, which we're now learning, that went to Prince William.

And of course, Harry is the one standing here saying, hang on a second, how could you do that?

The royal family do that to Rupert Murdoch and not actually try and hold any of this accountable when you knew it was going on.

So to understand a little bit more about what has actually happened at the High Court today, we're going to talk to Jim Waterton.

Jim Waterton is the media editor of The Guardian newspaper, and he has been in the High Court

where all of the proceedings have been going on this morning and early this afternoon.  
Jim, what have we learned so far?

What we've learned is that Prince Harry, who is fighting on three different fronts against three different media groups over phone hacking, has made a series of quite extraordinary detailed claims about the relationship between the royals and Rupert Murdoch's newspaper empire.

Not least the fact that his brother secretly reached a payout deal with Murdoch's company in 2020, which we just didn't know that happened at all.

And in some of the more incredible claims that Queen Elizabeth II, his late grandmother, was personally involved in trying to get an apology from Rupert Murdoch's company, which never emerged, and that Prince Charles did his best to kill Prince Harry's legal cases on the basis that they would cause damage to the royal family and that they needed to protect their relationship with the media.

So we're basically getting a really, what's an all, account from someone within the room and what the relationship is really like between the royal family and one of the most powerful media people in the world and one of the most powerful media companies in the world.

And the point is that neither of the main parties to this, i.e. Murdoch's business and empire nor the royal family, ever wanted any of this to emerge.

And we are only learning it because Harry is involved in this suit.

Harry says, and news group, newspapers, which is Murdoch's company that owns the sun and the news of the world denied this, there was a secret deal between the royal household and Murdoch's company to make sure that this never went to court.

And at the end of it all, there would be an apology and everything would be sorted out. Essentially, you keep your head down now and at the end of it, we'll sort it out.

Now, it's really worth emphasizing that Murdoch's team insists that that just, they don't recognize it at all.

But Harry insists this is the case and that he has finally decided that he's had enough of this.

And a few years ago, he was going to go his own way and go to court and go to trial and try and force this into the open.

So this gym will seem like a wall that Harry is waging potentially with both the news papers and with the royal family.

I mean, he's taking on two fronts at once here, right?

Oh, my goodness.

I mean, it is the witness statement from Harry talks about the mental anguish, the impact on his relationships, how he felt that there was always a third party in his relationships, which was the tabloid media, how they always knew where he was going almost before he did and basically blames them for mental collapse, for enabling online trolls and for making his life miserable and changing how people thought about him.

I mean, if you read his witness statement, it is essentially a litany of mental collapses with the blame put at the door of the tabloid press.

And in this case, particularly the sun and the news of the world.

So where is this going, Jim?

And presumably now we can expect more revelations on this relationship between the royal

family and the Murdoch Empire.

Right.

I think the particular focus is on the sun.

So people get a bit lost when trying to remember what happened with phone hacking.

A lot of this was a long time ago and a lot of cases have been going quietly through the courts for the last decade.

But News UK Murdoch's company has always said that phone hacking took place only at the news of the world and that the sun, which during that period was edited by Rebecca Brooke, a very important person who still to this day runs Murdoch's UK media business.

They say that no phone hacking, no illegalities, no use of private investigators in the various means took place there, which creates quite an odd situation because you've now got Harry saying this all took place at the sun and you've got them denying it.

And if it went to trial, that would potentially be quite problematic and embarrassing for news group newspapers.

Now, we've got to remember Rebecca Brooks was found not guilty at a criminal trial of phone hacking, but civil litigation allows people to bring their own cases and has a lower standard of proof.

Do we know, is it publicly known how much news group newspapers have paid out already in phone hacking sums?

There's lots of estimates.

I mean, it's definitely in hundreds of millions.

Just this year, they put another hundred million aside for it.

They are ultimately paid through a slightly complicated series of arrangements by one of Murdoch's companies in the States.

But, you know, you could look around a billion has been spent by Murdoch on phone hacking cases over the years in the UK in legal cost damages and other issues, which makes the Dominion Fox judgment that we've heard so much about in recent weeks, where he was sued in the States over comments on Fox News that this is much bigger than that. And much of this has been going on with only a few outlets, including The Guardian, still reporting it.

And it's taken Prince Harry to put it back on the front pages.

And what's the worst case scenario for Murdoch, Jim?

What happens if it all goes wrong?

If the judge isn't convinced to throw this out, then Prince Harry has said, basically, I'm the one person who's willing to put up a lot of money and risk a lot of money by taking this all the way to trial, because the MO at the moment is that almost every time that Murdoch's UK newspapers are on the cusp of a trial over phone hacking, they settle with all the people and pay out.

You might remember Sienna Miller struggling to hold back emotions on the steps of the courts a year or two ago, when she said, even I couldn't afford to take them on.

And Harry is basically indicated maybe with that Netflix money that he'd be able to go all the way to a trial, which would take place in January 2024, and could potentially be very, very explosive.

That's astonishing.

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So he would actually be present in the courtroom on the witness stand to take on Murdoch on this. Is that basically what we're hearing?

That is the case.

And remember that there's two other parallel cases.

He's trying to do the same with the publisher, The Daily Mail, in only a couple of weeks.

He's going to be in court against the publisher of The Daily Mirror.

So, you know, there's only the Guardian, Telegraph and Financial Times of the national newspapers that aren't owned by a company currently being sued by Prince Harry for phone hacking.

Thanks, Jim.

Thank you.

Look, there is every chance that the judge just decides that Rupert Murdoch and his team of lawyers have a point and that Harry has left this too long and that everyone else has sort of brought their phone hacking claim in a previous decade, virtually, and that Harry, along with all the other claimants, and that includes, as we know, Hugh Grant and David Furnish and Elton John and Doreen Lawrence, it may be that this whole thing goes. But if it doesn't, what we are learning is that Harry, Prince Harry, is one of those few people who is willing to see this through to the end, that he has said he'll take the stand, he'll be in court.

He wants to do this, I'm imagining, because he somehow thinks of it as vindication for everything that his mother went through and everything that she died actually for.

And I wonder whether somewhere this has become a very, very emotional question for Harry.

It's clearly not about the money.

He's already been offered, I think, 200,000 or something in that region as a payout.

If he's not accepting that, yes, either he's he's trying to climb much, much higher or else he's just saying, I want to see Murdoch brought to his knees over this.

I think that's exactly right.

I mean, look, I think that he's got the money to do it, and crucially, he's got the will to do it.

And that's the difference, right, with all of the other people who've come and gone before.

Most people who have engaged in this, they don't want the endless, endless story and the stories that come their way as a result of taking these people on.

Harry's been there, he's done it.

And his whole objective isn't to get the money.

It is to, I think in some sense, we saw it when we saw the Meghan and Harry documentary, we saw it in spare.

I think there's a sense he has of destiny with this, that this is his role now, is to bring truth, to teach truth to these institutions.

It is Harry against the world.

And the reason this matters isn't just because this is like a royal salacious story.

The point is, is that if this does come to trial and this does start in January of next year, as Jim was saying, then the capacity for collateral damage and for huge damage, not only against Murdoch, not only against the wider press, but indeed the

collateral damage on the royal family itself could be huge.

And we know, frankly, he doesn't care.

Well, he doesn't care.

It's funny, it brings to mind a book by Josephine Hart called Damage and the line, the sort of tagline is, if you like, damaged people are dangerous.

And I think Harry is that damaged person.

I mean, he'd say so himself.

He had said so himself on many occasions and in many interviews.

If you are that damaged by what you've been through already, you kind of think you've got nothing to lose.

And these are the people he thinks damaged him or at least were part of the reason that he became damaged.

So we will be watching this closely and we'll be watching the case against the Mirror Group, which starts in, I think it's May the 9th, a couple of weeks time.

Yeah, the point is, he's got count them three separate cases against different papers right now.

Talking of damage and damages, we want to bring in Tucker Carlson, who's shock resignation from Fox News's prime time anchor was announced yesterday.

And it was very clear to us as soon as we saw the wording, which was parted ways that that was a euphemism for has got fired.

Indeed, Tucker Carlson signed off on Friday night with the word see you Monday and was not around to do the show a weekend later.

Now, I think it's really important to put that in the context of the money that Rupert Murdoch paid out to Dominion, the voting machine's company last week.

But I think it's also worth recognising that there may be elements to this story.

We do not yet know.

There may be a smoking gun that we do not yet know of.

And whilst Tucker Carlson was the man who went on air to discredit Covid and to salute the protesters on January the 6th and to call them sightseers and to insist that Trump had won the election and to spread manifest lies about democracy, that was not why he was fired.

I mean, there is no point at which.

That was fine, Tucker.

No problem there, son.

Murdoch doesn't mind that.

He minds the stuff that gets him into legal and financial difficulty.

And I think that's probably where we're heading now.

And if you don't consume much US news, you might not be that familiar with Tucker Carlson.

But as Emily said, it is hard to overstate just what a massive figure he is in the American media and particularly American conservative media.

You know, the influence he's had is astonishing.

He sometimes interviews people like Republican governors, suggests that they do something and they do it almost straight away.

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He had Governor Greg Abbott from Texas in on his show one day and he basically said, why aren't you mobilising the National Guard to sort out the border problem?

Lo and behold, basically the next day or a couple of days later, Greg Abbott did exactly that.

Ron DeSantis, one of the potential Republican nominees for president, governor of Florida, he said, why don't you take some of those migrants you've got to Martha's Vineyard, a really exclusive holiday resort, effectively, for liberal voters and take them there and see if they like it.

Lo and behold, a few days later, DeSantis did it.

He has extraordinary influence.

And we've got a little taster here of the man himself.

Woke M&M's have returned.

The Green M&M got her boots back, but apparently is now a lesbian maybe.

And there's also a plus sized obese purple M&M.

So we're going to cover that, of course.

If you were to assemble a list, a hierarchy of concerns or problems this country faces, where would white supremacy be on the list?

Right up there with Russia, probably.

It's actually not a real problem in America.

Sometimes you wonder just how filthy and dishonest our news media are.

They'll be in the shower and you'll think they're bad, but how bad are they?

Well, here's one measure of their badness.

You can try this at home.

Ask yourself, is any news organization you know of so corrupt that it's willing to hurt you on behalf of its biggest advertisers?

We don't know how many votes were stolen on Tuesday night.

We don't know anything about the software that many say was rigged.

We don't know. We ought to find out.

But here's what we do know on a larger level, at the highest levels, actually, our system isn't what we thought it was.

It's not as fair as it should be.

The question we always ask ourselves is when somebody starts speaking, let's call it euphemistically utter bullshit.

For example, about the voting machine or whatever.

But isn't the conversation we always have like, do they believe it?

And it was revealed a couple of months ago when this Dominion lawsuit was brought that Tucker Carlson actually didn't believe any of this stuff

because they went through his phone records and they went through his texts and they found texts that said this one was written on January the 4th, ironically, two days before the attempted insurrection at the Capitol.

We are very, very close to being able to ignore Trump most nights.

I truly can't wait.

And he also said of Trump's lawyer, Sidney Powell, Sidney Powell is lying, by the way.

I caught her. It's insane.

So you've got this sort of double whammy of somebody who is not only incredibly influential in conservative circles, but has also revealed themselves to not believe anything that they've actually spouted.

He's not a hypocrite, is he?

I wouldn't go that far, ever.

Fox News got a hypocrite.

Well, the point to circle back to our original conversation is this has been a very, let's say, difficult period for Rufus Murdoch and it has the potential to become even more difficult still.

Something just occurred to me, though, as well.

I mean, John's not here.

I mean, you don't think he's not going to turn up on Fox at 8 p.m., is it?

It's the new Tucker.

I just got Tucker Carlson's prime time slot.

Actually, turning up here next for what could be his last appearance, his valedictory appearance on the news ages.

Look, here is the tie because we're going to be talking about presidential bids and campaigns, and it is not inconceivable that Tucker Carlson actually could pop up as a rival to Donald Trump in the next 12, 18 months.

But we don't know that.

It is not inconceivable that he has political ambitions himself.

In a moment, we're going to talk about those presidential bids.

This is The News Agents.

Welcome back.

So it feels as if the 2024 presidential election cycle is truly underway even at this early stage.

And this morning, Americans woke up to the news that their president, forty sixth president, is going to be running for a second term.

But it wasn't through, you know, a crowded stadium or a massive campaign event.

It was via a campaign video on Twitter and Joe Biden's social media.

Listen to this.

Freedom.

Personal freedom is fundamental to who we are as Americans.

There's nothing more important, nothing more sacred.

That's been the work of my first term to fight for our democracy.

This shouldn't be a red revolution.

To protect our rights, to make sure that everyone in this country is treated equally and that everyone is given a fair shot at making it.

So I think it is not coincidental that he starts with the word freedom because that is going to be a major sell for the Democrats this year, that the Republicans are taking away women's rights.



They're taking away gay rights.  
They're taking away the rights of people to live their lives  
in the way that they want to.  
And he wants to be the person that celebrates, if you like,  
the freedoms that America so staunchly defends.  
There are also a lot of shots in that video of the Capitol building.  
And yes, it is obviously a symbol of American democracy,  
but it's also a subliminal reminder of what some of Trump's supporters  
nearly overturned on the riots of January the 6th.  
It's clear that Biden in that video, he's trying to do that thing that, you know,  
he managed to perfect in 2020 and has actually become more acute since then,  
I suppose, since because January the 6th hadn't happened by the time  
of the last presidential election, which is, you know,  
have this sense of optimism, have a sense of uplift.  
But actually, the message is pretty dark.  
I mean, a lot of the video until the very end is pretty dark stuff.  
It is existential again.  
You know, basically, democracy is on the line again.  
And doubtless, the Republicans will go into the next election  
basically saying the same things for different reasons.  
And so America has the prospects of another  
the highest pitch battle, probably between the same two guys as last time.  
And obviously, Joe Biden was waiting for one very important element  
before he announced his relaunch presidential campaign.  
And that was for John Soagle to land in Washington, D.C.  
So we cross now live to our Washington bureau  
and a man who had to get up at 6 a.m.  
to greet that campaign video and find out what people made of it.  
Hi, I thought it was going to land at about midday  
and the video on Twitter landed at six in the morning.  
So what do you do?  
I was I got a note from our editor, Tom, saying, we need Vox pops.  
We need people on the street.  
And I'm thinking it is quarter past six in the morning.  
So anyway, I went.  
Must have taken you back, John, back to the BBC days.  
I never got up at four or six in the morning in BBC days.  
There were other people to do that.  
Don't be ridiculous.  
I got up, we're staying with friends and Debbie drove me to the nearest Starbucks  
and there were people getting their copies.  
Everyone knew that Biden was running.  
I'm going to say the reaction wasn't overwhelming.  
Ma'am, can I just ask you a very quick question?

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What do you think about Joe Biden  
announcing that he's running again for president?  
I think it's great.  
You think you like him?  
He's he's trying.  
Better than Trump.  
What do you think about Biden running again?  
No, not good.  
Not good. Why not good?  
Because he's too old.  
He sucks. He's too old.  
I think he's too old.  
I think it's ridiculous.  
Someone else younger.  
Yes, someone else younger, middle of the road, charismatic.  
But not Biden.  
Not Biden.  
What's your opinion?  
Biden's running again.  
What do you think?  
Fabulous.  
You like him?  
I love him.  
Not too old?  
Not yet.  
I can't really speak.  
I'm almost as old as he is.  
So.  
But he's been good for the country.  
He's been excellent for the country and there's no other.  
There's no alternative because nobody else is.  
Who has all the skills that he has.  
So.  
OK, thank you very much.  
You're welcome.  
What do you think?  
I think every election, we wish we had different candidates  
than the ones that we have because they're off-lawed.  
I am concerned that the president's going to be 86 years old  
if he survives this full term.  
And that's too old.  
It's certainly risky.  
Our life expectancy is probably around that time.  
So.

I think President Biden's done a fantastic job.  
But I probably would have preferred there be a different candidate.  
I think he's OK.  
I mean, he's not my favorite.  
And he's old.  
He's a little old.  
It's OK.  
OK, all right.  
Thank you.  
I think he's too old.  
Really?  
Really.  
Do you think he could do it another server second term?  
Maybe.  
But you want someone else?  
I like somebody younger.  
Who?  
I don't know.  
Can I just ask you, what do you think?  
Biden has just announced he's running again.  
That's a bad thing.  
Why?  
Because he's nothing good for the country.  
Would you rather have Trump?  
No, I would rather have a Republican.  
So when the choice is Trump or Biden,  
it's not a great choice, then.  
Correct.  
Thank you very much.  
Have a great day.  
God save the Queen or the King, the King.  
The King.  
All right.  
Bye.  
I guess, soaps, it's worth pointing out that Maryland is a fairly sewn down  
blue state, i.e. predominantly Democrat voting.  
So when people are telling you they're not impressed with Biden,  
they're not saying they're Republican necessarily,  
apart from the guy at the end, they're saying we wish  
the Democrats were choosing somebody else, right?  
Exactly, exactly.  
Maryland has had a Republican governor until fairly recently.  
So it's not, it's kind of one of those states that switches,  
but it was pretty anti-Trump.

And yet the feeling I got from everyone I spoke to, and you know, vox pops are an imperfect way of gauging opinion. There was just this feeling of, oh no, he's too old. And, you know, and this is the real problem for the Democrats, I think there was a poll at the weekend that showed that over 90% of Americans want neither Trump nor Biden. And yet that looks like the most likely choice that they're going to have. And I've been speaking to someone very well connected at the White House who says that, look, what we're going to do is we are going to make sure that Kamala Harris is the one who is out there doing most of the campaign stops because Joe Biden is, you know, he's too old and we want to show him governing as president. But that carries huge risks. I mean, Kamala Harris is not popular. She is on the ticket this time round. And if she had been more popular, it may be that Biden wouldn't have gone for a second term. So you're going to put her out there as the face of the campaign when she's unpopular. And again, it's going to underline that old line about the American presidency. You know, the vice president is a heartbeat away from it. Well, in this case, it's going to be a rather weak heartbeat away from it because Joe Biden will be 82 when the campaign is underway. That's the bigger question to ask about American democracy, right, which is that how can it be? What is so, what has become so imperfect about the structures of American democracy that the vast majority of the American public, basically across the political spectrum, don't want to see this rematch. You know, the American presidency is supposed to be about renewal and the American Republic is supposed to be about renewal. And presidential elections are a perfect opportunity for that. And yet we're facing down the prospect of the first rematch since Eisenhower and Adelaide Stevenson in 1956 and Trump being the first candidate to run three times since FDR. Like something's gone wrong. It's all crazy. And Trump will be 78 when the election campaign comes round. He was impeached twice.

He's been indicted now.  
Who knows what other legal mechanisms are going on?  
And I heard some really interesting stuff  
about what's happening in Washington  
over the past two or three days of this massive investigation  
into January the 6th that is still ongoing  
by the district attorney in Washington.  
And so, you know, it is going to be  
the most imperfect election candidates ever running  
for reelection, running for the most powerful job in the world.  
And there doesn't seem to be any alternative  
because in the Republican Party,  
there is nobody that looks like they are able to beat Trump  
at this stage, even with all the problems that Trump has.  
And on the Democratic side,  
there is nobody who feels that they have got the power  
to challenge Joe Biden.  
Look, it was a pretty glitzy three-minute video  
that Biden put up this morning.  
But, you know, it's going to leave people thinking,  
my goodness, what a choice I've got come 2024.  
I guess the point is it's a gamble for the Democrats  
in that they believe Joe Biden can beat Trump at the ballot  
because he's done so in the past  
and because Trump is such a negative force  
for many Americans still.  
But the Democrats are now sewn down onto Biden.  
The Republicans aren't necessarily sewn down on Trump.  
So if it isn't Trump in 12 months time,  
in 18 months time,  
then there is every chance that Biden loses,  
in which case they'll have played the wrong guy.  
That is exactly the gamble that they have made.  
In 2020, an anti-Trump coalition formed  
that was not pro-Biden, it was anti-Trump.  
And white college educated women,  
the people who lived in the suburbs,  
moderate Republicans, independents,  
all came to Biden's side  
because they thought that was a better option  
than having Donald Trump.  
And it's my belief that that part of the gamble  
is correct, I think that would reform.  
I think Trump has got fervent support

among 30% of Americans.  
He's got a very high floor, but a very low ceiling.  
He doesn't get beyond 35% in polls.  
And therefore, I think that Biden would win again  
if it is Trump, but if it is DeSantis  
or Chris Christie or Nikki Haley,  
or who knows what improbable set of events unfold  
over the next 18 months, because let's face it,  
it's still a long way away from the general election,  
from the presidential election, and a lot can change.  
And if it is somebody younger, fresher,  
more dynamic than Joe Biden,  
I think the Democrats have huge problems.  
And so the gamble is I'm running  
because Trump is likely to be running.  
That seems to be Joe Biden's calculation.  
And you could see that in the videos, right, right, John?  
Two things that really struck me about the video,  
apart from the fact that, again,  
Biden didn't seem to especially energize,  
but leaving that to one side, it was very well produced.  
Two things about it.  
One was clearly the Trump bet was there.  
He talks about the extremist Maga Republicans.  
The Democrats are pitching this once again  
as an existential election,  
where American democracy is on the line.  
He was leaning hard line into the Democrats' own liberalism  
and the party's own progressivism.  
The abortion signs, the gay marriage signs.  
Absolutely, they were leaning totally,  
they were leaning really hard into that.  
You know, they are now a party  
that is very self-confident in those issues  
and in that identity,  
in a way that they wouldn't even have been,  
say, 10 years ago.  
And certainly, it was a complete contrast  
to the British Labour Party.  
Lewis, you did the podcast the other week  
on abortion law in America and what has happened  
and how tough it is for women to get an abortion.  
And as a political campaign,  
the Republicans have been incredibly successful

in overturning abortion law and Roe versus Wade.  
But it's come at a political cost.  
And so I kind of think it makes sense for Biden  
to lean into those issues about gay rights,  
about, you know, a woman's right to choose.  
And also other kind of wider issues  
that are playing big here in America,  
like would the Republicans threaten  
social security payments as well?  
So that all makes sense.  
And he wants to frame it as it's me  
versus extreme MAGA Republicans.  
And if we don't do that,  
then we lose the soul of America.  
And so I think that that is quite deliberate.  
I think the polling evidence seems to suggest  
that the overturning of Roe versus Wade  
has cost the Republicans dearly.  
And I think you're going to see Democrats  
leaning into that, that whilst 40% of Americans  
might be cheering the overturning of Roe versus Wade,  
there are an awful lot of people  
who think that America is heading in the wrong direction  
in these kind of, you know, live rail cultural issues.  
Thanks, Ope. Back it is to Starbucks for you.  
Take care of yourself, John. Bye.  
Bye.  
Well, joining us now is Susan Platt,  
who was formerly Joe Biden's chief of staff.  
So somebody who really knows the inside  
of the workings of his mind quite well, I'm guessing, Susan.  
Was there ever any doubt, do you think,  
that he was going to run again?  
No, there never was.  
Thank you and good morning to everyone.  
It's a great day.  
It was great to get up this morning  
and watch such an uplifting, inclusive, warm,  
forward thinking, everything is possible in America video.  
And I'm so glad we finally made it official  
so we can get on with the business of re-electing him.  
What do you say, though, to the argument  
that this is a man who is going to be 86  
by the time of the end of his second term?

You know that that is going to be an argument that we hear again and again and again. Okay, if Donald Trump is his opponent, he's not that much younger, but nonetheless, he's already the oldest president in US history. And are there not genuine, legitimate questions about whether a man of that age can exercise that kind of job? Well, I think there are genuine, legitimate questions to that, but I think I have to respond with something Joe Biden has said all along, watch me. So watch him. You have to look and see what the man has accomplished. His administration has accomplished in the last two years alone, which is quite a bit. He has, you know, the Republicans are presenting a very dark, scary, discriminatory, ugly view of America. Joe Biden is presenting one that says, we've got hope, this is America. We can do anything we want to do if we just work together. And I think that's what people are looking for. That's what he's done, and that's what he will continue to do, and that's what people want. The Democrats are hoping, I guess, that he faces Trump. But what if he doesn't? Like, what if there's a moderate Republican figure that emerges, that becomes the top dog, who suddenly makes Joe Biden look really like yesterday's man? Well, there's always what ifs, at any political campaign, particularly. But I think what we're looking at right now is the current field. It's gonna be Donald Trump. I don't see anyone come. Look, we have nine months to go before the primary contest starts. So anything could happen. Donald Trump's already been indicted once. He's probably gonna be indicted two or three more times until that happens. We'll see what happens. But the way it looks right now, I just don't see how anybody's gonna be able



to catch up with them.  
You had Ron DeSantis in Florida.  
Numbers went up, numbers dropped.  
So I think Donald Trump has a hold,  
a negative hold on the Mac a Republican Party,  
and that's where we're gonna go.  
And Susan, do you worry that it's not  
that Democrats don't like Biden,  
but they're not overwhelmingly, obviously,  
just judging a little bit from the polls  
and a little bit from the new action today.  
They're not excited.  
Isn't the worst case scenario  
that people just don't come out and vote?  
They kind of lose interest a bit.  
Well, I'm a Democrat.  
So by that definition,  
I always worry about everything.  
But Biden has traditionally underpulled,  
traditionally underpulled,  
ever since I worked for him in the 90s.  
But there's something about having Joe Biden,  
who you see who's the real guy,  
who believes in America,  
who believes in each and lifting up each and every one of us.  
And I think one thing that we're talking about right now,  
more importantly, is access to more freedoms.  
And Republicans are talking about taking away our freedoms,  
taking away books and libraries,  
taking away women's right to choose on our own healthcare,  
taking away lives.  
There have been over 131 mass shootings.  
That means four people or more in this country  
since January 1, 2023.  
Something has to change.  
But the Republicans want to talk about taking away  
every other freedom that anyone has to vote,  
to learn for their healthcare, except for those guns.  
And that's something that needs to change.  
Susan, do you think that there was any doubt  
in Biden's own mind about running again?  
And do you think it's something  
that he would have been weighing up  
with the First Lady and so on,

that's been part of the conversation?  
Or do you think he always was going to do it?  
And if it wasn't the case that he was always going to run,  
do you think that the prospect of it as another Trump run  
has been important in making him decide to do it?  
Because after all, he is the guy who beat him.  
This is Joe Biden's time.  
This is his time, right this moment.  
And of course, I can't imagine Joe Biden  
doing anything without Jill's say so.  
But I think as a team, as a family,  
their intention always was,  
but as he said many times, he's a believer in faith.  
But this is Joe Biden's time.  
Susan Platt, just such a pleasure  
to have you on the news, agents.  
Thank you so much.  
I have a feeling we'll be coming back to you  
over the course of the year.  
So keep us on speed, Darla, if you can bear to.  
Thank you very much.  
Susan Platt, former Chief of Staff to Joe Biden.  
We're gonna be back in a second.  
This is The News, agents.  
Welcome back.  
Well, it's funny, we were mulling sort of political ageism  
in the office with the team,  
and we were remembering the Lib Dem leader, Ming Campbell,  
who actually took on the role in his mid-60s.  
And at that time, I mean, that was over a decade ago,  
but at that time, people were asking the same questions  
as they're now asking of Joe Biden in his 80s.  
I caught up with Ming a little earlier.  
Ming, you were mid-60s when you were Lib Dem leader.  
Was it ageism that chased you out,  
or did you feel that you'd given all you could to the job?  
What happens in our system of politics?  
Once a narrative is established,  
it is very, very difficult to break out.  
I had a couple of bad performances  
at Prime Minister's questions, and they hung round my neck,  
even on occasions when, although I set myself,  
I gave Tony Blair a pretty hard time.  
And when Gordon Brown chose not to have an election,

I realized that he would have to go to the end of the parliament,  
by which stage I would be 69.

And if people were chasing me because I was 66,  
then there was certainly going to be doing that when I was 69.

But I pause only to say, the manifesto was written,  
the helicopters had been booked.

I was ready for an election at that time,  
but I knew that if I was the leader for another three years,  
it would constantly be about age,  
is he up to the job?

America is different.

I mean, there are parallels, obviously,  
but America is different.

There's more tolerance of age in the United States,  
and there's more tolerance of age,  
either in the Senate or in the Congress.

Yeah, I mean, I suppose in a way,  
in 2029, if you took the current House of Commons,  
I think there would be only two MPs  
who would be about the same age as Biden,  
or older than Biden would be at that time.

I think it's Bill Cash and Barry Shearman.

So the truth is in the House of Commons,  
there are very, very few octogenarians,  
and not that many septogenarians either,  
whereas obviously in American politics,  
you know, it's dominated by all the people,  
particularly the Senate.

You know, you've also had Nancy Pelosi in the House  
who's only just stood down.

She's still in Congress, but stood down and speaking.

You know, he got Bernie Sanders, Biden himself.

You know, so it's much more of a gerontocracy in America  
than I think it is over here still.

I think we still have a sort of a slight emphasis  
or a lean towards younger politicians.

I mean, look, the man who took the biscuit  
for the perfect response to ageism in American politics  
was, of course, Ronald Reagan.

Quite young by comparison to the current law.

He was only 69.

He was asked in a debate whether age would be a problem.

And he turned the whole thing round in his answer  
about his opponent, Walter Mondale.

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Prince Harry V Rupert Murdoch

I recall yet that President Kennedy had to go for days on end with very little sleep during the Cuba missile crisis.

Is there any doubt in your mind that you would be able to function in such circumstances?

Not at all, Mr. Truett and I, and I want you to know that also I will not make age an issue of this campaign.

I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent's youth and inexperience.

But I think the thing is, going back to experience,

Min Campbell came to politics after he'd had this sort of phenomenal life as a sprinter, right?

He was an Olympian.

He actually competed in 1964 in Tokyo in the Olympics there.

And then we were sort of looking, sort of pursuing his other running feats.

And I have to ask you this a quiz question that is because it's too good.

It's too good to just let it get away.

Do you know who Min Campbell ran against and beat in the Stanford 100 meters in 1967?

It wasn't Roger Bannister, was it?

It wasn't the man who beat the fastest ever.

Was it? Well, I don't know.

I mean, that would have been very impressive for Min.

Wouldn't he? He should have stuck to that.

I don't know. Who was it?

This is the answer for Min Campbell himself.

Well, who did I beat in this race?

I beat a young up-and-coming athlete trying to decide between American football, where he'd make a fortune, and track and field, where he'd be famous.

In the end, he chose American football that his name was O.J. Simpson, who became rather better known for other things than American football.

I know you don't know that much about sport, but presumably he's a figure that has captured your imagination.

I did not see that one coming.

I thought he was going to say Gerald Ford or something, but no, O.J., wow.

Min Campbell versus O.J. Simpson.

**[Transcript] The News Agents / Prince Harry V Rupert Murdoch**

There's a drama in that.  
Totally. See you tomorrow.  
Bye.