

[Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / RFK Jr. Is Striking a Nerve. He Explains Why.

Hi guys, it's Barry with a really exciting announcement for you.

As listeners of the show will know, one of the reasons that this exists in the first place is to embody and promote honest, frank conversations and good faith debates, both of which feel increasingly rare in our polarized country.

That is why I'm so excited to announce that the Free Press, along with FIRE, the nation's leading defender of free speech rights, are hosting a live debate on a very sexy and contentious subject on Wednesday, September 13th at 7 p.m. at the historic Ace Theatre in downtown Los Angeles.

The proposition? The sexual revolution has failed.

Arguing for the proposition is co-host of the podcast Redscare, Anacachian, and author of the case against the sexual revolution, Louise Perry.

They're going to be facing off against musician and producer Grimes, and writer and co-host of the podcast A Special Place in Hell, Sarah Hader.

I'm going to be the moderator and I couldn't be more excited.

This is going to be an amazing night.

It's a chance to meet other people in the real world who also like thinking for themselves and who listen to this show.

You can get your tickets now by going to [thefp.com backslash debates](https://thefp.com/backslash/debates).

Again, that's [thefp.com slash debates](https://thefp.com/slash/debates).

I can't wait to meet some of you guys in person.

And now here's the show.

I'm Barry Weiss, and this is Honestly.

One Joseph James Rogan podcasting juggernaut, former Fear Factor host and proud free thinker, made quite a bit of news yesterday.

It tells you a lot about our current political moment.

This time virologist Peter Hotez tore into Rogan on Twitter for hosting Robert F. Kennedy Jr. on his podcast last week, where they talked about that a podcaster is offering \$100,000.

Peter, if you claim what RFK Jr. is saying is misinformation, I am offering you \$100,000 to the charity of your choice, if you're willing to debate him on my show.

For a doctor to come on his show to debate a man running for president of the United States.

I've been on it a couple of times and have that discussion with it, but not to turn it into the Jerry Springer show with having RFK Jr. on it.

That doctor, Dr. Peter Hotez, didn't take Joe Rogan's bait.

Despite multiple people on Twitter offering to up the ante, it was \$250,000, then it was \$500,000, then it hit a million.

Now it's upwards of \$2 million.

But let's back up for a minute.

The man in question, the man running for president, is Robert Francis Kennedy Jr.

Here is the rare Kennedy who hasn't joined the family business of democratic politics.

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But at age 69, he's had a long career as an environmental lawyer and activist, protecting the Hudson River, founding the biggest network of water protection organizations in the world, fighting legal battles against polluters, promoting renewable energy policies, and supporting initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These days, Kennedy lives in a beautiful neighborhood on the west side of LA with his wife, the hilarious Curb Your Enthusiasm actress Cheryl Hines. They have three dogs, Kennedy hikes every day, they have a combined seven children between them. It seems like they have a very good, very comfortable life. Now that's one version of RFK Jr. The other side of his story is that he used to be a heroin addict, he's now sober. He's had affairs, or as he once put it in a leaked diary a decade ago, his lust demons he wrote are his greatest defect. And most notably, his interest in public health doesn't end with the environment. Kennedy has taken positions, namely his belief that childhood vaccines are the reason for the precipitous rise in autism that many people, including members of his own family, say are dangerous and disqualifying. So given all of that, perhaps you wouldn't expect that this would be the guy to decide to run for anything, let alone president of the United States. But here he is, running for office for the very first time. You're going to really take back this country. You give me a piece of ground and a sword, and I am going to take back this country with your help, the help of all the homeless Republicans and Democrats and independence who are Americans first. Thank you all very much. Many voices in the mainstream, or rather what used to be considered the mainstream, dismiss RFK as a distraction. Look, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is a conspiracy theorist. He is running for president, and there's nothing more to say about it. He has zero chance of winning this primary. He, you know, is doing this for publicity. The New York Times called him recently a crank and a high-profile circus act.

Most people think the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.
In this case, the nut fell very far from the tree.
You just can't, in general, debate with conspiracists and loons.
You can't debate whether up is down, hot is cold, black is white.
But if you look at the polls,
if you look at what Americans actually think about RFK Jr.,
they do not seem to agree.
All right, the name counts for a lot,
but also the debater and the ideas that Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is espousing
seem to be connecting with a number of Democratic voters.
He scores one out of five Democrats who say that,
yeah, they like it.
Kennedy is polling as high as 20% among Democratic voters,
according to recent surveys.
And according to one recent poll from The Economist and YouGov,
RFK Jr. has the highest favorability rating among all major candidates,
including Biden and Trump.
Now, an incumbent challenger has never won the primaries in modern political history,
and RFK Jr. probably isn't going to break that historical precedent.
But that he's doing this well, this early on,
tells you a tremendous amount about the current state of our politics,
namely that Americans are deeply dissatisfied with the options on the table,
especially Democrats, who are desperate, it seems, for a Biden alternative.
According to one recent poll, four in 10 Democrats,
almost half of Democrats in America,
won Biden to step aside in 2024.
So that's the political aspect of this story.
RFK's popularity also tells you, I think, something much deeper,
and perhaps more unsettling about what's happening in American life
that goes well beyond partisan politics.
And that brings us back to Joe Rogan and the wager currently on the table.
At the heart of that Twitter storm is not the question of whether or not
this doctor or that one is going to go on Rogan for a debate.
It's really about the broader and far more existential issue
about who we trust and who we don't trust these days.
And the fact is that many Americans seem to trust Joe Rogan
more than they trust the New York Times, even more than they trust the CDC.
And we should think deeply about the reasons why that might be.
It also speaks to the question of what fits into the realm of acceptable conversation
and acceptable disagreement in our culture.
And whether the lines of debate have been drawn too narrowly,
and whether RFK Jr. should be in or out,
and whether or not the questions he raises are legitimate ones.
He says things in public life that are considered by some

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to be out-and-out disinformation or conspiracy theories.

But others hear what he's saying and hear a brave truth teller willing to suffer the consequences of going against groupthink.

Here are the plain facts.

Kennedy founded a nonprofit called Children's Health Defense Fund that advocates against childhood vaccinations and other facets of modern life, like fluoride in drinking water and even Wi-Fi.

He has said that he believes antidepressants are a cause of school shootings, and he believes without a doubt that the CIA killed his uncle and his father.

And let me note that there's no solid evidence for any of these things.

And still, millions of people are willing and actually eager to entertain these ideas.

They're tuning in to listen to RFK Jr.

And here's what I know for sure.

If we lived in a world with no alternative media, no YouTube shows, no rumble, no Twitter, no podcasts, we probably wouldn't hear from him at all.

So last week, I went to Mr. Kennedy's house to ask him why he is hit on the nerve he has so clearly hit on.

Or, as the New Yorker put it just this week, is RFK Jr. the first podcast presidential candidate?

Can the mainstream media really just wish RFK Jr. away?

I don't think so, not by a long shot.

And has he already touched on something so pervasive in the zeitgeist that there's no turning back?

Before you hear the interview, it's important to note two things.

First, as you'll hear, or if you've already been following him, you've already known, RFK has a rare voice condition, which causes his voice to break when he speaks.

Which maybe makes it a little ironic that he's the podcast candidate.

Secondly, we had limited time together, and I didn't get to cover everything.

There were a lot of questions I had prepared that I wanted to ask him and grill him on.

I'm curious, for example, about his stated admiration in the past for Hugo Chavez, which I find abhorrent.

I wanted to talk to him about his views on Israel, which are a welcome and rare exception among progressives.

I also wanted to talk to him about his views on nuclear power.

He's opposed, a view I find a little bit wild, considering his environmental commitments.

I also wanted to dig a lot deeper on things like China and Ukraine.

But this isn't a deep dive into every single belief that RFK Jr. holds that I disagree with.

There are many.

Or that I agree with.

There are some.

This is a conversation with a candidate for president who has caught lightning in a bottle.

And my responsibility as a journalist is to find out why and to not ignore that fact.

We'll be right back.

Hi, honestly, listeners.

I'm here to tell you about an alternative investing platform called Masterworks.

I know investing in finance can be overwhelming, especially given our economic climate.

But there's one thing that will never go in the red, and that is a painting from Picasso's Blue Period.

Masterworks is an exclusive community that invests in blue chip art.

They buy a piece of art, and then they file that work with the SEC.

It's almost like filing for an IPO.

You buy a share representing an investment in the art.

Then Masterworks holds the piece for three to 10 years, and then when they sell it,

you get a prorated portion of the profit's minus fees.

Masterworks has sold \$45 million worth of art to date from artists like Andy Warhol, Banksy, and Monet.

Over 700,000 investors are using Masterworks to get in on the art market.

So go to [masterworks.com slash honestly](https://masterworks.com/slash/honestly) for priority access.

That's [masterworks.com slash honestly](https://masterworks.com/slash/honestly).

You can also find important regulation A disclosures at [masterworks.com slash CD](https://masterworks.com/slash/CD).

The first thing I noticed when I walked into Mr. Kennedy's cluttered office were the many taxidermied and preserved animals from hawks to beetles that were scattered among the wall-to-wall books.

And one of these animals, the top of a giant bookcase, was a saber-toothed tiger that looked very much like it was ready to hop off that bookshelf and claw me into pieces.

I asked him about it.

Johnson, when my father hadn't even been back to work, Johnson sent him to Indonesia to negotiate the end of a war.

It turns out, like many of the artifacts in Mr. Kennedy's house, it has a storied past.

It was a gift from Sukarno, the first president of Indonesia to Mr. Kennedy's father,

then Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy in 1965,
three years before he was assassinated.
Would he try to bring me back a Komodo dragon?
How old were you?
I was at that time 11.
And Sokarno sent two Komodo dragons,
but they were not little ones.
They were 10-foot.
One was 10-foot, one was 12-foot.
And so they did not even stop at our house.
They went right to the Washington Zoo
because they could have killed me and my younger siblings.
But he also gave my father that tiger as a gift.
So I had that tiger in my room growing up,
and my wife wouldn't let it in the house
because she thought it was too sad.
It's really creepy.
I mean, I'm also wondering, I'm sort of like
wondering, looking around this room,
where you're going to store your classified documents
when you eventually get them.
Yeah, as the advantage is, I have no place to put them.
Exactly.
It's like between the...
Okay, I know we only have a short amount of time,
so I want to get right into it if you're ready.
Okay, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., welcome to Honestly.
Thanks for having me, Barry.
Really happy to have you.
So I looked at my New York Times app this morning,
and maybe you saw this column.
There was a column called, He's No Jack Kennedy.
Have you read it yet?
No.
Okay, well it's by this writer called Michelle Cottle,
and of course it's about your campaign.
And she's sort of unsparing in her description of you,
as perhaps you wouldn't be surprised
that a New York Times editorial writer would be.
She calls you a bit of a crank.
She calls you a screwball.
She says you're another high-profile circus act.
And she's absolutely stunned
that you're polling among 20% among Democrats.

And to her mind, there's only a single explanation for this,
and this is what she writes.
There's no mystery what's going on.
The only reason anyone cares
what Mr. Kennedy thinks or says
is because of his political pedigree,
essentially because of your name.
But it seems to me that a growing number of people
that I know, both on the right and the left,
are either enthusiastic or intrigued about your candidacy.
And it's not because of your name.
It's because, frankly, they see you as giving a middle finger
to a lot of the things that they feel deep frustration about.
And these are things that go well beyond sort of partisan lines.
They're mad at the legacy press
and the way that it distorts or ignores stories.
They're mad at policymakers
that have gotten us into unwinnable wars.
They're mad at the political class
that locked up schools and kept kids out of schools during COVID
and has never suffered any of the consequences for doing so.
And I think it seems to those people
that you're seizing on that frustration and anger.
And to me, it seems like you're touching something
kind of profound in the zeitgeist right now.
And I wondered if you could articulate what that thing is.
Yeah, I just got off a plane
in which several of the passengers came up
and asked to take photographs with me and shook my hand.
And I get responses when I walk through airports,
when I walk down the streets from people.
And so many of them are saying,
I haven't voted Democrat for years
or I've never voted Democrat.
And I'm going to vote for you.
Some of them say they haven't voted for any Democrat,
including my family members until my run.
And then a lot of them are independents and others.
I don't think that, what was her name?
Michelle Cottle.
Michelle Cottle's assessment is probably accurate.
And I think that the middle class in this country feels ignored.
They feel besieged.
And even people, I've used this statistic

that 57% of Americans could not put their hands on \$1,000 if their family had an emergency.
35% of Americans are not making enough money now to pay for basic needs.
That means transportation, food and housing.
That means that they are sitting on a precipice on the other side of which is homelessness.
And then even people who are apparently well off, people who live in suburbs and nice houses, are all poised on the edge of a death cliff and are living lives of, in many cases, desperation.
So many people are closed to debt and you look at a whole generation of students now who are kind of in this financial and voluntary servitude to paying off their student debts.
It costs seven times what it costs when I was young to go to college.
At the University of Virginia, I paid \$600 per semester. And I didn't have to worry about that when I got out.
And yet you have kids now who are locked into certain ways of life because of that.
But the people coming up to you on the plane, do you think they're doing so because they're mad about debt and they're mad about the overlooking of the middle class? Or are they coming up to you because they see in you the person that's willing to say no to the group thing that has captured so much of the culture?
I think that's part of it too.
What I was going to say is I represent 1,000 families in Columbia County, Pennsylvania whose lives were upended by the Norfolk Southern Spill.
And I go down there and people are living so close to the margin in that area that it reminds me of when I went to Latin America a lot when I was a kid and saw the kind of poverty that I saw there in the desperation.
And the yards are filled with Trump signs.
And it's not because I don't know if any of them think that Trump is actually going to help them economically. They look to Trump because Trump is going to break things. And they're so angry and so desperate at this kind of elite plutocracy that is running our country.
And they don't feel that the Democratic Party is listening to them. They don't feel the Republican Party is listening to them.

They call it.

So many people use the term the unit party

because they feel that they're all the same.

And a lot of people have just given up on our system

and no longer vote.

The cynicism I've never encountered about our country before.

Cynicism has replaced idealism.

And I think a lot of those people feel like just nobody's listening to them.

And I think that they feel that I am listening.

And do they see in you someone that can also break things

but maybe in a different way?

I think so.

I think they see me as somebody who could fix things.

And that who can be trusted because of I think a lot of them were watching my

experience during the pandemic when I held my ground

and they feel like they need somebody who will hold their ground and not cave in.

And I think that that's the feeling that I get from talking to people.

I spoke to a bunch of people in advance of this conversation

and a few of them urged me not to do this interview at all.

Some of them on the grounds that I'd be quote platforming a person

whose ideas they find dangerous.

But most of them were opposed to it on the practical grounds.

They said you're a political distraction.

And I sort of found myself in the face of this argument casting my mind back to 2016

where in the run up to that election all of the pointy heads,

all of the experts, all of the well paid up members of political class

were telling us that a certain candidate named Donald Trump had no chance

that he was a joke, that no one was going to take him seriously,

that him and his ideas were well beyond the pale.

And yet despite all of their predictions, right,

the predictions of this entire class of people, they were wrong.

He won the GOP nomination then of course he won the White House.

And now here you are, right, a populist candidate from the left,

not from the right, but definitely populist,

promising to empower the American people,

promising to make America strong again.

That's actually the freeze you use for your foreign policy,

promising to be a champion of the middle class.

Like Trump, you have a famous name.

Like Trump, you come from a well known family.

And yet these same experts are looking at you

and they're saying the exact same thing that you have no shot.

What are they not understanding about this moment in American life

that you do understand?

How are they getting it wrong again?

In exactly the same way.

I was wrong about, I was as wrong as they were about Trump.

I didn't know my daughter who has no knowledge of politics, but was friends with Tiffany Trump.

She would come back from trips and say,

Tiffany's dad is going to be president.

And I would say to her, there is no way that that will ever happen.

And I had to eat a lot of crow on election day.

So I, you know, I understand that.

And I don't, you know, anything could happen in this race.

I have a very, very good feeling about the kind of support that, you know, that we're getting now that I have a very strong shot at winning, you know, in one way or another.

Oh, I don't know.

I've stopped making my own predictions.

What did you miss though?

Now, looking back to 2016, right?

When your daughter was saying Trump's going to win, who had knew nothing about politics, you know a ton.

You're from a highly political family and you didn't see it.

What did you miss?

Yeah, I think I was trapped in kind of an orthodoxy myself of assumptions about how the political system worked and that, you know, people who were that kind of far out, somebody who was that distant from all of the sort of rules and regulations and experience and knowledge of American politics and was breaking all the rules of the political system would never be taken seriously.

And I think I also just misjudged the level of anger among the American people.

But let me ask you something.

The people who are telling you you shouldn't give Robert Kennedy a platform for his, you know, kooky ideas.

Those are mainly traditional democratic liberals.

I would say so, yeah.

But also some libertarians and also some people who are closer to where I am on foreign policy, a topic I want to get to who are disturbed by some of your ideas, questions I want to ask you about.

But I can't help but notice that there's a book on your desk called How Trump Won.

Are you reading that?

I know.

Oh, you're not reading that?

No, there's a lot of books on my desk
that aren't recent.

People have sent me.

Okay.

Oh, yeah, I don't know.

I just couldn't help but wonder if you were kind of like looking at
his campaign as a kind of blueprint for what you might do.

No, but I do think that I appeal to a lot of the same people,
although it's a slight overlap.

I mean, I think I get a lot of Trump vote
because I think I'm trying to do the same thing, you know,
but Trump got a lot of people who voted for Obama twice
and went out for Donald Trump.

And I think a lot of those people
are willing to come back to the Democratic Party
if it offers something different.

So some really interesting people have endorsed you.

Jack Dorsey, of course, of Twitter has endorsed you.

Elon Musk seems like a fan.

I don't think he's actually endorsed you,
but seemed like a fan.

And some heavy hitters in Silicon Valley.

I know that David Sacks and Shemoth
are hosting you for a fundraiser in San Francisco.

Why do you think these people are supporting you?

Do you think they're supporting you
because they see in Biden a weakened president
and can't stand the idea of another term with him in office?
And you're kind of the way out of a Biden presidency?

Or do you think that they genuinely look
at your political platform and think we sign on
to what RFK is standing for?

And David Sacks has told me that he doesn't agree
with everything I say, but he likes my approach.

He thinks that I'm doing critical thinking.

He thinks that I'm curious,
and that I'll have rational common sense policies
and that he won't agree with all of them,
but he just wants somebody in office
who's not locked in the kind of tribalism.

My colleague, Peter Savodnik, was recently here,

and he sort of did a profile of you.
And one of the people he quotes in the piece
is a former Democratic congressman
who supports you, who said this to him.
He said, there's a concern among seasoned Democrats
about what's happening to the party.
It's almost like that which is not to be talked about,
but they know there's a reckoning coming.
What does that reckoning look like to your mind?
I don't know.
I mean, I think our country isn't for reckoning
and part of it is just the policies
that both parties have been supporting,
particularly the permanent warfare in our state.
Forever wars are unsustainable.
They're unsustainable economically.
And that we've run up these huge bills
with the lockdowns cost us \$16 trillion.
The Iraq war and its aftermath cost us \$8 trillion.
That's \$24 trillion.
And that money, the politicians do not have the courage.
I think the \$8 trillion is something
like \$200,000 a year for everybody in our country.
And the politicians do not have the courage
to go to the American people and ask for that money.
So they just print it.
And printing it is a way of, it's still a tax,
but it's a tax on the middle class and the poor
and the super poor because, you know, it's stripping them over.
Anybody who has a fixed income is being stripped of their wealth
and their assets are being stripped away.
And so I think that there's a reckoning coming from that.
We need to reboot in this country.
We need to reset our compass and try something different.
We got off on the wrong start at the time my uncle was killed.
I just now were warned about the domination
of our government by the military industrial complex
and exactly what he has predicted happened.
We've seen the emergence of military plutocracy in this country
that is dictating our foreign policy.
Nowadays, we call them the neocons, but that's what happened.
And it's not good.
But in your mind, the neocons aren't just Republicans.
They're also Democrats.

No, yeah.

This is the consensus.

The first neocon was a Democrat, Zbigniew Brzezinski.

But there was a group of Republicans in the Republican Party that really emerged in the Bush administration early,

George W. Bush administration.

And their blueprint was called PNAC or the Project for the Newest American Century.

And it was Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz.

I just mean when you say neocon,

you don't simply mean Bush-era Republican.

You mean something bigger than that.

I mean a smaller group of people who were exiled because they're the ones who tricked us into the Iraq War and outlined that that's what they wanted to do and to go after a country that had never done anything to the United States that was not a threat to us.

It was our first preemptive war.

And their philosophy is that after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992,

that America had won the Cold War

and that we should use our superior military strength to impose American hegemony around the globe using violence, using our military strength.

And they had a plan to invade eight countries beginning in 2001, even before 9-11.

And they had written out that plan.

It was called PNAC.

And they went after Iraq and then Syria and Yemen and Pakistan and Afghanistan.

And that continual war cost us about 8.1 trillion dollars.

But they were exiled because people realized, okay, there were no weapons of mass destruction.

We were lied to.

This whole thing was just the biggest calamity of foreign policy, calamity in American history.

And that group was exiled and were pariahs and were disgraced and everybody believed they'd never be back in politics again.

And then somehow they began reemerging in the Democratic Party during the Obama administration and some of them during the Trump years.

And then in full force during the Biden administration, people like Tony Blinken, like Avery Haynes, Victoria Newland, whose husband was Robert Kagan,

who was one of the authors, the primary authors of the Project for New American Century, and who has been provoking and promoting a war in the Ukraine since, you know, for almost a decade. I want to get to foreign policy. Let's stick a little bit first to your campaign. Okay. You've identified yourself as a populist. And I have to tell you, I hear that word and I get nervous. And the reason for that is not because I don't believe in people having power in a democracy. It's because I think populist energies are very, very hard to contain. And populism often leads to scapegoating. And scapegoating often leads to the blaming of minority groups, including the one I'm a part of, which is the Jewish community. Populism sometimes can feel like releasing a genie from a bottle. So I wonder how you think about the responsibilities of being a populist leader, and how you think you can contain populist energies, if at all? Yeah, that's a very good question. And in fact, ironically, the concentration of my studies when I was in college and both my junior thesis and senior thesis were on populism. So you're absolutely right that many populists start off as idealists. Tom Watson was one of those. And he ended up lynching blacks. George Wallace started out as a populist and an integrationist. And then he was beaten by a segregationist. And he famously declared, I'm never going to be out and word again. And then went into the kind of dark side of populism. And I think that that is always the danger. I think my father was also a populist leader. I talk often about the train ride that I took with him. When I took his body from when I was 14 years old from Penn Station in New York to Union Station, Washington, D.C., and there were two million people on the train tracks. That ride took seven and a half hours rather than the usual two and a half hours. And that cross section of people included tens of thousands of blacks who were on the train platforms in Trenton and Newark and Baltimore and Wilmington. And in Washington, D.C., as we crawled through those train stations, they were singing the battle hymn of the Republic, glory, glory hallelujah. But in the countryside, it was mainly whites. And they were hippies.

They were white people in uniform.

They were boy scouts.

They were little leaguers.

But many, many people, white men and women holding signs that said goodbye to Bobby, holding American flags, holding up children, holding up signs that say, pray for us, Bobby.

And four years later, I was at college in Boston,

and I read demographic data from the 1972 campaign that showed that in 72,

so my dad was killed in 1968, that the predominant numbers of white people who had supported him in Maryland and Baltimore and Delaware and New Jersey

had, during the 1972 campaign, instead of voting for George McGovern,

who was aligned with my father in almost every issue and was very close friends with my father, they ended up supporting George Wallace, who was antithetical to my father in every way.

He was, you know, a fierce ramp in segregationism and racism.

And so what do you take from that?

Well, I took from that that every nation, like every individual, has a darker side and a lighter side, and that the easiest thing for a populist leader to do is to appeal to our darker angels,

our anger, our hatred, our fear, our bigotry, our xenophobia, anti-immigration, misogyny, etc.

But it's also possible to do what my father was trying to do, which is to mobilize people to step outside of these narrow self-interest and away from their fear and their anger,

transcend those things and see themselves as part of a community and see themselves

a template for democracy for the rest of the world and that we need to live up to the highest

ideals of our country. And my father was largely successful at the last day of his life. He won

not only, he won California, which is the most urban state in our country, he also won the most

rural state, which is South Dakota. So he succeeded in bridging that gap and he succeeded in mobilizing

that populist movement for American ideals, for the highest ideals, rather than for, you know,

the dark side. And my father used to say, I remember very well, you know, in Latin America,

they had these huge disparities in wealth. They literally had no middle class in many of these

countries. They had a very wealthy oligarchy and then they had widespread poverty below and that

configuration is unstable configuration. Any social scientists or political scientists will

say that democracy cannot be sustained with that kind of configuration and wealth disparity.

And US policy to that point had been to fortify the oligarchs who naturally were anti-communists

and to support them by supporting military hunters who were aligned with the oligarchs

with weapons, with training and with USAID. And my father and my uncle said,

we can't do that anymore. There's going to be a revolution in these countries because you cannot

keep the poor subjugated that long. And that that revolution if we continue to be friendly

only to the oligarchs, that revolution is going to be owned by communists. But we can own it for

our own if we can convince people that America is on the side of the poor. So they created the

Alliance for Progress. They created USAID to foster the growth of the middle class to aid the poor

directly to enter on the oligarchs. They created the Kennedy Milk Program to provide nutrition to

the poor and the Peace Corps and all of these programs that were designed to make America,

to put America on the side of the poor. And they understood that kind of discontent and that kind

of fear and anger is going to be captured by somebody. And it's better to capture it for the

forces of idealism rather than for the dark angels. And I would say the same thing is happening in this country today. We are headed for a revolution.

Right. I was going to ask you. You have said several times in recent interviews that America needs a revolution. America needs a revolution. It's going to have a revolution one way or the other. I hear revolution and I think violence and bloodshed. How do you have a revolution without those things? Well, the word revolution means that profound change in direction. It does not mean that that has to come violently. It means that you can harness that anger for a peaceful change. The change is going to happen. It's either going to happen through violence or it's going to happen through peaceful means. And it's either going to be harnessed by cynicism or it's going to be harnessed by idealism. And I think I offer a contrast with Donald Trump. Donald Trump knows all of the alchemies of demagoguery. How to harness those populist energies and impulses. And I would say that I've spent a life thinking about that too.

So you're the alchemy of idealism if he's the alchemy of demagoguery.

I would say yeah. Okay. Let's talk about what a Kennedy revolution might look like.

Let's talk about some of the issues of your campaign. I want to start with immigration because last week you took a three-day visit to the Mexican border in Yuma, Arizona. And you took a video of yourself there at two in the morning where you're documenting hundreds of migrants flooding over the border from places like Senegal, Peru, Pakistan, and Colombia.

You called what you saw there a dystopian nightmare. Tell me about what you saw and how it affected your view of current American immigration policy.

Yeah. It's heartbreaking. And anybody who has any kind of humanitarian concerns should not be supporting the open border policy. These people have almost universally been victimized by the cartels. The cartels are now running U.S. immigration policy.

That's what we've ended up with. The cartels are recruiting these people. And the shocking thing to me is there was only two or three families that were from Latin America or Central America.

Almost all of the people that we saw were from Europe and Asia. They were from Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Tibet, Nepal, and then all of the countries in West Africa.

There was just this extraordinary logistical accomplishment by the cartels that they're able to recruit these people to entice them into understanding that they can walk across the border, that they can get on a bus, they'll spend five days in custody, and that then the U.S. government will pay for their plane ride to any city in America that they choose, and that nobody will harass them for seven years. I mean, it took me three days down there to really comprehend how bad this system is. But that first night when we saw these people coming, it was heartbreaking, you know, there was it right across the border visible through the fence, is an on U.S. property because the fence on U.S. property, the fence is north of Mexico, so it doesn't go right along the border. It goes in some cases a half mile north of the border, whatever. And there's a tree there called the rape tree where the cartels extract what they call the final payment, you know, from women and children who are, you know, subdued at

that tree and rape there. Oh, my God. I talked to a Peruvian family who had had every penny that they had earned during their entire lifetime removed from them before they crossed the border by the cartels. Oh, the cartels. Why is this being allowed to happen? Why is this in the American interest? It is a terrible policy, and I think it happened because of political tribalism in this country and pettiness. And by the way, you know, I was completely against the wall during, you

know, when Trump would talk about it, I would snicker at it, and there's environmental problems with the wall and all of the, you know, the idea of putting a 2,200-mile wall from San Diego to Brownsville, Texas, you know, is an ecological nightmare, and it's always the money. Well, now, you know, I think I have a more nuanced view of it, that you do need a physical barrier in some places, and particularly where there's denser populations. You need that. There are thousands, tens of thousands of people who migrate from Mexico every day, every morning, to work in the United States. Many of them are agricultural workers, but they're all kind of low-income workers, but they're salaried workers who are coming across to work in hotels, and it's legal immigration. They have visas, so you need an orderly border where people can cross, you know, for legal immigration, and then you need, in those areas that are very heavily populated, you need to block off that kind of easy access that I was witness to, and you need to enforce Title IX, too, which says, when people come across, you detain them, and then you deport them, and we don't do that. Instead, we send them, we give them a plane ticket. The U.S. taxpayer is paying for the airplane ticket to go anywhere in the world. Meanwhile, there's seven million, there's a million and a half or two million people now coming across every year illegally, and we have only one million people, the 1.1 million people coming in legally. You sound like a conservative on immigration policy. Would you say that's fair? I'm just an American. There's no country in the world. But then why has this become, I mean, you're slaughtering every sacred cow in your answer to this in a way I appreciate. In other words, among progressives, to suggest that what's going on at the border is anything other than totally copacetic, is regarded as xenophobic, is regarded as racist, is regarded somehow as cruel, and you're saying, no, the status quo is cruel. Why has that become unsayable? Because I would say that what they call Trump derangement syndrome is true, that Trump became such a bugaboo for Democrats that anything that Trump said was good had to be bad. Democrats used to be opposed to the trade deals, you know, to NAFTA, etc. The unions were against them. But as soon as Trump expressed concern about them, they became, you know, the sacred cows for the Democrats. The Democrats were evenly divided on vaccines prior to 2016. And when Trump said, you know, vaccines cause autism, then the Democrats put all vaccine discussion in the same dumpster, you know, anti science dumpster as they put Trump's climate denial. And I saw something at the border that was truly extraordinary because there were parts of the walls that when Trump went out of office, there were big sections of the walls, which were huge problem sections in the places that I was in Yuma, Arizona, that were not finished. But all the steel and the metal had all been purchased and it was stacked on the ground where I saw it. You know, acres and acres of material that cost tens or maybe 20s, maybe even hundreds of millions of dollars. And when the Biden administration came in, they ordered the, that all work on the wall be stopped. So those gaps were left open. And that was what we were watching these people come through that gap. So if you became president, would you close those gaps? Now, let me, let me just finish. Okay. Not only that, but there were sensors, there were ground-sensoring devices, there were cameras on towers and there were lights and there were infrared sensors that were removed. So that infrastructure was already there, but it was removed and it was removed really out of spite or pettiness toward Trump. Now, when Mr. Mayarko, Secretary Mayarko's DHS went down there and the board of patrol went to him and said, you got to close these gaps. We're getting, you know,

we cannot do any job down here where these gaps are open.

So Secretary Mayorko said, we'll close the gaps, but we're not going to use the metal that Trump used. We're going to do a Biden wall and it has to be a different color than the Trump wall. So they left all that material on the ground and they went out and bought a new kind of wall, which you can see now. If you go down there, that is more light looks like a cage or, you know, a fencing. And the problem with it is that it doesn't go underground. So many of the tunnels now, you know, a lot of the immigration, the really bad immigration, because the legal immigration is coming across, the bad immigrants, the bad people, the people who may have terrorist

connections, the people who are criminals, the people who are drug dealers are not coming through that gap. They're going underground or they're going through, you know, other breaches. So those gaps in the wall that were repaired during the Biden administration by an inferior fence are encouraging those kind of tunnels and it was all pettiness. And so, you know, you asked why this is happening. I would say that it is, it's through this spiteful hatred of Donald Trump, and I'm no fan of Donald Trump, but I am a fan of good policy and I don't think spite or pettiness or tribalism is a good justification for any policy. Let's talk a little bit about education.

One place where you and I very much agree is on the absolute folly of school shutdowns during COVID. This is a policy, of course, that affected poor and minority American kids more than anyone else. Parents that had the resources, took their kids out of school, created pods, hired tutors, moved to a better district, and the have-nots, the parents that didn't have the resources to do that, had their kids stuck at home, five kids to an iPad, and we all know what the outcomes of those things have been. School choice advocates argue, I think rightly, that nothing over the past three decades, not a think tank paper, not a book, not a speech, nothing has made the case for school choice

more than what's happened over the past few years. I wonder where you stand on the issue of school choice and who you blame for this absolutely misguided policy. Well, the people I blame are both the Democrats and Republicans because it was Trump's policy, and Donald Trump can say, well,

I got rolled by my bureaucrats. I didn't really want to shut down the school, but that doesn't mitigate the problem that we can't have a president who's going to get rolled by his bureaucrats and that, you know. But the ones that ultimately kept the schools closed were the teachers unions, who refused to go back. Exactly. I think the teachers union, I think Randy Weingarten has a lot explaining to do, and I don't think she has explained herself very well. But it was Republican and Democrat administrations that allowed that to happen, and neither of them should have allowed that to happen. The Brown University study shows that toddlers lost 22 IQ points during the shutdown.

There are multiple studies that show at least a third of kids will need remedial education throughout all of their school years now. You know, these are kids who will have less, who won't make less money, who will have less security in their lives, whose careers are going to be truncated because of missing those school years. It was an abuse of children and we should not have done it. And, you know, I listen. My inclination is that we ought to have school choice, and I have a nephew, Cheryl's nephew, who has severe cerebral palsy, and is in a charter school that, you know, he was able to choose. And that charter school has absolutely transformed his life. I think the worry is, if you use a voucher system, how do you use a voucher system in a way that

does not diminish our investment in our public schools? And I think that's the challenge that I have to deal with. So that's a pretty radical proposition, I would say, for a Democratic candidate to suggest that you're in favor of school choice and open to an idea like vouchers.

I think, you know, I feel like I'm also very much in favor of keeping our investment in public schools. I don't think. So invest in public schools but give parents the choice. Yeah, but give parents the choice. I don't think you can. If you live in an urban neighborhood, and, you know, I don't want to talk about how bad the schools are, because I think most of the teachers

in the schools want to do, we can't demoralize them. We have to encourage them. But there are some

schools that you cannot tell a parent who has ambitions for their children, you must leave your child in this, you know, cataclysmic school. And, you know, you have to give people a way out. 80% of black Americans want school choice. And I think we have to honor that choice.

You know, I had a choice of where I was going to send my kids to school, just because I have resources in it. And, you know, all Americans should have that choice.

At the heart of a lot of the things you speak about is the theme of institutional capture.

The idea that governmental institutions have betrayed Americans and left us to the rapacious instincts of big corporations, a big business, a big tech, a big pharma. And it seems to me that that should be like the basis of the Democratic Party platform opposing big corporate power. But it seems to me that sort of the opposite has become the case. And I wonder why you think that is. I think that also is part of the kind of Trump derangement syndrome that

a lot of the Democratic Party retreated into, you know, found sympathizers for their views of Donald Trump in the corporate world. And, you know, I'll just tell you kind of because one industry, which is the pharmaceutical industry, because I watched this happen that at one point the Democrats were almost universally appalled by the pharmaceutical industry. You know, the top four vaccine makers, Pfizer, Sanofi, Merck, and Glaxo have paid \$35 billion in criminal penalties and damages over the last decades. These are literally criminal enterprise. They keep doing the same thing, whether it's Vioxx or opioids. You know, they've captured the agencies.

Anybody who sees dope sick, the Netflix documentary can see how they do it. They capture the FDA and

FDA then says this opioids are safe and effective and they're not addictive. And every doctor knows they're addictive. But when the FDA says they're not addictive, the doctors suddenly say, oh, FDA says they're not addictive. And it's the same thing that they did with the vaccines being safe and effective. It's the industry capture. And then, you know, the agency becomes a sock up at the industry. And Democrats knew that. And Democrats also know that the most formidable industry on Capitol Hill is pharma. I use, I mean, I use, or maybe tech is today, because tech is almost part of the government. But in terms of lobbying, cloud, pharma is the richest industry and it gives twice. Then the next biggest industry is oil and coal. Oil and coal give half in lobbying. As pharma has more lobbyists on Capitol Hill, then, you know, all the senators, all the congressmen, all the Supreme Court justices combined, they're the most formidable lobbyists on Capitol Hill. So Democrats did not like them. But then during the Obama, when Obama was trying to pass Obamacare, he needed the pharmaceutical industry to sign on because he couldn't get it through Congress without them. And so he had to make a golden handshake with the devil, which was to say, we are, the government will now prepare the purchases of all your pharmaceutical

drugs and we will agree not to bargain for them. And that's what pharma wanted. And that's what pharma got. So every other country in their national healthcare, Canada, et cetera, is allowed to bargain with the pharmaceutical industry, but we can't do it here. And it meant, you know, hundreds of billions of dollars for pharma. But suddenly, because they were the Democratic ally on healthcare, the Democrats now were allowed to take money from pharmaceutical companies. So the Democrats are always starving for money because, you know, Republicans can take money from tobacco, from oil, from coal, from pesticide, chemical companies, from gun companies, and they could form up. But the Democrats couldn't. They only placed Democrats reliably, got money for it. I'm not talking about all Democrats, but generally speaking, if you were a solid, purest Democrat, you could only get money from trial lawyers and from labor unions. Exactly. And so Democrats are always starving compared to their opponents, but suddenly they could get money from pharmaceutical industry in good conscience. And that was when the transformation started. And then when Trump ran, Trump, then three times during the campaign, linked vaccines to autism. And at that point, it became a tribal issue. And Democrats became, you know, the allies of pharma and the solid allies of pharma as the, you know, the home of science and good sense and common sense.

And pharma became part of the kind of tribal structure of the Democratic party. And so as I watched that happen with pharma, the same dynamic happened in other industries as well. Well, let's talk about tech as one of those industries that has irrigated to itself the power to suppress unpopular positions and people. And you, of course, are one of those people. In 2021, Instagram removed your account from its platform. The suspension was only lived recently on the grounds that you're now an active candidate for president. As we broke in the free press, clips of your appearance with the comedian Theo Vaughn on his show that were up for two and a half years were recently taken down. And what I find amazing is that on this issue, the issue of civil liberties, the issue of free speech, the issue of the corporate suppression of speech has somehow been coded as a right wing issue. How did that happen? And please articulate for people why you think this should be a cause for anyone who's progressive, regardless of what they think about any of the issues you speak about. Yeah, I mean, that's a really good question. And by the way, yesterday, YouTube took down a two-year-old interview that I did with Mike Tyson, where I was talking about the, we were discussing the CIA involvement with my uncles, with my father's death and my uncle's death. And they took that whole podcast down and all the clips from that podcast. And so they, you know, And when that happens, does someone from YouTube call you or you just notice it? No, no, no, people, other people sent me messages. And, you know, I got a message yesterday saying, I looked at this clip two weeks ago and YouTube took it down yesterday. Oh, I think in that case, somebody from Mike Tyson's staff called me, Theo Vaughn called me when they took down his clips. He was very worried because I was about to go on his podcast. And he was trying to figure out whether just my mere presence on his podcast would cause YouTube to give him a strike too. And so he didn't know why they'd taken it down. Nobody explained it to him. And he was trying to figure out with YouTube, whether, you know, they just objected to me or whether there was something that I said that justified the take

down. He was worried for his livelihood because his money comes from his podcast. And so people self censor. So it's not, you know, when people know that YouTube is going to take them down, they will self censor. And that's damaging to them, but it's more damaging to Americans because censorship hurts both the speaker and the listener. And, you know, Americans are hungry for information, particularly about COVID and they need a lot of diverse sources and they weren't getting it because people were self censoring and censoring. I'll say this about Big Tech. I'm inclined to blame Big Tech for the censorship during the COVID crisis. Big technology firms sold themselves to us promising that they were going to democratize communications around the globe and that this was the best part of globalism. And it turned out that instead of doing that, they have become the primary weapon for totalitarian systems and totalitarian controls because they now are the public square. But I'm more and more convinced that the fault here, the blame is with the government agencies. I think that tech companies were cowardly, but I think they were being put under tremendous pressure by the intelligence agencies with whom they have big contracts and who have all kinds of leverage over them by the White House directly, by the health agencies to censor. And I think they're under that pressure not only in this country, but all around the world. I mean, having reported on the Twitter files, I think that gives them a little bit too much of a pass for decisions they decided to make. I'm not giving them a full buy. I'm just saying that. But just quickly, if you're the president, what are you going to do about the power of Big Tech? You're going to break up the companies? Are you going to impose a kind of common carrier rule? What's the policy? A combination of things. I'd say a series of reforms first. I'll start by issuing national security order that no federal official or employee can collaborate with any tech company on censorship. And I'll get that memo on that to every single employee of every agency. Second, I'll meet with the tech companies and ask them how they want to be regulated to ensure that they actually act to protect free speech. And if they don't come up with a plan, then I'll work on making them common carriers in which I think that's the ultimate backstop. After the break, foreign policy, vaccines, and what RFK Jr. imagines his dad and uncle would think of his run for president. Stay with us. Let's talk about foreign policy. And I want to make sure that I really understand your position. As I understand it, broadly speaking, America cannot and should not be the world's policeman. On your campaign website, you write that as president, you will start the process of unwinding empire. Now, as far as I can tell, we've not been like the Roman empire, the British empire, but fine, I'll go with that metaphor, American empire. Why is it a good thing for America not to be the world's sole superpower? Why is that a better world? Well, I wouldn't frame it that way. I'd say we're, first of all, it's unsustainable for us to be the policeman of the world. It is bankrupting us. You know, Paul Kennedy, who's a Yale historian, wrote a history of all the empires over the past 500 years and shows how each one of those empires destroyed themselves through the overextension military power, which is always a seduction to extend the military, extend the illusion of control. And the fact is that we can't control these countries and that we shouldn't be trying. We should be on the real strength for our country and every country comes from having a strong economy at home. And, you know, we should arm ourselves to the teeth at home and make sure that we are too expensive to ever invade or attack

and then start redirecting that money that is now being channeled to maintain 800 bases around the world. In the Chinese base and a half outside of China, we have 800. We spend more on our military than the next top 10 nations combined. But I hear you say America has 800 bases and China has one. And I feel comforted by that. I don't like the idea of the reverse of those numbers. In other words, someone's going to be on top. Better it be us than it be China. And when I hear you articulate your ideas about foreign policy, what I hear basically is retreat. What I hear basically is we're overextended. And the way that we solve that overextension in your mind is pulling back from the world. And I take your point that we've been involved in some unwinnable, absolutely feckless wars. But my assumption is someone is going to fill the vacuum. And I would so much rather it be us than it be Xi Jinping. Why do you disagree with that? Number one, do you think it's made us safer around the world? Do you think it's made Americans safer to have that, our military all over the world? I think it has absolutely made us safer to have America be the world's hegemon than have China be the world's hegemon. And I think someone's going to be. That's my argument. Someone is going to be. I'm not suggesting that we put ourselves in a militarily inferior position from China. We spent three times on our military, which China spends on it. We can make substantial reductions in military without reducing our capacity to use military power when it's called for around the world. But the fact that we have 800 bases around the world and that we spend so much of our national economy on weapons makes it inevitable that we are continually embroiled in wars. Now, what happens when we, you know, why was the World Trade Center attacked? Because some terrorist hijacked planes and drove them into the World Trade Center. And what was their justification for doing that? Hating America, hating the West. Because we had troops in Saudi Arabia, which is the home of Mecca, that is what Osama bin Laden said why he attacked the United States of America. But do you believe that? Do I believe it? There's no reason not to believe it. Why else would he attack us? Because he hates the West and the decadence and, you know, the girls gone wild and bikinis and the Constitution. Like, that's why. He hates us for our freedoms. No, I do not believe that. I believe that our military around the world is stirring up hatred of America. And when I was a kid, people all over the world loved America and we did not have to have x-rays to get on our airplanes. When my uncle was president, he refused to send troops abroad. He'd combat troops. He never sent any combat troops abroad. And there were more statues to him, more boulevards named after him, more avenues, more universities named after him than any other president. People loved our country at that time. Nobody was sending terrorists over to attack America. That began when we started American Empire abroad. And that, of course, is very predictable. If we are, you know, killing people abroad, that is going to come home to us. So you think 9-11 was Americans' chickens coming home to roost? That's your way of characterizing it. I'm saying that our presence in all these bases around the world, our presence, the people who perpetrated atrocity, that violence, you know, that historic violence against our country, said they were doing it because we had a base near Mecca, near their sacred city. And their religious texts tell them that foreigners having a base near Mecca is offensive to their religion and that anybody who's faithful to that religion should die rather than allow that to happen. So, you know, I take them at their word. That's just one of our bases.

We have 800 bases around the world. And everywhere there's a base, every time there's a drone strike, we have the possibility of making other people hate America and want religious war on America. So, you know, I'm saying that the more that we spend on our military abroad, the less safe Americans are at home and abroad. If we want Americans safe at home, we should do more what my uncle wanted to do and what the Chinese, a formula that the Chinese today are following, which is to project economic power abroad. The Chinese don't want to have a war with us. No, the Chinese want imperial control over all of Africa. The Chinese want to control ports and harbors everywhere around the world. And you know how they're doing that? By buying up ports and harbors and by opening schools that are Mandarin only schools across Africa. Why are we doing that? Because we're trying to compete using military power more than rather than economic power. And that because of that, the Chinese are how competing us. I'm not scared of an economic competition with the Chinese. I think American ingenuity, I have faith in our ingenuity, our energy, our resourcefulness. I don't think the Chinese can compete with us economically except for the fact that we have both hands tied behind our back because we do not have the money or we're putting so much of our resource, our human resources, our intellect, our manufacturing resources into military weapons that do we do not have the capacity to compete on any other playing field. And that's where we ought to be competing. We ought to be competing economically and that will be good for us. It will be good for the Chinese and it will be good for everybody else in the world. The people in the world want that. They want America competing economically, projecting an economic power, not military power. We have made very, very few friends. And our friends, you know, who were our friends are now leaving us for the Chinese because they like that approach better than being paused around with weapons. So if you become commander in chief, what is the Robert F. Kennedy Jr. philosophy if China invades Taiwan? Would you defend Taiwan? Would you allow China to invade Taiwan? That's kind of a core litmus test issue, I would imagine, that you'd be asked on any debate stage. Yeah. And it's a question that no politician with presidential ambitions who has any sense would ever answer. Why? Because our national policy towards Taiwan has always been strategic ambiguity for that reason. We don't want anybody to know what we're going to do. And the circumstances will dictate that. But, you know, the official policy of the United States, of the President of the United States, toward Taiwan, toward that particular question that you just asked me, is quote unquote strategic ambiguity. And I'm not going to break that tradition because it wouldn't make any sense for me to do so. I would be silly to do so. Okay. So let's talk about a topic that's come up a few times in our conversation so far, which is the topic of vaccines. You hold views about vaccines that a lot of people regard as a huge liability to your campaign. And this is the view that vaccines and not just the COVID vaccine are harmful and they're linked to the rise of autism and other serious medical issues. You've obviously spent years of your life researching this subject. I don't want to go down the sort of research rabbit hole. I want to talk about how it fits into your campaign and your electability. I've heard you say in a number of interviews that you're not out there trying to talk about vaccines, that you're not leading with it. It's not on your campaign website. You didn't mention it in your two hour launch speech. You've said, I'll answer it when people

ask me, but it's not going to be at the center of my campaign. But respectfully, I sort of think that that's a cop out. And the reason for that is that your activism around vaccines is a huge part of who you are and the work that you do. You've written multiple books about it. You file lawsuits about it. You've inspired Senate hearing committees about it. You founded an on-profit, the Children's Defense Fund about it. You wrote a book recently alleging that Fauci conspired with Bill Gates and social media companies to suppress COVID information for financial gain. I could go on and on. This is the heart of your life's work. And it's central to sort of who you are, I think, and what you believe in. And I wonder how those strongly held views will practically impact American health policy if you become the president.

You said recently in an interview with Breaking Points that your day one agenda includes starting to fix the NIH, the FDA, the CDC, and get them off their subsistence relationship with the pharmaceutical industry and unraveling that agency capture. So I wonder what practically that means. Does that mean changes to children's vaccine schedule? What does it mean if you were to become president? It means that we'll have evidence-based science. And the vaccine schedule by CDC's own admission has, I think, until 2016, the vaccine scheduled by CDC's on admission was not based on evidence-based science. In 2016, they adopted evidence-based science for the first time.

What I would do is I would say, let's go back and look at all the vaccines that were approved before then and apply evidence-based scientific criteria to them. Let's make sure that they are, that we understand the risk profiles of those vaccines, that we understand the benefits, and that we're very honest about those things with the American people.

I have a nine-month-old daughter. We're vaccinating her on schedule. If you were president and I came

up to you as a new parent and said to you, President Kennedy, should I vaccinate my child? What would you tell me? I would say I'm not a doctor. You need to talk to a doctor about that, but I would also urge you to do your own research. I would not trust only your pediatrician, because a lot of times pediatricians have not done research they're taking as gospel, what the CDC tells them, and what the CDC has been telling them is not based upon evidence-based medicine. You need to do your own research. Your job as a mother is to protect that child, and part of protecting that child is when you go out and buy a baby seat, you make sure it's the right one, and you buy food for them. You're making sure it's organic food. When you give that child a medical product, a healthy child, a medical product that is designed to permanently alter their immune system, you should know everything about that product before you allow your child to take it. That's your duty as a mother. I think a lot of parents, respectfully, are going to say to you this, I'm busy. I got to pick my kid up from school. I have to make dinner. I got to make sure that I'm making rent. I don't have time to go out there and research vaccines and what goes into them, and I'm not equipped to. I have to be able to trust my doctor. What do you say to that mom? I would say I agree with you, and that's why I'm running for political office, so that those agencies finally are made trustworthy, but unfortunately, up till now, they have not been. They have been serving the mercantile interests of pharmaceutical companies, and you cannot believe anything that they say about those particular products. If you decided to become a mother, part of that responsibility is making the time to do your research so that you don't injure your child. If you could wave a magic wand tomorrow, what changes would you make to the children's vaccine schedule? I'd make sure that every vaccine was subject to placebo

control trials, so longer term placebo control trials that we're looking at a vaccinated person, unvaccinated cohorts, and looking at health outcomes on both sides.

You've compared mandatory vaccines to the Holocaust more than once. In April 2015 in Sacramento, you spoke to a crowd alleging that there's a link between autism and a mercury-based preservative in vaccines. You said this about children. They get the shot. That night they have a fever of 103. They go to sleep, and three months later, their brain is gone. This is a Holocaust. That is what this is doing to our country. In COVID in 2022, you led a rally at the Lincoln Memorial against vaccine mandates, and you gave a speech saying that the COVID mandates

were worse than in Nazi Germany. You said, even in Hitler's Germany, you could cross the Alps to Switzerland. You could hide in an attic like Anne Frank did. Obviously, there was uproar and huge backlash to these kind of statements. Your wife believed that the 2022 statement went too far.

She called the comments reprehensible and insensitive. Do you regret saying those things?

Do you think there would have been a better analogy? Let me explain what I said,

because I never compared vaccine COVID mandates or vaccine

injuries to the Holocaust. In 2016 in Sacramento, I used the word Holocaust not

in terms of the 1937 to 1945 Holocaust in Germany, but in the biblical sense of the world,

which is a sacrifice of the children. If you read the Bible, Abraham is going to sacrifice

his son Isaac on a pyre. He calls it a Holocaust, and it's a sacrifice of something valuable like a

child to a religion. If you'll notice, I said a Holocaust. I didn't say the Holocaust. At my

Lincoln Memorial speech, I was not even talking about vaccines. I was talking about something

altogether different. I was saying that the emergence of new technologies, of surveillance

technologies like 5G, like AI technologies, like low-level satellites, all of which I mentioned,

like digital currencies, like vaccine passports, those things become a kind of turnkey totalitarianism

that it's been the ambition of every totalitarian regime in history to control every aspect of human

behavior, every communication, every transaction, every movement, and ultimately every thought.

No totalitarian regime has ever been able to do that, but now they could. And I gave examples

of both left-wing totalitarianisms like the Stasi in East Germany, the communist regime,

and I mentioned Anne Frank. I was not comparing COVID countermeasures to the Holocaust. I was

just

saying, making a reference to history of that. I would consider a permissible reference. The problem was that CNN made the statement, which was false, that I had compared COVID countermeasures to the

Holocaust. That then was picked up by all of the other corporate media, which is hostile to me.

Now, under normal circumstances, I could go on the Today Show and say, that's not what I meant.

That's not what I said. Look at the tape, or I could write a letter to the editor. Because of

the censorship that I lived, the regimen that I live under, nobody prints my letters to the editor,

and nobody allows me on the Today Show for any reason. So I had to live with that tsunami of

what was a misstatement about something that I said, and I ended up to protect my family,

having to apologize for something that I had never said. When you talk about the collusion

between big tech and the government, when you talk about the sensorious nature of the legacy press

and the way they distort things you've said, I find myself nodding along. But then when I hear

you talking about the link between autism and vaccines, you lose me. Do you worry that that's

going to be a pattern with you among voters? Show me where I got it wrong, and I'll change.

You're expressing a belief, but your belief is based upon something somebody told you. It's not based upon critically reading science. If you were critically reading the science, you would share my beliefs. I believe, and I'm very happy to show you the science. I'm very happy to show you, I mean, the most compelling study is CDC's own data showing these enormous links between autism and vaccines. The Verstraten study, for example, the Verstraten data, which showed an 1135 percent increased risk of autism among children who got the hepatitis B vaccine in their first 30 days, compared to those who didn't. The Stefano 2004 study, which is another CDC study with the data showed, again, the data showed, the CDC did not report the data, neither these, what we now have of their internal communications, where the data showed a 350 percent increase in autism among black boys who got the MMR vaccine by 36 months. And the scientists, the CDC, five CDC scientists who had uncovered that data were forced by their boss, Frank de Stefano, the director of the immunization safety office, to destroy the data. And, you know, those are pretty compelling facts that I think, if most Americans know, they would have reservations about.

Okay, let's go back a minute to your campaign. You have found a lot of fans among the political right. Steve Bannon called you an excellent choice for Trump's running mate. Michael Flynn, Trump's former national security advisor, tweeted that he's really starting to like you. I could go on, I don't need to. What do you think makes you so appealing to these people on the right, and is that concerning to you at all? It doesn't concern me. I mean, I, you know, I'm trying to broadcast a message that's designed to reach all Americans. And I want to talk to everybody, no matter what their views are. You know, I will, I'm happy to talk to, to General Flynn, or I would love to talk to Steve Bannon, but my wife would probably, at that point, consider a divorce. Yeah, I think so. I'm sure Steve Bannon would love to have you on his show.

Well, you know, I went on his show twice. I've never talked to him about the presidential campaign. And I've met him only once. I went remotely during COVID on his show. And listen, when I was, you know, during the 35 years that I was one of the leading environmentalists in the country, I was the only environmentalist that regularly went on Fox News. I went on Sean Hannity multiple times. I went on, I went on Neil Cavuto, you know, all the time. And I went on Bill O'Reilly many, many times. And they have big audiences. And I want to speak to those audiences.

My history in the environmental movement has been trying to recruit hook and bullet people to the environmental movement. So those are people that those kind of audiences are people that I think we need to talk to. There's basically been a media blackout on your campaign, as far as I can tell, on networks like MSNBC, CNN. I did notice that you did, Michael's McCornish's show. But in general, I would say you're not getting invitations to write op-eds in the New York Times, the Washington Post. But you are making the rounds very much in what I think of as sort of like the wild west of the independent press. Do you think that you could actually kind of make an end run around the legacy corporate press and reach enough Americans by doing the podcast circuit, the newsletter circuit by going on shows like Joe Rogan? Do you think that that's actually where cultural power now lies? I do think so. I mean, Joe Rogan has an audience that is on some nights a hundred times that CNN's audience. I think it's a new media. And I think it can have a big impact on this, on letting people like me who are operating outside of the Overton window to talk to the American public. We started this conversation by talking about your family and your last name. And I kind of want to end with it as well, because I think it's, whether you think it's an asset or a distraction or a liability or an unfair advantage,

it's just impossible to ignore. Some of your family doesn't support your run for office. Your sister, Kerry, has said, I love my brother Bobby, but I don't share or endorse his opinions on many issues, including the COVID pandemic vaccines and the role of social media platforms in policing false information. Several of your family members wrote an open letter a few years ago saying you are, quote, tragically wrong about vaccines. Your sister, Kathleen, your brother, Joseph, and your niece, Maeve wrote that your work against vaccines is having heartbreaking consequences. Does that hurt you? And are you worried about not having the support of some of your family? And in fact, having some of your family members disavow you in public. Well, I have a lot of family members who support me. I have four family members who are, who are, you know, who don't want me to run. But, you know, there's divisions and a lot of families and I, they disagree with me on policies. And you know, look, I grew up in a family where we were encouraged to argue with each other and at the same time love each other. So I think that's their choice. It's permissible. And no, I'm not hurt by it. You were nine years old when your uncle was assassinated. You were 14 years old when your father was assassinated. Your brother died of an overdose. That's a lot of tragedy in a person's life. And I wonder if you could reflect a little bit to me about how you've endured that. And also, you know, I feel really strongly that we're in a moment in American history where a lot of things are really, really broken. A lot of things. People don't trust our institutions. People are suspicious of one another. We're living through an epidemic of loneliness. I would say a crisis of meaning and maybe even spiritual crisis. What are the tools that you've gathered from your own life experience that you feel you can bring to an America that I think is in desperate need of a kind of, I don't know what else to say other than spiritual revival? I was very close to my two brothers who were, who died and one of my brothers died, the first one. David, I asked my mom who had had a lot of losses. I mean, by that age, I'd already had a lot of losses, but my mom had had a lot more, including both her parents and her brothers. And I asked her if the whole that people leave in you and they, who you love when they die, if it ever gets any smaller. And she said to me that it doesn't, it never gets smaller, but that our job is to grow ourselves bigger around it. And you do that, she said, by taking the best parts of that person and trying to integrate them into your own character. And in doing that, you grow yourself larger and the hole gets proportionally smaller. And in that way, you also immortalize the person who left. And I've tried to do that in my life, not only under those circumstances, but under other circumstances as well, that when bad things happen, to try to find the good in them, you know, to try to bring or to do what God wants us to do, which is to bring order out of chaos, to assume that God's in charge of things and that everything happens for a reason and that each crisis that you face is not a crisis, but it's a task and that you have an assignment and you're supposed to do something with it that is productive, that's healing, that's compassionate, that is gentle and that is patient. And in doing that, you know, we give meaning to our own lives and we also give a kind of order to a chaotic universe. And that's our role. And you know, if we're wrong and God is not in charge and there is no plan, then we're all screwed anyway, so it's better if we just assume that. And you know, I believe that and that's the way I try to live my life. 56 years ago, Chicago hosted the Democratic National Convention. And of course, it was 1968, just months after your father, Robert F. Kennedy, was assassinated. If he hadn't been murdered, he would have been on that stage that night instead of Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

So perhaps it's poetic that this year, Chicago's again hosting the DNC. And you're stepping in where your father left off almost 60 years ago, fighting against a Democratic incumbent. What do you think your father would say about your candidacy? And how do you think about your role

in the storied lineage of your family? Well, you know, obviously, you know, my dad was my hero, and I, you know, studied his life and his words. And then I, you know, I spent 14 years of my life with him. And obviously, I feel like, you know, my father would be pleased with what I'm doing and the way that I've lived my life by, you know, other, you know, family members may would certainly feel otherwise. Let's say in January 2024, you become the 47th president of the United States. What does the country look like after four years with you as president? We will have wound down a lot of the empire. We have taken that, you know, beating the swords into plowshares. We will be spending the piece of it. And instead of buying billion dollar bombers that can't fly in the rain, we will be building the schools that actually work for our children. We'll be returning our industrial base in our country, restoring it. We will have significantly reduced the chronic disease epidemic among our children. We will have identified the pesticides, the toxics that are destroying our butterfly populations, our insect populations, our amphibians and our birds. And we will be in the process of eliminating those. We will be switch transitioning. We'll have incentives that encourage farmers to switch to regenerative agriculture, which is, you know, the best thing that we can do in terms of for people who feel strongly about climate. That's the most important thing that we can do. And we will be enforcing the rules that make sure people don't pollute our waterways and cut down our mountains and ridges. And in the process of rebuilding America, the American communities has prosperous, dignified and generous communities that make them a lot as once again to restore our moral authority around the world and give pride to our children of the kind that I grew up in in this country, which is the greatest country in history. Mr. Kennedy, thank you so much. Thank you, Barry.

Thanks for listening. If you like this conversation, if it provoked you, which I imagine it provoked many of you, if you agree with RFK Junior's politics or his belief, or if you disagreed with them, use this episode to have a conversation or a debate with your friends and family. Now, about those vaccines, I'm fully vaccinated. So is my whole family. We're vaccinating our daughter, but I'm not a scientist or a doctor, and I don't have a degree in epidemiology, but I want to point you to someone who does today on the free press. Dr. Vinay Prasad wrote a point by point check of RFK Junior's major claims about vaccines and other public health issues, and I urge you to read it and stay tuned over the next few months for more conversations with presidential hopefuls. We've already interviewed Nikki Haley, Tim Scott, and Marianne Williamson, and we're planning on many more conversations and debates on honestly in the run up to 2024. Last, if you want to support honestly, there is one way to do it. Go to thefp.com as in the free press, t-h-e-f-p.com, and become a subscriber today. Stay tuned, and we'll see you next time.