

2013, Jan 19

Saturday History Call

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- CLICK ON "HISTORY OF OUR GALACTIC WORLD & NESARA" & THE INFORMATION PAGE WILL COME UP.
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Opening & Meditation: Cheryl Croci

Everyone is invited to Cheryl Croci's Sunday and Monday ascension and activation calls

- 8:45 pm EST/5:45 pm PST
- 213-342-3000; PIN 9467441#

Housekeeping: Rainbird

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T & R:

- Needs are for \$500 towards their January **rent [due Jan 9th]**: can donate via website at the Paypal buttons

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- **Please let them know when you are gifting:**

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The work we do together, the sharing we do - all of this is important: thank you all for sharing!

Phone Numbers: 530-413-9537
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Hard News:

T: thanks to Cheryl, Rainbird and ourselves: another huge shift as Divine government is now in session!

Camp Loveway: Guests Terrence McKenna's brother and Krishna Dass talking about CRYSTAL GRID

- Started in Arkansas on Dec 12; completed on Dec 21/12
 - the upgrade is assisting us and upgrading us: really tough to hold on to old stuff with this energy
 - wherever there are glitches in the matrix, the crystals which are fully awake are cleaning things up - becoming easier and easier for people like Julian Assange to get stuff out
- the Wingmakers are helping fully at **45th level** above the President
 - T & R always talk about the 38th level where KOS presides - this is higher
 - as we are looking for our free-dom [domain], we are given much more responsibility - it is not about waiting for money: it never was and it never will be; it is time for the carbon-based molecules to be transmuted: the money and the guns are part of the 3D aspect, a system of slavery to keep people in line and time for them to go
- Spirit molecule is stepping in as Mother Earth has asked for it, in spite of the screaming and kicking in our personal lives, or the planetary system of life, or in the controlling lives of 13 families - all being dislodged
- Bear, Teran's wife, and Krishna Dass: the idea of transvaginal probes on poor women of every colour or a "useless white eater: [those who don't match the 13 families pattern!] -the violation of the Feminine stops now
- Melissa Harris Perry had a graph this am:
it showed, starting in 1965 when women's rights were part of the civil rights movement, to the time of Roe v. Wade on Jan 22, 1973 where freedom for full reproductive rights, including right to have an abortion, became law
 - When marching for Civil rights, there were every imaginable kind of women's rights groups, all kinds of groups - gay, women etc - 93,000 people marching - all kinds of organizations
 - **Jan 22, 2013 is 40th anni of Roe v. Wade** - the political persecution of women's rights went way down in 1965 until time of Roe v Wade [1973]; then it went further down;
 - **shot sky high again in 2011** when the GOP/Nazi party and the Tea Party wanted white men to control women's bodies again; they were re-installing the Vatican Rag, as the church had been the original controllers of women's bodies
 - This is a clamping down really hard at the end times - and not surprising, given the energies.
 - Bob McDonnell - creator of vaginal probe - required poor women have to go through this - would like to see the smug, superior look on their faces removed!
- Whole MHP show was about women's issues - even though there are women in leading gov't positions, does not mean that they carry the feminine energy: it's also about ideology - need lots of love to take on the Nazi ideology of
 - Harder on a woman's body to play the role of the nazi - T lists the women in politics who are part of that ideology - today the ideology is changing - Divine Feminine now in the lead.
- Today is actually National Service Day: BO and MO doing things at an elementary school in DC, along with their daughters and Chelsea Clinton
 - **The Points of Light organization:** the largest one of its kind dedicated to volunteer service www.pointsoflight.org there are more than 250 organizations across the US
 - enter your zip code and you can find a source of help
 - Has been around for 20 years; by-partisan legacy of service
- Monday, Jan 21, day of service to honour Martin Luther King, Jr; Obama asks to make this an inaugural

tradition all across the country for every inauguration

- Once NESARA is announced, there will be no need for money
- Time to think of what we would like to contribute to divine government

• **MHP:** about a book - Michael Aleal, a professor from Emory University: Arming America - the Origins of an National Gun Culture

- James Lindgren researched the book and found out that the information was falsified - more guns in America in 18th century than was stated in the first book - wrote another book Visions for a new America
- Tavis Smiley all week has been pulling up interviews, Cornell West, Jeffery Sachs - will be doing "A Vision for a New America: a Nation without Poverty"
- no time for us to whine, but as we believe it, so it is - accentuate the positive
- the crystals will help us manifest - Buy a few crystals and activate them

T: asking more people to come to Cheryl's calls - the power of the opening of the crystal kingdom exponentially magnifies energies

- We ARE the ones we have been waiting for to bring the balance back between the male and female energies, and in our physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and cosmic bodies!

Camp Loveway: this is the day for the reversal of fortune: the superiority, the reduction of the human population has been forfeited - those ones have lost their chance to accept the love

- Lady Justice, LM Liberty, Lady Victory are in place - the dark ones are removing themselves by their own hand as fast as the light takes the Talking Stick
- Gov Chris Christie - send him love as he needs it - in trouble physically, mentally, emotionally & cosmically - needs the energy very much in the physical; life hanging in the balance
 - Rubio in same place - prediction that Christie would be in serious trouble by Mar 21st

• **March 21st** is spring equinox; the energies are building now; the full blossom of spring after the darkest night on Dec 21st

- The reversal of fortune brings lots of miracles; free energy technology is anchored in the talk we will hear from Dr Keshe today - everybody will have full access to the black boxes which will take everyone off the grid: we will get the boxes for free & have no more utility bills
- getting them depends on the flow of energies AFTER NESARA is announced
- time to stop depending on orgs like FEMA, the ATF; that these organizations are military death squads, also NRA - need to be replaced with humanitarian organizations; the Fox News channel is a voice that keeps these organizations in place: those orgs enable the Luciferian ones

• **The White Knights** made sure that Karl Rove's voting machines would not work: **9.3 million votes were either thrown out or discounted** - that was the number a month ago: **still not finished** -

- **there has never been one to receive as many votes in one election as BO**
- Cheryl comment that she did not know Dennis Kucinich was appearing on Fox News.
- Yet on John Fugelsein's program they spoke of Dennis putting himself in the den of iniquity: Fox News of Roger Ayles and Rupert Murdoch, full blown Nazi 4th Reich to the max: they are going to get a dose of love, delivered with love - which will decapitate their ideas

Camp Loveway: talking of the jinn, the adru jihad - these are crystalline beings that exist in force fields in the lower astral kingdom which is now in 3D

- In 1987 the astral plane ceased to exist as a separate dimension: can see them with your physical eyes if you train yourself to see them: tells the story of Rama being taken on the ship and dropped down into the halls of White House; they went to see Tom Daschle who wanted to call in

the security and KOS said "I wouldn't do that if I were you!" As Rama walked with KOS down the hall later, he could see a full blown 9' tall reptilian walking down the hall and when Rama turned around and looked after him, the being disappeared into the 5th dimension. We can do the same.

- The crystalline beings Rama is talking about were put into these force fields by Lucifer who had manipulative control before; now the giant squid beings have been released - they have human souls like the whales and the dolphins [lobster, shrimp, crab - not to be eaten - they have a higher soul in them.] They have been released now.
 - Also the anklebiter energy has been shut down: it is time to acknowledge the paranormal, time to learn how to see with our 3rd eye so we can work with the fairy, elf, gnome, hobbit, menahuni kingdoms
 - **Lord of the Rings** is spitting image of ascension; a true story - the actors and actresses, directors gave up 6 years of their lives and became a community of light - the film is of the actual thing that we are becoming!! A classic and is about what we have been doing! Music has higher frequencies
 - There is only a tiny group left of annunaki/nephilim/Luciferian ones left, and the spells left that they have been using - **all spells, curses have been dispelled.**
 - These ones and us are part of the shadow side of Alcyone - Jehovah - when we wanted to experience the co-creative powers we had when we were in the 12th dimension and were fully awake, and the divine ray of our beings in place in the Pleiades in the first creation - we travelled with Mother and Alcyone for trillions of years which is a hard concept for us: there are stone people on the planet that are at least 3 trillion years old - they have souls and remember the 12 strands of DNA; the 13th strand is also in place in the vibrations of these stone people.

[This is an important segment to listen to]

- These energies are available: ask and you shall receive! Love is extremely painful to any harbouring of darkness - it is physic pain which is more painful than physical pain. This energy is available for healing as we learned from Merilene on Thursday night.
- The Libors, JP Morgans, toxic derivatives, etc etc - time for a huge, huge healing!

Caller: asking about the film from New Zealand **Lord of the Rings**

T: Fellowship of the Ring; the Two Towers; Return of the King [Sananda Kumara]

Music:

Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh

Reading: from Pistis Sophia **READERS WILL HAVE TO LISTEN TO THIS;** T reads from the book

Audio: Democracy Now About Aaron Swartz

2013, Jan 14 "An Incredible Soul"~ Larry Lessig Remembers Aaron Swartz After [SEE BELOW]
Cyberactivist's Suicide Before Trial; Parents Blame Prosecutor

2013, Jan 14 Freedom to Connect: Aaron Swartz (1986-2013) on Victory to [SEE BELOW]
Save Open Internet, Fight Online Censors

T: what Amy does not know is that Aaron was taken out by a black operation

Audio: Interview with Dr Keshe **Source: YouTube:**

Interview with Mehran T. Keshe on January 13, 2013

Music: the circle is cast

Graceland - in 1987 this piece was put together; at the same time, the naughties - Romney, Bush Sr - were doing the Iran Contra scandal; getting ready to do a mass genocide in Guatemala

Astrology: Richard

- Recommending a book - has found it both enjoyable read and a unique read: **Pride and Prejudice in Zombies**. Basic story of P & P and added zombies and martial arts: a man with a silly wife and 5 daughters before the Industrial Age north of London; Jane Austen and Seth Graham-Smith; published by quirk books ISBN 978-1-59474-334-4; printed in Canada
www.quirkbooks.com Philadelphia, PA
- First day of Aquarius: a trine is building, will be very powerful - sun approaching Sag, Trine
- as the trine builds, Uranus sits in 6 Aries - sun in mercury, sextile Uranus which is already sextile ?
- Mercury in Aquarius, moon in - both air signs
moon in Taurus tonight, opposite Saturn; North node in 23 Scorpio
- Chiron and Neptune in early Pisces where it was last week
- Had 7 days of rain starting on New moon - 9 inches in 7 days; sun came out yesterday

Audio: finishing the Keshe interview

Audio: Tavis Smiley - celebrating their 10th anniversary on PBS by re-visiting interview with Liberian peace activist, mother of 6 - Leymah Gbowee who encouraged the women of Liberia to get together and create peace. Muslims and Christians together, wearing white.

Mighty be our Powers is her book, for which she received the Nobel prize. Her work led to having the first woman president in Liberia

October 5, 2011

Peace activist Leymah Gbowee

[SEE BELOW]

Conf. Call

About Dr Keshe's wife being attacked by Belgian police! Why he left Belgium

T: Prison system in Belgium is nasty: separate system for people of colour: really ugly - and it's all kept under the carpet - it's supposed to be civilized, but it's not: out of sight, out of mind.

- Discussion about Glen Beck and the community he is building in Texas - the rich ones don't need gov't - see it as a noose around their necks as it means they have to help others - don't want to do it. The rich Mormons are just like rich ones anywhere: commit the obscene rite

Caller: who will announce NESARA? Obama or who? **T:** there will be 19 people on the stage and we will get to meet KOS - won't be any other country, either - will be BO who makes the announcement

T: China faked their GDP last month: jumped from 2% to much higher: impossible to do, but manipulation of their currency is what they are good at.

Caller 1: sent info about what was happening in China: people getting arrested

T: nobody knows how much gold there is in China: another story about someone who was thought to be dead for ages yet he is not: **a complete dynasty that has not been accounted for** - back in 2005, 2006, they checked out the story with KOS and it was for real

Caller 2: what is going to happen at the inauguration: Ashtar's Bulletin from the Bridge has come out about watching carefully - **T:** all they got from the KOS is "C'est possible!" also, it's a 3 day banking holiday as well. Strangely quiet!!! The energies are off the scale: talk about divine gov't energies - she's feeling the energies - all she has seen is Barack & Michelle hanging out in DC doing things for the people and they will do the same tomorrow - getting off the money titty which is for a collective use by the people - the Liberian lady said they put their anger in a peace container, a great image.

Caller 1: from Drake website: the real Buddha has come back to China; can see it in the arrests of people in the Chinese gov't - some kind of housecleaning efforts in China - Empress Wang is her name - what is her lineage? The Royal Family Trust has already been turned over to the Emperor - asks if Emperor of China is in Taiwan? **T:** The only public change was new head of Communist Party. China has 6,000 years of dynastic lineages so who knows which one it is? The program that China represents in the NESARA program is the Nations Project which is huge, much bigger than the Big O - Chiang Kai Chek's wife is the one who put all the gold in the rollovers from all the lineages across the earth - reminds us that this is a galactic operation. She brings up the movie of Star Trek IV from 1986 - the movie about the dolphins - they take the whales to the 24th century -

Caller 3: please comment on what Dr Keshe said: she has trouble understanding what he said **T:** a JAM BOX that helps make things clearer [jambox.com] - a device that you can put on your speakers to make it super clear. **Caller 3** says he's [Keshe] is an ET - too calm, etc **T:** he's a love bubble! The Iranians know more than all the rest of the world put together - they absolutely love Americans and know the diff between the people and those who control them. People on the moon kicked Americans off and said don't come back until you're civilized. The moon was blown up during the Orion war - it is a fake moon that was put there to keep the moon energy in place as we need that energy: the ETs there have built glass towers that are 2 miles high **Caller:** David Icke said that mind control works from the moon - asks Rama if the dark Satonians use the moon for such purposes

Caller 1: found jam box [jawbone.com]

Caller 4: talks about Dr Keshe

Caller 3: asks about the dog Gracee **T:** she had to be taken to the other side: found out she had bone cancer throughout most of her body - the vet told them Gracie communicated telepathically with him. The fracture was in a place where they could put no splints or anything. Gracie told the vet she wanted her bones in New Mexico - so everyone knew. The animals will get to come back -

they get to ascend too!

Address: YouTube: Interview with Mehran T. Keshe on January 13, 2013

Audio: balance of interview **Peace activist Leymah Gbowee** [recipient of 2011 Peace Prize]

Audio: 2005 interview **Coretta King, MLK's wife** - T: she was also taken out; she went to Mexico to a healing centre and never came back. [NO TRANSCRIPT]

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/tavissmiley/interviews/civil-rights-activist-coretta-scott-king/>

. A noted activist in her own right, Mrs. King sat with us a year before she passed away to discuss the enduring legacy of her husband, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

After the assassination of her husband, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Coretta Scott King refused to retire from public life. Instead, she travelled the world carrying the message of nonviolence. A leader in the civil rights movement, she was the first woman to deliver the class day address at Harvard and preach at a statutory service at London's St. Paul's Cathedral. She was also the founding president of The King Center in Atlanta, GA, where she directed the creation of the largest archive of documents from the movement. A native of Marion, AL, Mrs. King earned numerous awards for her commitment to activism. She joined us in 2005, a year before she passed away, on the national King holiday—for which she fought to have created.

Audio: 2007, Oct 18 President Barack Obama [SEE BELOW]
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/tavissmiley/interviews/president-barack-obama/>

Audio: Max Keiser [KR395] [Keiser Report: Welcome Home German Gold](#)

<http://maxkeiser.com/> We discuss the currency war masquerading as a 'storage plan,' the Bond Kings threatening the gold repatriating Germany with having a Libya done to them and the Mexican taco stand in Florida advising customers to invest in silver. In the second half of the show, Max Keiser talks to [Doug Casey of CaseyResearch.com](#) about German gold, Glenn's Gulch and future war.

Audio: Breaking the Set <http://rt.com/programs/breaking-set-summary/assassins-order-rachel-2013, Jan 19>

Corporate assassins determine world order, justice for Rachel Corrie

On this episode of Breaking the Set, Abby Martin interviews John Perkins, economist and author of 'Confessions of an Economic Hitman,' about how corporations are determining the world order, and how assassins take out those who challenge the system. Abby wraps up the show with a discussion with Cindy and Craig Corrie, parents of slain activist Rachel Corrie, about their case against the Israeli government and their fight for social justice worldwide through the Rachel Corrie Foundation.

Reading: Bulletin from the Bridge January 18, 2013

[SEE BELOW]

Reading: on Isonomy from the Aboriginal Moabite Nation

[No Text Available]

Reading: The Mayan Factor

Closing: Rainbird

FOLLOWING - PRINTED RESOURCES RELATED TO THE NOTES

2013, Jan 14 "An Incredible Soul"~ Larry Lessig Remembers Aaron Swartz After Cyberactivist's Suicide Before Trial; Parents Blame Prosecutor

Today we remember the pioneering computer programmer and cyber activist Aaron Swartz, who took his own life Friday at the age of 26. As a teenager, Swartz helped develop RSS, revolutionizing how people use the Internet, going on to co-own Reddit, now one of the world's most popular sites. He was also a key architect of Creative Commons and an organizer of the grassroots movement to defeat the controversial House Internet censorship bill, the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA), and the Senate bill, the PROTECT IP Act (PIPA). Swartz hanged himself just weeks before the start of a controversial trial. He was facing up to 35 years in prison for sneaking into the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and downloading millions of articles provided by the subscription-based academic research service JSTOR. We hear Swartz in his own words and speak to Harvard Law School Professor Lawrence Lessig, a longtime mentor and friend. "There are a thousand things we could have done, a thousand things we could have done, and we have to do, because Aaron Swartz is now an icon, an ideal," Lessig says. "He is what we will be fighting for, all of us, for the rest of our lives." Lessig also echoes the claims of Swartz's parents that decisions made by prosecutors and MIT contributed to his death, saying: "This was somebody who was pushed to the edge by what I think of as a kind of bullying by our government."

Filed under [Internet](#), [Aaron Swartz](#), [Lawrence Lessig](#)

Guest: [Lawrence Lessig](#), Roy L. Furman Professor of Law and Leadership at Harvard Law School. He was a longtime mentor and friend of Aaron Swartz, whom he knew for 12 years.

Transcript

AMY GOODMAN: We spend today's broadcast remembering the life and work of cyber activist, computer programmer, social justice activist and writer, Aaron Swartz. At the age of 14, he co-developed the Really Simple Syndication, or RSS, web protocol, the key component of much of the web's entire publishing infrastructure. By the time he was 19, he had co-founded a company that would merge with Reddit, now one of the world's most popular sites. He also helped develop the architecture for the Creative Commons licensing system and built the online architecture for the Open Library. Aaron Swartz committed suicide on Friday. He hanged himself in his Brooklyn apartment. He was 26 years old.

His death occurred just weeks before he was to go on trial for using computers at MIT—that's the Massachusetts Institute of Technology—to download millions of copyrighted academic articles from JSTOR, a subscription database of scholarly papers. JSTOR declined to press charges, but prosecutors moved the case forward. Aaron Swartz faced up to 35 years in prison and a million dollars in fines for allegedly violating the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. When the case first came to light, the United States attorney for the District of Massachusetts, Carmen Ortiz, said, quote, "Stealing is stealing whether you use a computer command or a crowbar, and whether you take documents, data or dollars."

In a statement, Swartz's family criticized federal prosecutors pursuing the case against him. They said, quote, "Aaron's death is not simply a personal tragedy. It is the product of a criminal justice system rife with intimidation and prosecutorial overreach. Decisions made by officials in the Massachusetts U.S. Attorney's office and at MIT contributed to his death," they said. On Sunday, MIT President Rafael Reif said the university will conduct an internal investigation into the school's role in Swartz's death.

Aaron Swartz was a longtime champion of an open Internet. Last year, he helped organize a grassroots movement to defeat a House bill called SOPA, the Stop Online Piracy Act, and a Senate bill called PIPA, the PROTECT IP Act. During a speech he delivered last May in Washington D.C., he explained the challenges he saw the Internet facing.

AARON SWARTZ: There's a battle going on right now, a battle to define everything that happens on the Internet in terms of traditional things that the law understands. Is sharing a video on BitTorrent like shoplifting from a movie store? Or is it like loaning a videotape to a friend? Is

reloading a webpage over and over again like a peaceful virtual sit-in or a violent smashing of shop windows? Is the freedom to connect like freedom of speech or like the freedom to murder?

AMY GOODMAN: Later in the broadcast, we'll play that full speech. That was Aaron Swartz speaking in May of last year. Well, he took his own life on Friday. A funeral will be held in Chicago on Tuesday.

For more, we now go to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Harvard Kennedy School of Government to speak with Harvard Law School Professor Lawrence Lessig, the director of the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard. He knew Aaron for 12 years. He was a friend and mentor. Lawrence Lessig is a founding board member of Creative Commons.

Welcome to *Democracy Now!*, Professor Lessig. Tell us about Aaron.

LAWRENCE LESSIG: Well, thank you. Thank you, Amy, for having me here to talk about this incredible, incredible soul.

You know, I think the thing to remember about Aaron is that from the youngest age, from the age of 12, his work has been—his work was dedicated solely to making the world a better place for the ideas that he had. He started with the idea that maybe we needed to make the Internet easier to share information, so that's what led to RSS. And then, with Creative Commons, it was: How do we license people to make the freedom to share legally protected? And then, after that, it was with the public library: How do we make books available? And when that wasn't enough, he started pushing in the social activist and progressive space, first with working with Stephanie Taylor and Adam Green at the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, and then with his own Demand Progress with David Segal. In all of these areas, what he was doing was advancing ideals. He was an idealist who believed we had to live up to something better, and he was an incredible soul, an incredible soul who inspired millions who now weep, as we've seen across the Internet, in outrage and devastation that he would have been driven to the cliff that he stepped over.

AMY GOODMAN: Can you explain what the case against Aaron was? Explain what happened.

LAWRENCE LESSIG: Well, I have to be very careful, because when Aaron was arrested, he came to me, and I—there was a period of time where I acted as his lawyer. So, I know more about the case than I'm able to talk about.

But here's what was alleged. Aaron was stopped as he left MIT. He had a computer in his possession, which there was tape that indicated that he had connected the computer to a server—to a closet in MIT, and the allegation was he had downloaded a significant portion of JSTOR. Now, JSTOR is a nonprofit website that has been for—since about 1996, has been trying to build an archive of online—giving online access to academic journal articles, you know, like the *Harvard Law Review* or journal articles from geography from the 1900s. It's an extraordinary library of information. And the claim was Aaron had downloaded a significant portion of that. And the question, the obvious question that was in everybody's mind, was: Why? What was he doing this for? And so, the Cambridge police arrested Aaron.

JSTOR said, "We don't want to prosecute. We don't want to civilly prosecute. We don't want you to criminally prosecute." But MIT was not as clear. And the federal government—remember, at the time, there was the Bradley Manning and the WikiLeaks issue going on. The federal government thought it was really important to make—make an example. And so, they brought this incredibly ridiculous prosecution that had multiple—you know, I think it was something like more than—more than a dozen counts claiming felony violations against Aaron, threatening, you know, scores of years in prison. But, you know, it's not the theoretical claims about what he might have gotten; it was the practical burden that for the last two years, you know, his wealth was bled dry as he had to negotiate to try to finally settle this matter, because the government was not going to stop before he admitted that he was a felon, which I think, you know, in a world where the architects of the financial crisis dine regularly at the White House, it's ridiculous to think Aaron Swartz was a felon.

AMY GOODMAN: What was the scene where he was arrested? He was riding his bicycle?

LAWRENCE LESSIG: Yeah. You know, this is part of the incredibly ridiculous propaganda that the government put out. They released these, you know, badly taken—because it was basically just a security camera—images of Aaron and suggested that what Aaron was doing was hiding his face and he was trying to evade—to evade detection. All he was doing was walking out of MIT with his bike helmet attached to his backpack. And the image was, you know, just of the guy who had just previously been in MIT, using their network, leaving.

Now, you know, we have to keep this in context. MIT, for most of its history, has been a celebrator of open access to information. Indeed, the policy of MIT, at least most people thought, allowed anybody who was on the campus to have access to information on the campus. MIT houses Richard Stallman, the founder of the free software movement, who has celebrated and defended MIT many, many times for their beliefs. And so, you know, a lot of people just wondered, what was MIT doing here?

Now, you know, I think we have to—we have to say—I criticized MIT very strongly in a [blog post](#) that I posted called "Prosecutor as Bully," because of what they did before Aaron died, because of their refusal to recognize the craziness of what the federal government was doing and to stop it by saying, "We don't prosecute here, and you should stop prosecution." MIT should have done that, and they didn't. But what MIT has done on Sunday, I think, is extraordinarily important. By appointing Hal Abelson, who I think is the best possible person in the world to look at what MIT did and to report back about whether it was right or wrong, I think MIT has taken an important step to acknowledge—to acknowledge the wrong in what happened here. And we'll see what Hal Abelson says when he looks at it and reports back.

AMY GOODMAN: We're going to go to break, and when we come back, we're going to read that statement of MIT and also the statement of JSTOR, that didn't want Aaron Swartz prosecuted, the company, the nonprofit, that ran this document archive that he was downloading, that ultimately is releasing it all to the public anyway. And we'll read the comments of his parents. Ultimately today, we'll play the speech that Aaron Swartz gave last year about freedom to connect. This is *Democracy Now!* Back in a moment.

[break]

AMY GOODMAN: We are doing today's broadcast about the suicide of Aaron Swartz, a 26-year-old cyber activist, social justice activist, co-founder of Reddit. He developed RSS when he was 14 years old. Our guest today is Harvard Law Professor Lawrence Lessig, his mentor, his friend for many years, speaking to us from Harvard. I'm Amy Godman.

Over the weekend, Aaron's family released this statement. They said, quote, "Aaron's death is not simply a personal tragedy. It is the product of a criminal justice system rife with intimidation and prosecutorial overreach. Decisions made by officials in the Massachusetts U.S. Attorney's office and at MIT contributed to his death."

MIT also released a statement, and I'd like to read that here. On Sunday, we reached out to MIT for comment. This is part of the statement the MIT president, Rafael Reif, sent to the MIT community regarding Aaron's death. He wrote, quote, "I will not attempt to summarize here the complex events of the past two years. Now is a time for everyone involved to reflect on their actions, and that includes all of us at MIT. I have asked Professor Hal Abelson to lead a thorough analysis of MIT's involvement from the time that we first perceived unusual activity on our network in fall 2010 up to the present. I have asked that this analysis describe the options MIT had and the decisions MIT made, in order to understand and to learn from the actions MIT took. I will share the report with the MIT community when I receive it."

I also want to read the statement of JSTOR. That's the nonprofit that is the archive of all of the documents that Aaron was downloading. Over the weekend, JSTOR expressed deep condolences to the Swartz family and maintained the case had been instigated by the U.S. attorney's office. They wrote, quote, "The case is one that we ourselves had regretted being drawn into from the outset, since JSTOR's mission is to foster widespread access to the world's body of scholarly knowledge. At the same time, as one of the largest archives of scholarly literature in the world, we must be careful stewards of the information entrusted to us by the owners and creators of that content. To that end, Aaron returned the data he had in his possession and JSTOR settled any civil claims we might have had against him in June 2011."

And now I want to play a comment of Aaron Swartz himself about JSTOR, about these documents. This was a comment made by Aaron Swartz at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in October of 2010. He spoke about JSTOR.

AARON SWARTZ: I am going to give you one example of something not as big as saving Congress, but something important that you can do right here at your own school. It just requires you willing to get your shoes a little bit muddy. By virtue of being students at a major U.S. university, I assume that you have access to a wide variety of scholarly journals. Pretty much every major university in the United States pays these sort of licensing fees to organizations like JSTOR and Thomson and ISI to get access to scholarly journals that the rest of the world can't read. And these licensing fees are substantial. And they're so substantial that people who are studying in India, instead of studying in the United States, don't have this kind of access. They're locked out from all of these journals. They're locked out from our entire scientific legacy. I mean, a lot of these journal articles, they go back to the Enlightenment. Every time someone has written down a scientific paper, it's been scanned and digitized and put in these collections.

That is a legacy that has been brought to us by the history of people doing interesting work, the history of scientists. It's a legacy that should belong to us as a commons, as a people, but instead it's been locked up and put online by a handful of for-profit corporations who then try and get the maximum profit they can out of it. Now, there are people, good people, trying to change this with the open access movement. So, all journals, going forward, they're encouraging them to publish their work as open access, so open on the Internet, available for download by everybody, available for free copying, and perhaps even modification with attribution and notice.

AMY GOODMAN: That was Aaron Swartz speaking, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, October 2010, about JSTOR. That was before he was arrested. Professor Lawrence Lessig, the significance of what Aaron was dedicating his life to, before we move on to the speech that he gave last year to play in full?

LAWRENCE LESSIG: Yeah, he was dedicating his life to building a world, a nation at least, but a world that was as idealistic as he was. And he was impatient with us, and he was disappointed with us, with all of us, as we moved through this fight. And he—as he grew impatient, he called on people to do more. And it is incredibly hard for all of us who were close to him to accept the recognition that maybe if we had done more, maybe if we had done more, this wouldn't have seemed so bleak to him, maybe if we had stopped this prosecution.

I received an email from JSTOR four days before Aaron died, from the president of JSTOR, announcing, celebrating that JSTOR was going to release all of these journal articles to anybody around the world who wanted access—exactly what Aaron was fighting for. And I didn't have time to send it to Aaron; I was on—I was traveling. But I looked forward to seeing him again—I had just seen him the week before—and celebrating that this is what had happened. So, all of us think there are a thousand things we could have done, a thousand things we could have done, and we have to do, because Aaron Swartz is now an icon, an ideal. He is what we will be fighting for, all of us, for the rest of our lives.

AMY GOODMAN: Professor Lessig, on November 27, 2007, Aaron [blogged](#) about his depressed mood. He said, "Surely there have been times when you've been sad. Perhaps a loved one has abandoned you or a plan has gone horribly awry. Your face falls. Perhaps you cry. You feel worthless. You wonder whether it's worth going on. Everything you think about seems bleak—the things you've done, the things you hope to do, the people around you. You want to lie in bed and keep the lights off. Depressed mood is like that, only it doesn't come for any reason and it doesn't go for any either." What about Aaron's state of mind, how he kept up his spirits, especially during this very, very difficult time, also struggling with depression?

LAWRENCE LESSIG: Yeah, Aaron was depressed. He was rationally depressed. You know, he was losing everything, because his government was overreaching in the most ridiculous way to persecute him, not just because of this, but because of what he had done before, liberating government documents that were supposed to be in the public domain. Of course he was depressed. He wasn't depressed because he had no loving parents—he

did have loving parents who did everything they could for him—or because he didn't have loving friends. Every time you saw Aaron, he was surrounded by five or 10 different people who loved and respected and worked with him. He was depressed because he was increasingly recognizing that the idealism he brought to this fight maybe wasn't enough. When he saw all of his wealth gone, and he recognized his parents were going to have to mortgage their house so he could afford a lawyer to fight a government that treated him as if he were a 9/11 terrorist, as if what he was doing was threatening the infrastructure of the United States, when he saw that and he recognized how—how incredibly difficult that fight was going to be, of course he was depressed.

Now, you know, I'm not a psychiatrist. I don't know whether there was something wrong with him because of—you know, beyond the rational reason he had to be depressed, but I don't—I don't—I don't have patience for people who want to say, "Oh, this was just a crazy person; this was just a person with a psychological problem who killed himself." No. This was somebody—this was somebody who was pushed to the edge by what I think of as a kind of bullying by our government. A bullying by our government. And just as we hold people responsible when their bullying leads to tragedy, I hope Carmen Ortiz does what MIT did and hold—

AMY GOODMAN: The U.S. attorney.

LAWRENCE LESSIG: The U.S. attorney—and lead an investigation, ask somebody independent to look at what happened here and explain to America: Is this what the United States government is?

2013, Jan 14, 2013 **Freedom to Connect: Aaron Swartz (1986-2013) on Victory to Save Open Internet, Fight Online Censors**

Cyber activist and computer programmer Aaron Swartz took his life on Friday at the age of 26. We air an address of Swartz's from last May where he speaks about the battle to defeat the Stop Online Piracy Act, or SOPA — a campaign he helped lead. "[SOPA] will have yet another name, and maybe a different excuse, and probably do its damage in a different way. But make no mistake: The enemies of the freedom to connect have not disappeared," Swartz said. "Next time they might just win. Let's not let that happen." [includes rush transcript]

Guest: [Aaron Swartz](#), cyber activist who took his own life on Friday at the age of 26, speaking in May 2012 at the Freedom to Connect conference in Washington, D.C.

Transcript

AMY GOODMAN: Professor Lessig, we want to end with the words of Aaron himself. And we're not going to go to our second break—I want to warn all our stations—because—in order to fit in this whole speech. This is a speech that Aaron Swartz gave, the cyber activist, computer programmer, who took his life on Friday, speaking last May about the battle to defeat the Stop Online Piracy Act, or SOPA.

AARON SWARTZ: So, for me, it all started with a phone call. It was September—not last year, but the year before that, September 2010. And I got a phone call from my friend Peter. "Aaron," he said, "there's an amazing bill that you have to take a look at." "What is it?" I said. "It's called COICA, the Combating Online Infringement and Counterfeiting Act." "But, Peter," I said, "I don't care about copyright law. Maybe you're right. Maybe Hollywood is right. But either way, what's the big deal? I'm not going to waste my life fighting over a little issue like copyright. Healthcare, financial reform—those are the issues that I work on, not something obscure like copyright law." I could hear Peter grumbling in the background. "Look, I don't have time to argue with you," he said, "but it doesn't matter for right now, because this isn't a bill about copyright." "It's not?" "No," he said. "It's a bill about the freedom to connect." Now I was listening.

Peter explained what you've all probably long since learned, that this bill would let the government devise a list of websites that Americans weren't allowed to visit. On the next day, I came up with

lots of ways to try to explain this to people. I said it was a great firewall of America. I said it was an Internet black list. I said it was online censorship. But I think it's worth taking a step back, putting aside all the rhetoric and just thinking for a moment about how radical this bill really was. Sure, there are lots of times when the government makes rules about speech. If you slander a private figure, if you buy a television ad that lies to people, if you have a wild party that plays booming music all night, in all these cases, the government can come stop you. But this was something radically different. It wasn't the government went to people and asked them to take down particular material that was illegal; it shut down whole websites. Essentially, it stopped Americans from communicating entirely with certain groups. There's nothing really like it in U.S. law. If you play loud music all night, the government doesn't slap you with an order requiring you be mute for the next couple weeks. They don't say nobody can make any more noise inside your house. There's a specific complaint, which they ask you to specifically remedy, and then your life goes on.

The closest example I could find was a case where the government was at war with an adult bookstore. The place kept selling pornography; the government kept getting the porn declared illegal. And then, frustrated, they decided to shut the whole bookstore down. But even that was eventually declared unconstitutional, a violation of the First Amendment.

So, you might say, surely COICA would get declared unconstitutional, as well. But I knew that the Supreme Court had a blind spot around the First Amendment, more than anything else, more than slander or libel, more than pornography, more even than child pornography. Their blind spot was copyright. When it came to copyright, it was like the part of the justices' brains shut off, and they just totally forgot about the First Amendment. You got the sense that, deep down, they didn't even think the First Amendment applied when copyright was at issue, which means that if you did want to censor the Internet, if you wanted to come up with some way that the government could shut down access to particular websites, this bill might be the only way to do it. If it was about pornography, it probably would get overturned by courts, just like the adult bookstore case. But if you claimed it was about copyright, it might just sneak through.

And that was especially terrifying, because, as you know, because copyright is everywhere. If you want to shut down WikiLeaks, it's a bit of a stretch to claim that you're doing it because they have too much pornography, but it's not hard at all to claim that WikiLeaks is violating copyright, because everything is copyrighted. This speech, you know, the thing I'm giving right now, these words are copyrighted. And it's so easy to accidentally copy something, so easy, in fact, that the leading Republican supporter of COICA, Orrin Hatch, had illegally copied a bunch of code into his own Senate website. So if even Orrin Hatch's Senate website was found to be violating copyright law, what's the chance that they wouldn't find something they could pin on any of us?

There's a battle going on right now, a battle to define everything that happens on the Internet in terms of traditional things that the law understands. Is sharing a video on BitTorrent like shoplifting from a movie store? Or is it like loaning a videotape to a friend? Is reloading a webpage over and over again like a peaceful virtual sit-in or a violent smashing of shop windows? Is the freedom to connect like freedom of speech or like the freedom to murder?

This bill would be a huge, potentially permanent, loss. If we lost the ability to communicate with each other over the Internet, it would be a change to the Bill of Rights. The freedoms guaranteed in our Constitution, the freedoms our country had been built on, would be suddenly deleted. New technology, instead of bringing us greater freedom, would have snuffed out fundamental rights we had always taken for granted. And I realized that day, talking to Peter, that I couldn't let that happen.

But it was going to happen. The bill, COICA, was introduced on September 20th, 2010, a Monday, and in the press release heralding the introduction of this bill, way at the bottom, it was scheduled for a vote on September 23rd, just three days later. And while, of course, there had to be a vote—you can't pass a bill without a vote—the results of that vote were already a foregone conclusion, because if you looked at the introduction of the law, it wasn't just introduced by one rogue eccentric member of Congress; it was introduced by the chair of the Judiciary Committee and co-sponsored by nearly all the other members, Republicans and Democrats. So, yes, there'd be a vote, but it wouldn't be much of a surprise, because nearly everyone who was voting had signed their name to the bill before it was even introduced.

Now, I can't stress how unusual this is. This is emphatically not how Congress works. I'm not talking about how Congress should work, the way you see on *Schoolhouse Rock*. I mean, this is not the way Congress actually works. I mean, I think we all know Congress is a dead zone of deadlock and dysfunction. There are months of debates and horse trading and hearings and stall tactics. I mean, you know, first you're supposed to announce that you're going to hold hearings on a problem, and then days of experts talking about the issue, and then you propose a possible solution, you bring the experts back for their thoughts on that, and then other members have different solutions, and they propose those, and you spend a bunch of time debating, and there's a bunch of trading, they get members over to your cause. And finally, you spend hours talking one on one with the different people in the debate, try and come back with some sort of compromise, which you hash out in endless backroom meetings. And then, when that's all done, you take that, and you go through it line by line in public to see if anyone has any objections or wants to make any changes. And then you have the vote. It's a painful, arduous process. You don't just introduce a bill on Monday and then pass it unanimously a couple days later. That just doesn't happen in Congress.

But this time, it was going to happen. And it wasn't because there were no disagreements on the issue. There are always disagreements. Some senators thought the bill was much too weak and needed to be stronger: As it was introduced, the bill only allowed the government to shut down websites, and these senators, they wanted any company in the world to have the power to get a website shut down. Other senators thought it was a drop too strong. But somehow, in the kind of thing you never see in Washington, they had all managed to put their personal differences aside to come together and support one bill they were persuaded they could all live with: a bill that would censor the Internet. And when I saw this, I realized: Whoever was behind this was good.

Now, the typical way you make good things happen in Washington is you find a bunch of wealthy companies who agree with you. Social Security didn't get passed because some brave politicians decided their good conscience couldn't possibly let old people die starving in the streets. I mean, are you kidding me? Social Security got passed because John D. Rockefeller was sick of having to take money out of his profits to pay for his workers' pension funds. Why do that, when you can just let the government take money from the workers? Now, my point is not that Social Security is a bad thing—I think it's fantastic. It's just that the way you get the government to do fantastic things is you find a big company willing to back them. The problem is, of course, that big companies aren't really huge fans of civil liberties. You know, it's not that they're against them; it's just there's not much money in it.

Now, if you've been reading the press, you probably didn't hear this part of the story. As Hollywood has been telling it, the great, good copyright bill they were pushing was stopped by the evil Internet companies who make millions of dollars off of copyright infringement. But it just—it really wasn't true. I mean, I was in there, in the meetings with the Internet companies—actually probably all here today. And, you know, if all their profits depended on copyright infringement, they would have put a lot more money into changing copyright law. The fact is, the big Internet companies, they would

do just fine if this bill passed. I mean, they wouldn't be thrilled about it, but I doubt they would even have a noticeable dip in their stock price. So they were against it, but they were against it, like the rest of us, on grounds primarily of principle. And principle doesn't have a lot of money in the budget to spend on lobbyists. So they were practical about it. "Look," they said, "this bill is going to pass. In fact, it's probably going to pass unanimously. As much as we try, this is not a train we're going to be able to stop. So, we're not going to support it—we couldn't support it. But in opposition, let's just try and make it better." So that was the strategy: lobby to make the bill better. They had lists of changes that would make the bill less obnoxious or less expensive for them, or whatever. But the fact remained at the end of the day, it was going to be a bill that was going to censor the Internet, and there was nothing we could do to stop it.

So I did what you always do when you're a little guy facing a terrible future with long odds and little hope of success: I started an online petition. I called all my friends, and we stayed up all night setting up a website for this new group, Demand Progress, with an online petition opposing this noxious bill, and I sent it to a few friends. Now, I've done a few online petitions before. I've worked at some of the biggest groups in the world that do online petitions. I've written a ton of them and read even more. But I've never seen anything like this. Starting from literally nothing, we went to 10,000 signers, then 100,000 signers, and then 200,000 signers and 300,000 signers, in just a couple of weeks. And it wasn't just signing a name. We asked those people to call Congress, to call urgently. There was a vote coming up this week, in just a couple days, and we had to stop it. And at the same time, we told the press about it, about this incredible online petition that was taking off. And we met with the staff of members of Congress and pleaded with them to withdraw their support for the bill. I mean, it was amazing. It was huge. The power of the Internet rose up in force against this bill. And then it passed unanimously.

Now, to be fair, several of the members gave nice speeches before casting their vote, and in their speeches they said their office had been overwhelmed with comments about the First Amendment concerns behind this bill, comments that had them very worried, so worried, in fact, they weren't sure that they still supported the bill. But even though they didn't support it, they were going to vote for it anyway, they said, because they needed to keep the process moving, and they were sure any problems that were had with it could be fixed later. So, I'm going to ask you, does this sound like Washington, D.C., to you? Since when do members of Congress vote for things that they oppose just to keep the process moving? I mean, whoever was behind this was good.

And then, suddenly, the process stopped. Senator Ron Wyden, the Democrat from Oregon, put a hold on the bill. Giving a speech in which he called it a nuclear bunker-buster bomb aimed at the Internet, he announced he would not allow it to pass without changes. And as you may know, a single senator can't actually stop a bill by themselves, but they can delay it. By objecting to a bill, they can demand Congress spend a bunch of time debating it before getting it passed. And Senator Wyden did. He bought us time—a lot of time, as it turned out. His delay held all the way through the end of that session of Congress, so that when the bill came back, it had to start all over again. And since they were starting all over again, they figured, why not give it a new name? And that's when it began being called PIPA, and eventually SOPA.

So there was probably a year or two of delay there. And in retrospect, we used that time to lay the groundwork for what came later. But that's not what it felt like at the time. At the time, it felt like we were going around telling people that these bills were awful, and in return, they told us that they thought we were crazy. I mean, we were kids wandering around waving our arms about how the government was going to censor the Internet. It does sound a little crazy. You can ask Larry tomorrow. I was constantly telling him what was going on, trying to get him involved, and I'm pretty sure he just thought I was exaggerating. Even I began to doubt myself. It was a rough period.

But when the bill came back and started moving again, suddenly all the work we had done started coming together. All the folks we talked to about it suddenly began getting really involved and getting others involved. Everything started snowballing. It happened so fast.

I remember there was one week where I was having dinner with a friend in the technology industry, and he asked what I worked on, and I told him about this bill. And he said, "Wow! You need to tell people about that." And I just groaned. And then, just a few weeks later, I remember I was chatting with this cute girl on the subway, and she wasn't in technology at all, but when she heard that I was, she turned to me very seriously and said, "You know, we have to stop 'SOAP.'" So, progress, right?

But, you know, I think that story illustrates what happened during those couple weeks, because the reason we won wasn't because I was working on it or Reddit was working on it or Google was working on it or Tumblr or any other particular person. It was because there was this enormous mental shift in our industry. Everyone was thinking of ways they could help, often really clever, ingenious ways. People made videos. They made infographics. They started PACs. They designed ads. They bought billboards. They wrote news stories. They held meetings. Everybody saw it as their responsibility to help. I remember at one point during this period I held a meeting with a bunch of startups in New York, trying to encourage everyone to get involved, and I felt a bit like I was hosting one of these Clinton Global Initiative meetings, where I got to turn to every startup in the—every startup founder in the room and be like, "What are you going to do? And what are you going to do?" And everyone was trying to one-up each other.

If there was one day the shift crystallized, I think it was the day of the hearings on SOPA in the House, the day we got that phrase, "It's no longer OK not to understand how the Internet works." There was just something about watching those clueless members of Congress debate the bill, watching them insist they could regulate the Internet and a bunch of nerds couldn't possibly stop them. They really brought it home for people that this was happening, that Congress was going to break the Internet, and it just didn't care.

I remember when this moment first hit me. I was at an event, and I was talking, and I got introduced to a U.S. senator, one of the strongest proponents of the original COICA bill, in fact. And I asked him why, despite being such a progressive, despite giving a speech in favor of civil liberties, why he was supporting a bill that would censor the Internet. And, you know, that typical politician smile he had suddenly faded from his face, and his eyes started burning this fiery red. And he started shouting at me, said, "Those people on the Internet, they think they can get away with anything! They think they can just put anything up there, and there's nothing we can do to stop them! They put up everything! They put up our nuclear missiles, and they just laugh at us! Well, we're going to show them! There's got to be laws on the Internet! It's got to be under control!"

Now, as far as I know, nobody has ever put up the U.S.'s nuclear missiles on the Internet. I mean, it's not something I've heard about. But that's sort of the point. He wasn't having a rational concern, right? It was this irrational fear that things were out of control. Here was this man, a United States senator, and those people on the Internet, they were just mocking him. They had to be brought under control. Things had to be under control. And I think that was the attitude of Congress. And just as seeing that fire in that senator's eyes scared me, I think those hearings scared a lot of people. They saw this wasn't the attitude of a thoughtful government trying to resolve trade-offs in order to best represent its citizens. This was more like the attitude of a tyrant. And so the citizens fought back.

The wheels came off the bus pretty quickly after that hearing. First the Republican senators pulled out, and then the White House issued a statement opposing the bill, and then the Democrats, left all alone out there, announced they were putting the bill on hold so they could have a few further

discussions before the official vote. And that was when, as hard as it was for me to believe, after all this, we had won. The thing that everyone said was impossible, that some of the biggest companies in the world had written off as kind of a pipe dream, had happened. We did it. We won.

And then we started rubbing it in. You all know what happened next. Wikipedia went black. Reddit went black. Craigslist went black. The phone lines on Capitol Hill flat-out melted. Members of Congress started rushing to issue statements retracting their support for the bill that they were promoting just a couple days ago. And it was just ridiculous. I mean, there's a chart from the time that captures it pretty well. It says something like "January 14th" on one side and has this big, long list of names supporting the bill, and then just a few lonely people opposing it; and on the other side, it says "January 15th," and now it's totally reversed—everyone is opposing it, just a few lonely names still hanging on in support.

I mean, this really was unprecedented. Don't take my word for it, but ask former Senator Chris Dodd, now the chief lobbyist for Hollywood. He admitted, after he lost, that he had masterminded the whole evil plan. And he told *The New York Times* he had never seen anything like it during his many years in Congress. And everyone I've spoken to agrees. The people rose up, and they caused a sea change in Washington—not the press, which refused to cover the story—just coincidentally, their parent companies all happened to be lobbying for the bill; not the politicians, who were pretty much unanimously in favor of it; and not the companies, who had all but given up trying to stop it and decided it was inevitable. It was really stopped by the people, the people themselves. They killed the bill dead, so dead that when members of Congress propose something now that even touches the Internet, they have to give a long speech beforehand about how it is definitely not like SOPA; so dead that when you ask congressional staffers about it, they groan and shake their heads like it's all a bad dream they're trying really hard to forget; so dead that it's kind of hard to believe this story, hard to remember how close it all came to actually passing, hard to remember how this could have gone any other way. But it wasn't a dream or a nightmare; it was all very real.

And it will happen again. Sure, it will have yet another name, and maybe a different excuse, and probably do its damage in a different way. But make no mistake: The enemies of the freedom to connect have not disappeared. The fire in those politicians' eyes hasn't been put out. There are a lot of people, a lot of powerful people, who want to clamp down on the Internet. And to be honest, there aren't a whole lot who have a vested interest in protecting it from all of that. Even some of the biggest companies, some of the biggest Internet companies, to put it frankly, would benefit from a world in which their little competitors could get censored. We can't let that happen.

Now, I've told this as a personal story, partly because I think big stories like this one are just more interesting at human scale. The director J.D. Walsh says good stories should be like the poster for *Transformers*. There's a huge evil robot on the left side of the poster and a huge, big army on the right side of the poster. And in the middle, at the bottom, there's just a small family trapped in the middle. Big stories need human stakes. But mostly, it's a personal story, because I didn't have time to research any of the other part of it. But that's kind of the point. We won this fight because everyone made themselves the hero of their own story. Everyone took it as their job to save this crucial freedom. They threw themselves into it. They did whatever they could think of to do. They didn't stop to ask anyone for permission. You remember how Hacker News readers spontaneously organized this boycott of GoDaddy over their support of SOPA? Nobody told them they could do that. A few people even thought it was a bad idea. It didn't matter. The senators were right: The Internet really is out of control. But if we forget that, if we let Hollywood rewrite the story so it was just big company Google who stopped the bill, if we let them persuade us we didn't actually make a difference, if we start seeing it as someone else's responsibility to do this work and it's our job just to go home and pop some popcorn and curl up on the couch to watch *Transformers*, well, then next time they might just win. Let's not let that happen.

AMY GOODMAN: Cyber social justice activist Aaron Swartz committed suicide Friday. He was 26 years old.

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October 5, 2011

Peace activist Leymah Gbowee

Liberian native and author of *Mighty Be Our Powers* discusses the importance of and challenges faced by women in politics and the significance of the nation's first woman president. Gbowee is one of three recipients of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize.

After watching her native Liberia descend into a lengthy civil war, Leymah Gbowee decided to take a stand. The single mother of 6 and social worker by profession mobilized a coalition of Christian and Muslim women that changed history—eventually paving the way for Africa's first democratic election of a female head of state. She's the co-founder and exec director of the Ghana-based Women Peace and Security Network-Africa and The Daily Beast and *Newsweek* Africa columnist. Gbowee chronicles her journey to empowerment in the riveting text *Mighty Be Our Powers*.

TRANSCRIPT

Tavis: When Leymah Gbowee's homeland of Liberia became torn apart by tribal conflict and brutal government rebels she decided to fight back. The iconic peace activist encouraged and empowered women in Liberia to fight for peace and foster a new era of stability in the country.

The new memoir about her remarkable journey is called "Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer and Sex Changed a Nation at War." Leymah Gbowee, an honor to have you on this program.

Leymah Gbowee: Thank you, Tavis.

Tavis: Let me start with this quote on the back of the book for a particular reason. The quote says, and I quote, "Leymah bore witness to the worst of humanity and helped bring Liberia out of the dark. Her memoir is a captivating narrative that will stand in history as testament to the power of women, faith and the spirit of our great country." It's written by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the president of Liberia, the first woman, as you well know, to be president of your native homeland.

A year ago, 2009, as a matter of fact, April 7th, as I recall, 2009, President Sirleaf sat in that very chair. I was honored to have her on this program for a conversation, and I asked her a question about what being a woman did for her, how that aided and abetted her or challenged her in becoming the first woman president of Liberia, and here's what your president had to say.

[Begin video clip of previously recorded interview.]

“President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf:” As a man I would have had so many kind of interests, so many things to claim my attention. I would have not been so focused, so concentrated, or wanted to be a successful professional. I would not have been able to speak out in a manner in which I could, because I think men and their camaraderie, want to make sure everybody – the forceful positions I took I think came from the fact that as a woman I felt I could speak.

[End video clip of previously recorded interview.]

Tavis: I want to start with that, Leymah, because there's no way that Ellen Johnson Sirleaf becomes president if women like you courageously don't pave the way for that moment to happen. So what do you make of your country now having a woman as president as we are about to approach the reelections now in Liberia?

Gbowee: It was for me, 2005 was an exciting moment because I felt like we were ordinary women doing our protest and advocating for peace, and then having a woman as president was like the intro to our story coming to the limelight, because I often say that there's no way anyone can tell the story of Madame Sirleaf and don't say what the women did for peace.

So that's the first thing, but it was really an exciting time because it's been years. Liberia got her independence in 1847. It was not until 1957 that women could vote. So almost 100 years after independence before women could vote, so we had waited all of these years and then we finally got the female president.

It opened up two things. First, we had a whole population of young women who had been destroyed by the war and they were at a place where sex, their bodies, all of the abuses was what they knew, and the war really pushed them back into that subservient place.

Having a woman as president brought them out. We had a whole generation of older women who never really thought that politics and involvement of women in politics was something that they were supposed to do. Ellen also, her elections paved the way for that. So it opened up a whole new avenue of possibilities for women in politics.

Tavis: I want to get more to the back story of your life and what made this moment for her and your nation possible. Before I do that, as I referenced a moment ago, we are just days away from elections in Liberia, President Sirleaf standing for reelection. What's going to happen in those elections, you think?

Gbowee: Well, I'm a serious optimist. I come from a country where you have little to be hopeful for, and so you have to always be an optimist. I'm optimistic that she's going to have a first-round win.

Tavis: A first-round win.

Gbowee: First-round win, that's how optimistic I am. People say that's too much to be asking for, but I think there are two challenges ahead of us as women of Liberia. One, African women are saying to us your failure to reelect Ellen is going to prove to us that you are not as powerful as we thought you Liberian women were. That's the first thing.

The second thing, it is like now we've seen development roll out in a way that we've never seen. I have never seen it in my own lifetime like I'm seeing now, and I think we should continue in this trend and then start to prepare someone to take over after she leaves.

So I think she's going to have a first-round win. It's a tough call, but she's definitely going to.

Tavis: What, to your story now, and it's told beautifully in this new text, but what motivated you, or put another way, what compelled you to put yourself, literally to put your life on the line to motivate, to empower, to bring women together and to do so bringing Christian and Muslim women together, which is remarkable for me.

Gbowee: Tavis, we had no life, so there was no life to put on the line. You wake up in the morning and you were grateful. Grateful for what? Nothing, because it was always in the back of your mind that one bullet could take you out and you could be gone.

You go to bed at night, you're grateful to be sleeping, but then sleep would never come. We had a horrible life. Rape was an everyday thing. Our children were being adopted and sent off to fight, so there was absolutely no future. No one is promised a tomorrow as it is, but people plan for tomorrow.

When the nation get to the place where there is no planning and no hope that there is a tomorrow, someone had to do something. It was at that point that we, the women of Liberia, we will die sitting, so let's die trying to bring peace. That was the motivation for us.

We needed to secure the future for our children. So for me, I had four children at the time, and they were not with me, they were living as refugees in another country. That was no life. I thought, let me get out there. Sisters, let's do what we have to do.

Those women who had seen the worst decided we will step out; we will do what we have to do. Even if we die trying, we will do it.

Tavis: Tell me, Leymah, what the purpose was and how you came upon the idea to just sit holding those signs, and always sitting, again, women, Christians and Muslims together, wearing white. Tell me more about that.

Gbowee: When we decided to do the protest we had different ideas, and the first thing was we had no idea about Dr. King, nonviolent struggle. The rest of the women – I had read King, I read Gandhi, but these were women who didn't have any ideas of any of these things.

The only thing they knew was the bible and the Qur'an, and the Christian women were saying, "Let's do as Esther did when the children of Israel were under threat. Let's go to God in our sackcloth and ashes," and we didn't have the literal sackcloth and ashes to put on, so we thought, white.

But then also as we put on the white, no makeup, no jewelry, and we cover our hair, so that's how the white came about. So the white was symbolic, symbolizing our sackcloth and ashes. Then we decided we would do it fasting and praying.

Every day as we went out there to fast and pray we thought let's not keep it inside. Let's take it outside, and we decided to take that fish market because it was the major highway for President Taylor going home and going to work every day.

Then someone said, "Let's picket." At the end of the day we kept our focus. It was about the peace of Liberia, it was about the future of our children.

Tavis: I am struck by, and I want to ask you to comment on this, I am struck by – and it's in the subtitle of your text, but we live in a world where not everybody values the power of prayer.

No matter who you're praying to – if you're a Christian you're praying to God, if you're Muslim you're praying – so you're bringing, again, these Christian and Muslim women together, but the one thing they have in common, the one thing they agree upon, is the power of prayer, which again, for some people is so overrated these days.

But talk to me from your perspective about the power that's pregnant in prayer.

Gbowee: There is no way that I can talk about the work that we did, or there is no way that the success of this work can be documented without the religious or the prayer part. That part of faith.

I'm sitting on your show today and it's evident of the power that God has in using the foolish things of this world to confront the wise. When we started our work we could not have gotten the boldness to step outside if

we weren't praying to God. So every morning we went, we said a Christian prayer, we said a Muslim prayer and we sang.

Tavis, no one, not a single being in this world, can leave their children at home knowing that I could be protesting for peace and a missile could land on my house and do that protest faithfully for two years without prayers and without the power of faith in a higher power.

So I know that everything we did was that guidance, that hand carrying us. There were times that we would decide we're going to this place to do something. Some of the very people in Taylor's government would be the one calling our cell phones to say, "Don't go," and it's only through the hands of God that these things happened.

The world that we live in now, people don't believe these things. They tend to put it, but the work of the Liberian women, God first, our nation to persevere second – I think that's what gave us the success. But 100 percent, even from the beginning of the work, it was divinely inspired.

Tavis: Since you mentioned the bible, there's a bible verse that comes to my mind right now that says that God has not given us a spirit of fear -

Gbowee: But of power, love, and of a sound mind.

Tavis: – love and a sound mind. You know it well. I love that. I love a sister who knows her word. So not a spirit of fear, but of love, of power and of a sound mind, and yet I'm juxtaposing that scripture with the brutal dictatorship of Charles Taylor.

How do you get beyond the fear of a dictator like Taylor, on trial right now – we'll come to that in a second – on trial at The Hague, outside, of course, of Liberia, but how do you get beyond the fear to get to the love, the power and the sound mind when what you're up against is the brutality of a dictator like Charles Taylor?

Gbowee: First thing, I had been afraid all of my life, and you get to a place, I was 17 when the war started, and this is 14 years later. So you're talking 31, you can't be afraid for that long. You get used to it.

At 17, the first time I saw a dead body, I froze. By 31 it was a natural occurrence for me, and no group of people should live like that. That's the first thing. So we had gone over the thing of fear. The power came from our anger.

I always tell people, anger is like liquid. It's fluid, it's like water. You put it in a container and it takes the shape of that container. So many people you see in prison, unleashing war on their people, they are angry and they take their anger and put it into a violent container.

We took our anger and put it into a peaceful container, and then we just got the power, I think, from God, because that anger in that peaceful container propelled us.

Taylor had a ban on public gathering. The first day we were just singing and praising God in a little room, and then someone said, "Let's go outside." Without even a second thought, because he had some of the most brutal soldiers, we took to the street – about 250 of us.

People were shocked. We marched through the street, went to the city hall, presented our statement to the press, no one did anything. It emboldened us. The next time we stepped out our numbers increased, and every time we stepped out it increased and increased and increased.

Sound mind? You can't have a sound mind all by yourself when you live in terror, you live in mayhem. The sound of a tire firing is like a sound of an explosion. You can never have a sound mind by yourself, and I think that's the second place that God stepped in.

I'm going to keep this group focused. You will not lose your mind. Even as you lose your children, because there were women losing their children on a daily basis, but you keep your focus. I will give you a sound mind and you will do this work that I've called you to do.

Tavis: Tell me how you arrange these kinds of protests, you gather these women together, again, of different faiths, in a country, by your own admission, where women had not been respected.

So they're being raped and murdered, women and their children, every single day. I'm trying to figure out how you go from being disregarded in that way to being respected as you protest in the streets. I'm missing something here.

Gbowee: In 2003 we had a gathering where we brought women together in 2002, and these women, after we had sat for five days just having a conversation about peace, 20 of us, they decided let's take to the streets and create the awareness amongst the ordinary Liberian woman that we have a stake in all that is happening.

So we started a campaign called the Peace Outreach Project. Fridays we went to the mosques, Saturdays we went to the markets, Sunday we went to the churches. We did that for nine months, and the first time we started it was just 20. By the following week it was 40, 60, 100, 200, and then we had to split up into groups and give people assignments.

Then we went to a meeting after nine months to evaluate the work that we had done, and these women then signed a memorandum of understanding of Christian and Muslim women that anything that threatens our society, we will step out.

By April of that year that was when the war started again. These women stepped out. But when we started we asked each of the groups that came (unintelligible) they have different churches and different Muslim sects. We asked them to give us leaders from the different groups, so each group brought a leader, and these leaders became the organizers.

So every day after we protested, 20 of us again went around the table and three questions we asked ourselves: What did we do good? What did we do wrongly? How can we do better tomorrow?

Because we had no political connections we didn't know where the meetings were being held, the big meetings. Someone would just call and say, "Oh, we saw the presidential convoy going to this place." There was this old guy who could not make good business with his old boss so he would just pocket daily, and then once we had somewhere to go we jumped in.

Some days we didn't have money to pay him and he would say, "Well, when peace comes, I'll get my pay." So that's how we operated. Sometimes we walked, other times we had transportation. Sometimes no water, sometimes we had water. But the one thing we never had to offer those women on a daily basis was food.

Tavis: I mentioned Charles Taylor earlier. He is, as we know, on trial at The Hague. Your thoughts about his being on trial at The Hague and not in Liberia, and what you expect to come out of this trial.

Gbowee: Well, first I have a really radical view when it comes to The Hague, the prosecution of Taylor. I would have loved to have seen Taylor on trial for crimes in Liberia, not minimizing what he did in Sierra Leone, but I also think the people of Liberia deserve some answers for the kind of terror that he unleashed on them.

He's on trial in Sierra Leone and the verdict is supposed to come any day from now. The one question I'm asking myself, even if he's guilty, how does that make it right for those amputees in Sierra Leone that we see on a daily basis living in camps?

Billions of dollars – and this is like a policy issue now – is being spent on keeping this one man in a cell while hundreds of thousands of people will never have the ability to live their lives right.

Every time I ask myself what kind of justice, because I think justice is equal, if you look at the justice scale. So if you are serving justice to one person, those who have been affected should also be served some form of justice. I would like to see, even after his verdict is handed down, and I think it's going to be guilty, that some of his wealth is given to those people to rebuild their life. That would be a semblance for me of justice.

Tavis: How do you spend your time these days? Taylor is out of the country now on trial; perhaps about to be found guilty, you've got a woman president standing for reelection now. So what are you and the women in your group doing these days?

Gbowee: Many, many challenges, Tavis. Peace is not an event, it's a process. Six years later we have teen prostitution on the increase, teen pregnancy. I'm a part of something called the African Women's Leaders

Network on Reproductive Health and Family Planning. Liberia has one of the worst maternal mortality rates in the world – 994 deaths to every 100,000 births.

In some countries it's one to every 100,000. Liberia has 994. You have the whole issue of the youth surge. Unemployment is high amongst the youth. So we continue to do peace education amongst young people, we're doing leadership with girls.

Because the one thing I keep saying to the young women and to my colleagues, we've left a legacy, President Sirleaf is leaving a legacy, but all of those legacies will only be a legacy if we have young women to walk in our shoes when we leave the stage.

So that's the kind of work that we do now. Beyond that, we're using our experiences from Liberia into other countries. A few years ago we conducted a nonviolence campaign during Sierra Leone's elections. For the first time my group and I have organized something we called the first-ever West African Women's Elections Observation Mission.

So we're having women from all over West Africa go to observe Liberia's elections.

Tavis: I love coming to work every day. I love coming to this studio every day, because I never know what icon and what great artist, what great humanitarian I'm going to meet, but it's not often that I just see courage walk up in this studio, courage just walk up in this building. Doesn't happen every day, but it did today, and I am honored to have Leymah Gbowee on this program.

Her new book is called "Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer and Sex Changed a Nation at War." Leymah, I am honored to have met you, honored to have had you on this program. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Gbowee: Thank you for having me. It's been a pleasure, and I'm truly humbled just being here today.

Tavis: I'm delighted to have you.

"Female One:" Every community has a Martin Luther King Boulevard. It's the cornerstone we all know. It's not just a street or boulevard, but a place where Walmart stands together with your community to make every day better.

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2007, Oct 18 President Barack Obama

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/tavissmiley/interviews/president-barack-obama/>

We revisit our conversations with the president during his six previous appearances on the show, dating back to his days as a little-known Illinois state senator.

In February 2007, then-Illinois' junior senator Barack Obama announced his candidacy for the White House and, on November 4, 2008, became the first African American to be elected U.S. president. He'd previously become a rising star in the Democratic Party with a memorable keynote address at the 2004 national convention and was elected that year as the only African American in the U.S. Senate. Since sitting down with us at the DNC during our first season, the former civil rights lawyer returned several times to talk about his senate and presidential campaigns, his book, *The Audacity of Hope*, and his thoughts on the gridlock of the Democratic Party of the '90s. On January 20, 2009, he became the 44th President of the U.S. and was re-elected in November 2012.

TRANSCRIPT

Tavis: In the spring of 2004, Barack Obama was a little-known state senator from Illinois who had a big political dream – to become a U.S. senator from his home state, which would make him only the third African American in the U.S. Senate since Reconstruction.

I spoke to then-state Senator Obama just after his primary victory in Illinois at a time when most people knew him as a skinny kid with a funny name from the south side of Chicago.

[Begin previously recorded interview clip]

Tavis: The phrase that you have become accustomed to using, “the skinny kid with the funny name from the south side of Chicago,” tell me beyond your race, beyond that issue, how you got beyond getting people to vote for a guy whose name a few months ago they couldn’t even pronounce?

Then-State Senator Barack Obama: They still screw it up sometimes. (Laughter) They call me Alabama, they call me Yo Mama. There are all kinds of versions of it.

Tavis: Yeah.

Obama: But one thing that I confirmed in this race is that the American people, at their core, are a decent people. They get confused sometimes, they’re busy, they’re stressed, they’re tired. Sometimes they’re watching “Fox News.” You know that’s going to get them confused.

Tavis: Yeah.

Obama: But ultimately, when you talk to them about issues and you talk to them about the things that we have in common, our belief that every child should have a decent shot at life, the belief that the vulnerable among us should be cared for and the government has a role in that, people respond.

One of the things that I started off this campaign believing was that if people knew who I was, if they knew that I had helped reform the death penalty, if they knew that I had provided health insurance for children who didn’t have it, if they knew that I’d helped set up an earned income tax credit that gave tax breaks not to the wealthy but to people who really needed it, those kinds of messages are ones that would appeal across race, region, and class.

[End previously recorded interview clip]

Tavis: Most people with political ambitions can spend years trying to gain name recognition and a seat at the table of national politics. But then-state Senator Obama was clearly not just another political figure, and just four

months to the day after his first appearance with us in 2004, he had just delivered what many described as one of the most electrifying keynote speeches in American history at the Democratic National Convention that year in Boston.

[Begin previously recorded interview clip]

Tavis: It's been fascinating for me to see somebody who I've known for years come into the national consciousness. Jesse Jr. and I were talking the other day, Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr. Kwame Kilpatrick was on this show this week, we were talking, and for us it was just fascinating to sit here in this hall and to watch you come into the consciousness of everybody across the country. But you seem to be handling it well.

Obama: The nice thing, aside from having a wife who's got a great sense of humor and doesn't take this stuff too seriously, just to remind you who you are. Really what I tried to do in that speech was just give voice to what I'm hearing from voters on the south side of Chicago and down state Illinois.

It was really their eloquence that was communicated, and so it's not that hard for me to keep it in perspective. This is really just an expression of I think a lot of the hopes and dreams of people all across the country who know we can do a little bit better, and I hope recognize that John Kerry and John Edwards are going to be the team that can help us do better.

Tavis: How did you decide what to put in, what to leave out of your speech? I've been in a number of conversations all this week, certainly since your speech, with people trying to analyze what you did say, what you didn't say. As always, speeches get parsed.

Obama: Absolutely, right.

Tavis: I really felt for you, because it's unfortunate in many respects that if, in fact, you win, you'll be the only African American in the U.S. Senate. You've got to be all things to all people.

Obama: Absolutely.

Tavis: How do you do a speech where you have to remain authentically Black -?

Obama: Right.

Tavis: – for those Black folk in Chicago on the south side you represent who know you, but at the same time to everybody else now you're the face of the party.

Obama: Right.

Tavis: I heard Pat Buchanan say that you were great, that it was the best speech he's heard in a long time.

Obama: Well, I think that I try to remind people that I'm rooted in the African American community, but I'm not limited by it. I think that basic philosophy applies to the speech and it applies to my politics.

When I try to pass a bill that is boosting the wages of low-wage workers, that helps everybody. But disproportionately, Black folks are low-wage. If I'm working on people who are uninsured or underinsured, well, that helps everybody, but Black folks are specifically underinsured.

So my approach is generally to say the African American experience is not unique to America, and that we are all aspiring for the same common dreams and common hopes, so that if I help everybody, I can help the African American community in particular.

Now, there's some issues like affirmative action or discrimination in which those are specific to minority communities, and I'm going to stand foursquare behind dealing with those issues. But see, I have optimism that white America wants to see justice done as well, and I don't think those things are contradictory.

[End previously recorded interview clip]

Tavis: After his historic Senate victory now, U.S. Senator Obama was making a name for himself in states all across the country and while even some of his closest friends and advisers counseled him not to seek the highest

office in the land so soon after joining the Senate, Barack Obama sensed that the time might be right for a White House run.

When president candidate Barack Obama joined us here in the fall of 2007, he was running behind a better-financed and better-known frontrunner named Hillary Clinton. But as he joined us on that October night, he displayed a quiet confidence that would ultimately carry him all the way to the White House.

[Begin previously recorded interview clip]

Tavis: In the Senate he sits on the powerful Foreign Relations Committee, and in that capacity has been a key voice in the debate over Iraq. His most recent “New York Times” best seller is “The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream,” the book out in paperback November the 6th, as if there’s anybody in America who does not have it in hardback already. I was just reading – you sold over a million copies of that book.

Then-U.S. Sen. Obama: We did all right.

Tavis: Isn’t that amazing?

Obama: Almost as many books as you sell, Tavis.

Tavis: Get out of here, get out of here. Good to see you, man.

Obama: You doing all right?

Tavis: Yeah, I’m hanging in. You all right?

Obama: Good. I’m doing fine.

Tavis: Seriously, that’s an amazing thing, to have your personal story sell, and your viewpoints sell a million copies plus in hard -

Obama: It’s a great honor. The first book that I wrote, “Dreams from My Father -”

Tavis: “Dreams,” sure.

Obama: – ended up selling a million copies in paperback, and that was out of print for 10 years, just about. So it’s been a real blessing, and you’re right – what it does is it gives people a chance to get to know me in a way that usually you don’t get to know presidential candidates. In fact, up in New Hampshire they’ve organized these book clubs where supporters will invite people, not for money, but just to read the book, because their feeling is the more that they get to know where I’m coming from, the better off we’ll do.

Tavis: What’s your sense – and this requires setting your humility aside for just a second – what’s your sense, though, why yours connected in that way, and I raise that, Barack – Senator Obama – because there are so many people on the campaign trail who when they decide to run put a book out, of course. But yours is just blowing away everybody else’s.

Obama: I think part of it was the first book was written well before I ever thought about politics, and so it was personal. I think it was candid enough where people said, “Oh, he obviously wasn’t thinking about running for office when he wrote that.” (Laughter)

So I think that there was an element of trust where people felt that hopefully I’m not just going to give the canned responses. That ended up carrying over to the second book as well.

Tavis: Yeah. In either of those first two books, though, who knew – you and Dick Cheney, cousins?

Obama: Listen, (laughter) I don’t think I’m going to the family reunion. I don’t know how I’ll be greeted. But no, these folks have been doing all these genealogies on me, and they’ve found all sorts of strange connections.

Tavis: This has got to be the strangest, though.

Obama: Well, listen, if you go back far enough, you've got all kinds of crooks and thieves in your family. (Laughter) I'm not necessarily drawing that analogy, I'm just saying you don't know who's back there.

Tavis: I'm just reading this stuff every day. You, of course, are the guy, you're the candidate. How much truth to the stories that we're reading that you are having to do some damage control where your supporters are concerned, who are fretting, your wonderful answer notwithstanding, fretting that if these numbers in the polls don't start to move, the campaign's in trouble.

Obama: No. Listen, campaigns always go through ups and downs, and what I've always said to my folks is if you were looking for the safe choice, you shouldn't be supporting a 46-year-old Black guy named Barack Obama (laughter) to be the next leader of the free world.

That's not where the smart money went, especially when you're running against the dominant political force in the Democratic Party over the last 20 years. People have gotten involved in our campaign because they believe that politics as usual, business as usual, is not adequate.

It's not that they dislike some of the other candidates. They just think that if – let's take the example of healthcare. If we can't break the gridlock between Democrats and Republicans, but if we also can't overcome the insurance company or the drug company lobbyists that have a lock on the debate in Washington, we're not going to get anything passed.

It doesn't matter whether John Edwards' or my plan or Hillary's plan is better. That, I think people understand. The second thing my supporters understand, the day I'm inaugurated this country looks at itself differently, and the world looks at America differently. If you believe that we've got to heal America and we've got to repair our standing in the world, then I think my supporters believe that I am a messenger who can deliver that message around the world in a way that no other candidate can do.

Tavis: They would look at the U.S. differently for what reason or reasons?

Obama: Well, I think if you've got a guy named Barack Hussein Obama, that's a pretty good contrast to George W. Bush to start with. Somebody who's lived in a foreign country, somebody who knows what it's like to see family members in dire poverty.

Somebody who has a grandmother who lives in a village in Africa without running water and without heat, and without indoor plumbing. A village that's been devastated by HIV/AIDS.

When I go to Africa I'm not speaking as based on what I've read or what I hear in a hearing or what I've seen visiting the ambassador's residence in Nairobi. I'm speaking from experience, in the same way that when I talk about issues facing the inner city here in the United States, I'm not looking at it from a distance.

I'm speaking from somebody who's worked in public housing projects and dealt with trying to find ex-felons a better life for themselves. So that experience, I think, gives me more credibility to talk about these issues.

Tavis: Going back to Hillary Clinton for just a second, since we raised her earlier, one could argue that these national polls notwithstanding, people really don't like Hillary Clinton.

Obama: Mm-hmm.

Tavis: You say that people like the Clintons, they like Bill, they like Hillary. One could argue, if you dig deep in these numbers, one could argue at least that they really don't like Hillary in that these numbers seem to suggest in many of these polls that she is not the most electable Democrat in a face-off with two or three people on the other side of the aisle.

Obama: Exactly, right.

Tavis: In part because her negatives are so high.

Obama: Are very high.

Tavis: All right. So what do you make of that?

Obama: See, I think the question is can we get beyond the gridlock that we experienced during the '90s. Who's in the best position to point forward? Part of the reason – when I sat down with Michelle and I said, “Should we do this race?” we asked three questions. One, could our family survive it? Since Michelle's exceptional and my children are above average, we figured they'd be okay.

The second question was could I win. We looked at it and we said we can win, because I'm not interested in running a symbolic race. That's been done. The third question was is there something I can do that no other Democratic candidate can do?

What I believe is that the country is ready to get beyond the old arguments that we've been having since the '60s about Vietnam and the sexual revolution and the role of faith in society.

All these things that we've been arguing about, and the American people have moved beyond that. That's part of the reason why you see consistently in polls that among Independents and among Republicans we do very well.

When we get these big crowds, I'm always shaking hands afterward, and I always have folks saying, (whispers) “I'm a Republican, Barack, but I support you.” And I lean over, I say, “Thank you. Why are we whispering?” (Laughter)

But they almost surprise themselves. I think it has to do less with the positions I'm taking than the tone I'm taking, which is I'm going to listen to everybody and I want to break down this red state-blue state divide. That's part of the reason why the convention speech I did in 2004 went so well, it's because it's not that my positions were different, but the language and the tone was one of let's unify the country.

Tavis: Your dear friend, my dear friend and your supporter, Dr. Cornel West, and I were in a conversation the other day and we were going back and forth, as we tend to do about these issues. The point was made that if you had the support, speaking of symbolism, if you had the support that Jesse Jackson had in Black America in '84 or '88, this race would be over.

Obama: Well, and -

Tavis: Of course, I shot back if you had that number in Black America, you might not have \$75 million, either. What do you make of the fact that if you had Jesse's support in Black America in this primary, it'd be over? You'd be the champion right now.

Obama: Well, what is absolutely true is this – that Black folks certainly have fondness for the Clintons. Black women in particular have fondness for the Clintons, and if right now nationally the poll numbers showed us getting that kind of 80, 90 percent African American support, then -

Tavis: It'd be over with.

Obama: Well basically, that gap between me and Hillary would be entirely closed.

Tavis: Precisely.

Obama: Look, what's going on, I think, in the African American community is the same thing I saw in the U.S. Senate race. Up until a month before the race I was getting 25 percent of the Black vote. The reason is because Black folks didn't know me, and they're looking, “Barack Obama? We don't know. Where's he from and what's he about?”

We went up on TV and by the end of it, we got 80, 85 percent. Now my support in Illinois is 90 percent among African Americans – the same thing you're starting to see happen in this race in those states where I'm active. So in South Carolina, I started off at 10 percent.

Now we lead among African Americans, and that's before we've run any television. But the interesting thing among Black voters is what we hear again and again. Number one is folks are somewhat concerned about my safety, and I've got to remind them that I've got the best protection on Earth. We're going to be all right. Don't fear on that.

The second thing is they're not sure white folks will vote for me, and what I try to say is don't sell ourselves

short. Don't anticipate that this can't be done, because when we made progress at each juncture, it's been because we made a decision we're going to break through those barriers.

You can't tell me that I can't do something. People said I couldn't win that U.S. Senate race. We won it by record numbers. I got the most votes of any elected official in history in Illinois. We won the white vote, Black vote, Hispanic vote, Asian vote, rural vote, urban vote.

Don't tell me I can't do it. What I want us to do is to focus on the fact that this can be done, and then once people break through that threshold, then they can ask themselves okay, is this guy a guy who is going to care about me and work on behalf of my issues?

There, I can say look, look at my track record. As a community organizer, I didn't go to the fancy white shoe firm. I worked as a civil rights lawyer, I worked in public housing. I had fought on issues that are hard, like criminal justice issues, where there's a political cost to pay.

I will put my record against any of those candidates, and once they realize that record, then I think we're going to be in a strong position to win.

Tavis: You mentioned a moment ago your personal safety, and in addition to being a fine candidate, you must be a prophet as well, because I was literally in my car driving to the studio to have this conversation with you today, and you and I are both admirers, lovers – I certainly see myself, and I think you do; we've talked about it many times on camera – we see ourselves as part of the Kingian tradition in this country.

Obama: Right.

Tavis: I'm in my car on the way to the studio just an hour or so ago listening to some King stuff. I brought the CD in and I want to play a clip from it. This is King speaking at a church in your hometown in 1966, talking about his own fear for his own life.

As you know, he didn't talk about this very often in public, but here he is in a church on Chicago, dateline 1966, Barack Obama's hometown, the words of Dr. King. Take a listen. I want to ask you something about this.

[Begin audio clip]

“Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:” They started making nasty telephone calls and came to the point that some days more than 40 telephone calls would come in threatening my life, the life of my family, the life of my children.

I took it for a while in a strong manner, but I never will forget one night, very late. It was around midnight. You can have some strange experiences at midnight.”

[End audio clip]

Tavis: He goes on to talk about the fear for his own life, and this, of course, King speaking about Montgomery, Alabama, when he was leading the movement there.

I listened to that and thought about you on the way to the studio, wondering how it is that you process that, and so you led me into it when you suggested, as Michelle has, your wife suggested, that Black folks should not be afraid to vote for you because of what they think might happen to you.

Obama: Mm-hmm.

Tavis: We know that there's Secret Service all around this studio right now – other candidates don't have – that because of threats against your life. How are you dealing with that, seriously?

Obama: It is not something I think about. Part of when I listen to that tape is I think about the courage that that man went through, because he didn't have Secret Service protection, and law enforcement in the towns where he was working were against him.

Some of them were Klansmembers. So I can't even comprehend the degree of courage that was required, and yet look what he did each and every day. Getting up, speaking out, marching, leading. It just reminds me of that

tradition where the stuff we go through now, I get called names.

People call me up, they say, “Oh, I’m sorry about that bad newspaper article about you.” “Oh, that review on the debate, that was rough. I thought that was really unfair.”

I’m thinking, listen, (laughter) nobody’s throwing a brick through my window. I do think that the country has changed in a profound way, and when I’m traveling through Iowa, which doesn’t have a large African American population, and you see the responses of people and the crowds we’re attracting, you really get a sense that folks are ready to transcend some of these issues.

Now that’s not to say that the country’s going to be colorblind in this race. Obviously, that will be an issue both for Blacks and whites. One of the things my candidacy has surfaced is people have some confused views, both in the white community and the African American community, about this.

But what it does say is I think the vast majority of Americans right now, what they want to know is how are you going to help me hang on to my house now that the subprime lending crisis is in full force? What are you going to do to help me deal with my job now that the plant moved to China?

How can I save for my child’s college tuition and my own retirement at the same time? If I can answer those questions effectively in the last few months of this campaign, then we have an excellent chance of getting this nomination.

Tavis: Speaking of the issues, one of the strategies that it’s clear that the Obama campaign is employing now is to remind people of your opposition to the Iraq war before the vote even went down to contrast that with one Hillary Clinton and others who voted to support the war and give President Bush what he asked for.

The question is whether or not you think that strategy works, and I ask that against the backdrop of whether or not looking back and reminding them of what was is a good strategy versus where the American people are now with trying to figure out who has the best solution – pardon the pun – regarding a way forward.

Obama: Right. Well, two points I’d made on it. Number one, you’d be surprised the number of people who – again, this goes back to knowing me – don’t realize that I opposed the war at the beginning. So part of politics is redundancy.

You’ve just got to repeat stuff sometimes, even when you get tired of saying it. (Laughter) You’ve got to keep on repeating it because you assume everybody knows, and it turns out they don’t.

But the second thing is I don’t talk about my opposition to the war, which has been consistent since 2002, just to say I told you so. It points to how I exercise judgment around foreign policy, and that is relevant to looking forward, because what got us into Iraq was a conventional brand of thinking about our foreign policy that not just Republicans but Democrats brought into it, and Hillary, to some degree, still buys into.

So when we have a debate and I say we need to meet with all leaders, I’m not afraid of losing a propaganda battle because I’m meeting with Hugo Chavez. But for America not to meet with these leaders sends a signal that we’re arrogant and that we’re going to do things on our own, and that will not repair the damage that’s been done to our foreign policy as a consequence of George Bush, and that will make it more difficult for us to mobilize the international support, whether to get Iran to stand down on nuclear weapon or to deal with the situation in Darfur.

So what I’m saying is if you look at that opposition to the war, I didn’t just stumble into it. I laid out precisely what I thought would happen, and I want voters to understand we’re going to have another set of difficult decisions on Iran or North Korea or anything out there that we don’t know yet.

They need to ask themselves shouldn’t it be relevant who got the most important foreign policy issue of our generation right and who got it wrong, and how that will bear on their decision making as president. [End previously recorded interview clip]

Tavis: One week from today President Obama will be sworn in at his second inauguration in Washington, only the fourth Democrat to win a second term for the White House in well over 100 years. The next four years will

determine the legacy that President Obama will leave behind, but regardless of how history will ultimately judge his time in office, as we have seen tonight, his meteoric rise in American politics has been one of the most unlikely and transformative journeys in American history.

That's our show for tonight. Tomorrow night we'll switch gears from politics to Prince and a few memorable nights on this set with the music icon over these 10 seasons. Until then, good night from Los Angeles, thanks for watching, and as always, keep the faith.

“Announcer:” For more information on today's show, visit Tavis Smiley at PBS.org.

“Wade Hunt:” There's a saying that Dr. King had, and he said, “There's always a right time to do the right thing.” I just try to live my life every day by doing the right thing. We know that we're only about halfway to completely eliminate hunger, and we have a lot of work to do. And Walmart committed \$2 billion to fighting hunger in the U.S. As we work together, we can stamp hunger out.

“Announcer:” And by contributions to your PBS station from viewers like you. Thank you.



ASHTAR: BULLETIN FROM THE BRIDGE - 1-18-13

"Greetings, Beloved Family! We come to you with messages of the utmost importance, for it is that you and your World are on the brink of another great shift. It is to empower this potential to the maximum degree possible that we invite you to join with us, and we shall indeed give you the explanation herein.

"First, however, we shall address two other topics of great importance. You are aware of the many different stories circulating on the internet, and we wish to remind you that among them are varying degrees of Truth - everything from complete Truth to complete lies. It is up to each and every one of you to discern what is truthful for you, but be mindful of what you call the 'wolf in the clothing of the sheep.' There are some who are skilled at deliberately presenting false information appearing real (F.E.A.R.), and there are others who unknowingly do so. This is why I have chosen the excerpt which accompanies this message, so as to remind you of that which we are preparing to be accomplished in the nearest possible moment!

"The advice which accompanies this is to be in the Highest State of Love, and to let all of your discernments emanate from that place. It is far more productive, in this 4D Golden Age, to envision and focus upon what you call the positive creations, rather than continuing to be caught up in the 'don't want' negative ones. So, for example, look for news of peaceful expressions and events and rejoice at those, rather than dwelling on the horrors of violence and war! This is how you create Peace on Earth, which is your Divine Heritage!

"You have the awareness that the new energies are accelerating, not only time itself, but also the time which it takes to manifest everything!!! Thus it is that we, Beloved Family, have 'Golden Opportunities' as never before to bring forth all of the loving and joyful potentials that this Golden Age is here to give to us! We shall be in further discussion of this when we gather on 1-22, and I invite all of you to join us on this free teleconference call!* With us shall be a special guest speaker, who is St Germain!!! He now has a most special message and invitation to you all:

"Beloved Family, I come here to stand with my Brother, and with all of you, who are in Truth my Brothers and Sisters in shining the Light of Freedom for the World!!! And it is that we are at a most exciting moment to further all that you have been waiting for in this - specifically the official announcement of NESARA and all of the great Abundance it brings to everyone on Earth!

"Yet, there is still preparation to do, but we have an opportunity to accelerate this in an exponential way! We have told you many times that President Obama is of the Light. Yes, we do know that he has sometimes seemed not to be so, but this is only because we have advised him to play the game, as it were, so as to *seem* to be furthering the agenda of the dark hats. The reality of this wisdom is now coming forth, as these ones are being exposed and arrested.

"Obama's inauguration is on Monday, 1-21. We urge you to watch it if at all possible, and to invite

everyone you know to do the same. It is to feel the energy of his Love, and to radiate Love back to him, which is the primary mission, so that he will beam forth the Highest levels and amounts of this energy!!! It will also serve as a message to the dark's hats - a message which is an invitation to join us in the Light, or to 'stand down,' because the Light has prevailed!!!

"I assure you that I am with Obama constantly as he prepares for this event. You will hear from me, even as he speaks, for he graciously and gratefully accepts the inspirations I give to him! Some of you may even see me standing with him - as to whether a few or all will do so 'remains to be seen.' I am open to *all* possibilities! Nevertheless, I will be there, as will all of us who come from the Higher Dimensions! Yes, Ashtar and his ships will be there in huge numbers as well, in order to provide the necessary security, as well as lending their loving support.

"I encourage you to attend this magnificent event as it occurs,** or to watch the film of it later, and to send your loving and supportive energies to Obama and to all of the White Knights who have made this great day possible. For, this is truly the official inauguration of the Golden Age of Love, Freedom, Abundance and Peace on Earth!!! Namaste!"

Given through Susan Leland, January 18, 2013. © Ashtar On The Road Publications 2004-2013. All Rights Reserved.

* "Ashtar Teleconferences," www.ashtarontheroad.com .

**The live public swearing in ceremony will begin at approximately 11:30am, Eastern Standard Time, on January 21, 2013. News coverage of the events of the day will begin earlier.