

Demetri Kofinas: 00:00 Today's episode of Hidden Forces is made possible by listeners like you. For more information about this week's episode or for easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io and subscribe to our free email list. If you listen to the show on your Apple podcast app, remember, you can give us a review. Each review helps more people find the show and join our amazing community. And with that, please enjoy this week's episode.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:48 What's up everybody? My guest today is Andrew Marantz. Andrew is a staff writer for The New Yorker. He's written extensively for the magazine about technology, social media, and the alt-right, topics he explores at length in his newly released book titled, "Antisocial: Online Extremists, Techno-Utopians and the Hijacking of the American Conversation."

Demetri Kofinas: 01:14 For several years Andrew was embedded in what were effectively two symbiotic worlds. The first was what he calls "the gatekeepers" of Silicon Valley, who we commonly think of as the Facebooks and the Googles of the world, and their executives and employees, and the other was what he calls "the gate crashers," and these are people like Milo Yiannopoulos, a celebrity troll and lightning rod for woke outrage, or Gavin McInnes, an internet shock jock, who happens to also be a cofounder of Vice Media.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:51 These are people who, many of us, may not know, but who Andrew contends exercise as much power over shaping the national conversation and driving the new cycle as some of the most deft propagandists operating in mainstream media today. This book is not easy to categorize. It's not a book about social media algorithms, it's not, in other words, like Zuboff's Surveillance Capitalism, but it does cover this. Certainly, with the chapters on techno-utopians. It's also not a book about politics, though, again, politics is central to the story. I think it's really not about anything. There's no argument being put forward. It's more like a series of reports from the frontlines of the online culture wars told through the stories of all these different characters that Andrew embeds with for what must have been three very torturous years of his life.

Demetri Kofinas: 02:51 And we talk about this. We talk about what it was like for a Jewish reporter from a liberal magazine to spend time with what were, in some cases, legitimate anti-Semites and neo-Nazis, and in other cases, just generally not particularly likable people. So, this was challenging for me as well, because it's hard to get away from the viscerally unpleasant experience of reading about some of these people, and that's a way of saying,

"Hang in there," because we do muddle through some of these anecdotes during the middle of the episode before we get into what I feel is the best part of this conversation, which is a discussion about race relations, gender norms, the masculine appeal of guys like Joe Rogan, to people like me, and what that says about what might be missing in popular culture that attracts both men and women to alternative media, and in some cases, to subversive elements of media.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 03:51 And that conversation goes well into the overtime, where I also share some personal anecdotes. I know some of the people featured in Andrew's book, personally. In some cases, extremely well, and I probably watched hundreds of hours of videos put up by Alex Jones, David Icke, and all of these different characters that will pop up on your YouTube feed, because, like many Americans, I lost faith in our government. Not only after watching CNN and MSNBC and Fox sell an unpopular war on false intelligence, but also watching how both the Bush and Obama administrations handled the bailout of Wall Street, which was how I got totally red pillled and went down all of these various rabbit holes. So I think it's important not to discount the legitimacy of the paranoia that drives people to consider all sorts of radical theories to fill the gap left by these institutions and their narratives that have lost so much credibility with the electorate over the years.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 04:57 So, I hope you all enjoy this conversation as much as I did, and without further ado, here's my conversation with Andrew Marantz.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 05:11 Andrew Marantz, welcome to Hidden Forces.
- Andrew Marantz:** 05:14 Thanks. Thanks for having me.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 05:15 It's great having you on, man.
- Andrew Marantz:** 05:16 Yeah, yeah. I'm happy to get into it. I mean, it's funny, you know-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 05:19 So, are you in therapy right now? Are you... I'm working with a post-traumatic stress physician.
- Andrew Marantz:** 05:26 You know, my wife is very... She's unaccredited, but she's very patient.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 05:30 She's unaccredited.

Andrew Marantz: 05:31 Yes, she is a lawyer, so she's... but we have a lot of blue pilling sessions in my house.

Demetri Kofinas: 05:35 You know, that's another cool thing about your book, all the different idioms that arise from the internet, whether it's being red pillled or whatever. We'll get into those. So, I told you, I read the book. It's quite a book.

Andrew Marantz: 05:49 How are you sleeping now?

Demetri Kofinas: 05:50 You know, we'll get into the experience of reading it, but before we do, maybe you can give us some context. How did you decide... I believe you actually did a great interview on the Longform podcast with someone who is your cousin by marriage, or something, right?

Andrew Marantz: 06:04 Yeah. Yeah.

Demetri Kofinas: 06:04 And he said the subtitle could have been How Nice Jewish Boy From Brooklyn Got Caught Up With Hanging Out...

Andrew Marantz: 06:11 The worst people on the internet.

Demetri Kofinas: 06:12 With white supremacists and Nazis. So, how did this happen?

Andrew Marantz: 06:16 It's a good question. I mean, basically, I wasn't one of those people who went in being like, "Who are the craziest, scariest, darkest people on the internet?" Because I feel like there's almost a danger of turning them into antiheroes in that way, like you're looking for Breaking Bad or something. I didn't want to do that, I didn't want to romanticize it, and I didn't want to overestimate their importance. A lot of these people, people who are propagandists and trolls, they'll often try to inflate their importance because they want to seem big and bad and cool, and sometimes they're actually not that influential.

Andrew Marantz: 06:48 Really my way in was like 2014, 2015. I was just very curious and concerned about what the internet was doing to us, to our brains individually, but also as a society and as a polity, politically. And so I, basically, had a couple of moments of this kind of dizzying feeling where I was like, "Okay, we have this notion that there will be these traditional structures of media. That people will know what they know because of getting it through official channels." That was never entirely true, but it had just become so much less true than it had always been. There used to be Walter Cronkite, there used to be a kind of gatekeeper apparatus. That was extremely imperfect and had

lots of flaws and I try not to be too nostalgic for some golden age that never existed.

- Andrew Marantz:** 07:34 But when I really looked at what social media was doing in terms of chopping up and rearranging our national psyche, I went, "We might be screwed here." Because there's no common arbiter of fact any more, there's no common arbiter of decency any more, and so, because I'm a Longform immersive reporter, because I don't like to just do arguments and polemics. Arguments and polemics are fine. I read them. I like them. But I didn't want to spend 400 pages going, "This is why social media is bad and scary." I wanted to get in there and see it for myself and do some observational reporting, because I feel like opinions only get you so far, and seeing it for yourself, watching how these people operate, how they interact with each other, how they look when their mask starts to slip off, that's the only way we're going to actually move forward and redescribe the world to ourselves as it really is, and not as we want it to be.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 08:23 I have a bunch of quotes in my rundown of yours that I liked, as well as quotes of some of the more dislikable characters like Milo Yiannopoulos or Mike Cernovich, but there's a quote of yours that either was from the book or was from the press kit where you said, "Something was happening and I was trying to figure out what it was."
- Andrew Marantz:** 08:45 Yeah. Yeah.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 08:46 And, so, I mean, that's kind of like all of us, right? Because I think this is a shared experience, irrespective of where you're coming from. Most people are just trying to figure out, "What's happening?" And I don't even mean it politically or... I mean it culturally. What's happening culturally? How is this all changing? When you went into the book, when you went into the research for the book, you said you tried not to be biased but you were unapologetically biased in a way, which you actually talked about in the book. But you mentioned, you didn't want to go and looking for this kind of antihero, but what was the thesis that you went into the book with?
- Andrew Marantz:** 09:21 Well, I think you are totally right to say, first of all, that culture and politics can be fused into this one thing and I think it's sometimes dangerous for us when we see politics is over here, culture is over here, business is over here, media is over here. One of the thesis' concepts that I went into the book reporting with was that those distinctions no longer applied, and that actually all these things were really blurring. And in fact, if those

things were blurring, then the political outcomes that people were predicting might not make much sense, right? Because you remember, in most of 2015, and for that matter most of 2016, everybody was saying, "Well, Donald Trump is this cultural figure, but he's not a political figure. We can't take him seriously in that arena. He's a reality star. He's on The Apprentice, and stuff."

Andrew Marantz: 10:07

Which to me was like, "Okay, again, there's nothing in the Constitution that says that people are going to vote for who they see getting endorsed in their local newspaper."

Demetri Kofinas: 10:15

Quite the opposite. An endorsement could be toxic.

Andrew Marantz: 10:17

Exactly. And also, they might just not see it, right? So much of it has to do with, what are they actually seeing and paying attention to? Where is our attentional energy being drawn to? And that, this is one of the great insights of Andrew Breitbart, who was a despicable guy in lots of ways but who was a media savant, who saw way ahead of time... He died in 2012, but he prefigured a lot of the people in my book, and his great insight was, "Politics is downstream from culture." And of course, the stream goes in both directions, but to see it in that direction was a real insight at the time.

Andrew Marantz: 10:48

And so he knew that even though Donald Trump wasn't a Conservative and didn't know anything about politics, of course he could be president because he's a celebrity and he understands how the attentional ecosystem works. Now, if you put that... That's true enough in the age of mass TV and mass media and top-down gatekeeping. Once you get to the fractured media landscape that social media creates by chopping everything up and turning it into algorithms, it's even more the case that someone like Trump could take over the political system, and that was... I didn't want to go in with preconceived notions. I had my own moral compass and I had my own fidelity to truth, but I didn't want to go in with factual presumptions like, "Oh, well, I'm from The New Yorker and what The New Yorker does is really heavily fact-checked and heavily reported. There must be a place for it to succeed on the internet."

Andrew Marantz: 11:34

Well, you can look at the numbers and see whether it's succeeding or not, and actually a lot of times the garbage bottom-of-the-barrel, racist, mean-o-sphere was out competing with The New Yorker, when I looked at it, so that was not a pleasant thing for me to realize because I don't like that fact and I'm biased in favor of my thing because I think it's better than

the garbage on the internet, but I didn't want to be biased in the sense of not seeing the facts for what they were.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 12:00 So, sticking to this point about bias, there's a point in the book where you're on the phone with Mike Enoch, and that's a pen-name he adopted at some point, and Mike is sort of the quintessential neo... Well, I guess, Richard Spencer-
- Andrew Marantz:** 12:15 Enoch is like the house philosopher of the online Nazi movement. He kind of puts the words in Richard Spencer's mouth in a lot of cases.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 12:22 Fascinating. Well, he is the guy that grew up in the suburbs, in New Jersey.
- Andrew Marantz:** 12:26 Oh, yeah.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 12:26 His parents are both progressive. They're both horrified by his transformation, but there's a scene where you're talking to him on the phone where he realizes that you're Jewish. In fact, you're eating a bagel and lox, and you thought, he asked you what you're eating for... and you said, you held back because you assumed he knew you were Jewish.
- Andrew Marantz:** 12:43 I assumed he knew, and I honestly, also-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 12:46 Based on-
- Andrew Marantz:** 12:46 ... based on just-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 12:46 The obvious fact that you're-
- Andrew Marantz:** 12:48 ... I have a Jewish name, I have a Jewish face, I have written for Jewish publications. Like, come on, man, I was like, "If your job is to be a professional anti-Semite and you're constantly bragging about your "Jew-dar", as he called it, come on, I'm not that hard to spot."
- Demetri Kofinas:** 13:00 So, that's what I wanted to say. So I want to commend you on the way in which you navigated this in the book, because you are a Jewish reporter working for a liberal magazine, talking to, in some cases, white supremacists and Nazis, and in other cases just people that you find generally dislikable, and that comes across. And I think you do a good job of owning that, and you often do it stylistically by breaking the third wall and speaking directly to the reader and having these honest moments where you're basically saying, "Hey, this is what I'm thinking, and this is

what I'm feeling right now because this is also a new experience for me."

Andrew Marantz: 13:45 Totally. Yeah. It was a really tough line for me to walk, as you say, because on the one hand, I don't want to just be arbitrary in my preconceptions. I don't just want to say, "Oh, I don't like you because of your shoes you're wearing," or whatever. That would be bad reporting. On the other hand, when people consistently lie or say misogynist things or say racist things or just show some kind of nihilistic glee at desecrating all the norms of the country that you live in, you can't just look at that all with a blank stare and go, "I have no opinion about that. I am a neutral, unbiased reporter, and so, therefore, somebody who thinks that women shouldn't be allowed in the workplace is of no meaning to me."

Andrew Marantz: 14:29 Like, of course, that has meaning to me, and I hate it. So I think people get caught up a lot of times on this notion of reporting that's unbiased as if reporters aren't allowed to have brains and eyes. But, yeah, at the same time, I didn't want to say, "Oh, because I'm some latte-sipping, oat milk-drinking soy boy from Brooklyn, therefore the world has to be funneled through my vision and if you step outside of my vision I'm going to slam you."

Andrew Marantz: 14:54 But I feel like, we get so caught up in these things, especially now, and I mean, again, this is another thing that Trump has done to us as a society. Suddenly the media is getting slammed by half the country for being against the president when, yes, of course, sometimes that's true, but a lot of times they're just pointing out his obvious lies or his obvious corruption, and that's somehow seen as biased. So, we've got to get out of this thing where, if you refer to unpleasant facts, that's seen as bias.

Demetri Kofinas: 15:21 That's an interesting thing you said, what Trump has done to our country. Is that what you said? That's an interesting way to put it. I wonder if that is accurate, and I think one of the things that came across in reading your book, and also in reading other journalists, is that there seems to be a perception among a certain class of academics, coastal "elite" people that go to... You went to Brown University, for example, you're highly educated.

Andrew Marantz: 15:46 It's no Wharton, but, yeah.

Demetri Kofinas: 15:47 It's not Wharton. It's, actually, in some ways, a much better university. But you have to be very self-motivated and sure-

footed. I also watched your commencement speech, is that what it's called?

Andrew Marantz: 16:00

Yeah. Yeah. That's funny.

Demetri Kofinas: 16:00

It was very, very good.

Andrew Marantz: 16:00

Thanks. That was a while ago.

Demetri Kofinas: 16:00

I'm sure your teachers were proud of you. There seems to me to be a desire somehow to simplify the problem and say, "It's Trump, or it racism, or it's all these things, and we just need to fix these things and then our country will move on and everything will be all right." That doesn't seem to be the case in my view. I think, Trump, to me, just seems to be an expression, the apotheosis of something deeper.

Andrew Marantz: 16:26

Yeah. I definitely agree with that and I-

Demetri Kofinas: 16:28

But I would also say that these guys, these characters in the book, like Mike Cernovich and some of these other figures like Gavin McInnes or Alex Jones, I think they're way more on the fringe, but they channel or speak to some of the concerns or sources of frustration or disconnect that many people on the country find relatable. Does that make sense? What do you think about that, what I just said?

Andrew Marantz: 16:50

I have a lot of things I think about what you just said. I mean, first of all, if we could fix racism and fix Trump, I think it would do a lot for our country. I think there's, like you said, people imagine that if we just fix racism we'd be able to move on as a country. I think it would be great if we could racism and it would help us to move on, but I don't-

Demetri Kofinas: 17:07

But I was suggesting that racism or latent racism or white supremacy or these pockets of this type of whatever you want to call it, is part of a problem but it's not the only issue or it isn't what's driving it is my-

Andrew Marantz: 17:19

Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. I'm extremely clear in the book that it's not the only issue. I go to great lengths to say that racism is part of an interlocked, intersectional, if you will, stack of multiple problems. I also go to great lengths in the book to exactly refute the thing you just said about how, once we get rid of one or two problems, our country will be on some automatic shining path to an inevitable future. That's in fact the antithesis of what I wanted to get across in the book.

Andrew Marantz: 17:42 I think the whole point of the book is that the antithesis of some faith that we're on some automatic tracks to some inevitable future is a concept that I call contingency, which is really the whole point of the book.

Demetri Kofinas: 17:54 Hm. All right, so let's... We're going to circle through and around all sorts of stuff. There's so many things that I've written down here. This is one of the most difficult rundowns to put together because, you really could have written one book on just the Deplorables, and even the Deplorables doesn't capture all of them. The Deplorables are like the stunt doubles you see in Spaceballs.

Demetri Kofinas: 18:14 You know when Lone Starr and his cadres are running through the Starship Spaceball One getting chased and then they end up in this room and it's their stunt doubles. Like, "You idiots, these are not them. You've captured their stunt doubles." And so I feel like the Deplorables are the stunt doubles.

Andrew Marantz: 18:29 For who?

Demetri Kofinas: 18:30 For... whatever the movie. It's like, if you film the movie, and you've got the stunt doubles. They're not-

Andrew Marantz: 18:36 Because they're pathetic.

Demetri Kofinas: 18:36 ... but they're also below the bar.

Andrew Marantz: 18:38 Yeah.

Demetri Kofinas: 18:39 They're beneath the JV squad.

Andrew Marantz: 18:40 Yeah, yeah, yeah. Totally. Totally. Well, but what's so shocking is that, even though they are the JV squad, or below the JV squad, and they're kind of bumbling and pathetic in many ways, they are way more influential than we like to think. I mean, I think, part of what was embedded in your last question is, "Well, how much do we really need to be talking about these people because they're obviously so beneath our contempt?"

Demetri Kofinas: 18:59 Yeah, that was an implication of my questions.

Andrew Marantz: 18:59 Yeah. And to me, it's like, "Well, yeah, I felt that way in the beginning, of like, well, I don't want to spend too much time around these people. They make my skin crawl." But first of all, they're actually sometimes way funnier and weirder than you think, and not funny in always an intentional way, and second of

all, they're way, way, way more influential than we like to think. I mean, you could say the same thing about, I don't know...

- Demetri Kofinas:** 19:21 It's hard to believe. I believe you on one level, right, because I don't think you're lying, right?
- Andrew Marantz:** 19:25 Yeah. Right. Right.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 19:26 Like when you talk about, again, Cernovich, and you're actually in his home, which, I... You know, it's such a weird book to read because it's visceral. Like it's viscerally disgusting when you talk about them. By the way, you also talk about the techno-utopians. I think you're much, probably more, forgiving of them than I would have been.
- Andrew Marantz:** 19:44 Oh. Interesting.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 19:44 Yeah. But I find, they-
- Andrew Marantz:** 19:46 I was super hard on them.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 19:47 Yeah. That's interesting. I think depictions of the Deplorables are way worse. That might be because they're worse or worse in your view, but interestingly, to stay on this point of visceral experience, the techno-utopians, like when you're with Emerson Spartz in his office, or when he's talking about remaking the future and all that stuff, it made me want to vomit. But that wasn't as bad as with the Deplorables, because there I felt like I was in some... like, the entrails of the internet and there was like crust and moldy piping and stuff all over me. By the time I got out, I just couldn't get it off me, which was just-
- Andrew Marantz:** 20:23 I love that. That should be a blurb for the book, because that's the thing about long-term fly-on-the-wall reporting. It's one thing to say, "I heard about these terrible people and I saw them Tweeting and they're really bad and they shouldn't be on Twitter," or whatever, but it doesn't give you that visceral sense, like, that was why I wanted to do it in this form.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 20:38 So gross. It's so gross. And the guys are grosser than the girls. And they feel oftentimes developmentally stunted. Their humor is very juvenile. Their humor, that you expressed in the book, is like, ka-ka poo-poo, penis humor.
- Andrew Marantz:** 20:52 Totally.

Demetri Kofinas: 20:52 And so, a lot of those guys, like the Deplorables, for example, there's a distinction between them and the Nazis. They don't seem to believe in anything. Like a Milo doesn't believe in anything. He was the editor of what at Breitbart, and he's gay and he doesn't have any particular beliefs.

Andrew Marantz: 21:04 Right.

Demetri Kofinas: 21:04 And his beliefs that he expresses seem to go counter to being gay.

Andrew Marantz: 21:08 And also to the beliefs he was expressing four years earlier, so, yeah. So, there is, I totally agree, there is this whole spectrum from pure nihilism opportunism to actual committed ideologues among the more white nationalist or anti-Semitic fringe. And again, with all these people, I mean, I totally... I wouldn't have just inflicted this on people if it was just 400 pages of gross-out, like, "Oh, my God, you won't believe the crazy, terrible things these people say." There's definitely an element of that, but I think of it as like, you know that book, it's like 20 years old now, *Among The Thugs?* It's about soccer hooligans. It's one of my favorite books.

Demetri Kofinas: 21:42 No.

Andrew Marantz: 21:43 You would love it. I think everyone would love it. It's a very specific time. It's this guy who embedded for a few years with soccer hooligans in England because, again, there was this question. I mean, it was pre-internet, it wasn't really political, directly, but it was just a similar question, like the quote you said earlier about something was happening and I wanted to know what was going on. I feel that any book like this where you're descending into a sub-culture like this, it could apply. And that was his... He saw a bunch of people come through a train station and just demolish the train station for no reason other than their football team had won.

Demetri Kofinas: 22:14 Yeah.

Andrew Marantz: 22:14 Or lost. Whatever. They're just like this group violence. And so, he spends time with them for two years to try to figure out why. On one level, I was just sort of doing that. Like, who are these people and why are they doing it? But as you were starting to say earlier, if it had just been that, it would have been one very specific kind of book, and it would have been like a tour through the circus of weirdos who live on the internet and who the internet has empowered.

- Andrew Marantz:** 22:39 But it was very important to me to do the other threads of the book about what the internet fundamentally is and how it's built at a mechanical level that makes this possible, because without that, I did feel like it was verging a little too close to antihero territory where it's like, "Oh, you know, Bonnie and Clyde, they really ought to stop robbing banks but look at them, they look dark and glamorous while they're doing it." I didn't want it to have that quality. I wanted it to have the quality of, the reason we're getting to know these people is, yes, to understand and try to figure out their weird psychological quirks and their histories and their gender relations and all that stuff, but also to try to see systemically, if we had a functional media informational ecosystem, these people would not be empowered in the way they are, and I really wanted to capture how empowered they are. And I know that creates a lot of cognitive dissonance because they shouldn't be.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 23:31 That's really interesting, the word power. This came up to me when I was thinking about this conversation. Before I express that thought, I do want to reiterate something I said earlier, but didn't, I don't think, emphasize enough, which is really, you could probably get 500 books out of this book. For example, Samantha, is just one chapter. You talk about this girl, Samantha, and the way she became radicalized and became... I don't know what you would call her. And that feels very parallel to a lot of the stories you hear about people that become radicalized in Isis, or their terrorist organizations.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 24:00 This thing about power, this really sticks out to me because I wrote, again, in the beginning of the rundown, I talked about how this book explores basically two things. One is how technology has changed the culture-making process, through how we build a shared consensus view of reality, and the other was an examination of the various realities. These little subcultures. But the one thing I don't think it examines, that it doesn't necessarily intend to, it doesn't have to, but it's something that I find very interesting, is the power dynamic.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 24:27 And the reason why I come back to this point again and again, which is, do we really need to focus on these people, is, they're not very powerful. You're saying they are. I'm curious to understand really how powerful they are. But the ones that are clearly powerful are the techno-utopians. It's the people that write the code, that run the platforms, that decide, right? I mean, you have this great chapter in the book, it's actually more than just one chapter, where you talk about Reddit and the decisions that were being made at Reddit in order to decide what subreddits to ban and what not to ban. And this also

brings us to a great conversation again. You could write a whole lot of frigging chapter on this, which is, where do we draw the line? Right? Maybe we can focus on both of those. We can talk about the line after, but let's talk about power. How do you think about power in the context of the work that you've done here?

- Andrew Marantz:** 25:14 There's lots of ways to get into it, and I agree, there are lots of threads coiled around each other in this, and that was... Yeah, I didn't want to resolve all these questions. I wanted to have it be playing off each other in these ways that just provoke you into thought and some, frankly, worries sometimes, without resolving them. So, one way of getting at it that is just pretty simple and not even all that political, you know, someone like Cernovich, let's take as an example, or someone like Lucian Wintrich, the guy who goes into the White House briefing room-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 25:44 Which you seemed to like him more than the others, or disliked him less.
- Andrew Marantz:** 25:48 It's hard to say. I mean, he's way far onto the nihilist end of the spectrum. You don't get the sense that he believes anything he says. So, it's like, all right, at least he's not a Nazi, but, on the other hand, his performance art is just all trying to troll the mainstream media out of any meaning or legitimacy at all, which I get why that's fun for people and I get why-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 26:08 I know. It's crazy. And you call him Milo light.
- Andrew Marantz:** 26:09 He is Milo light. Yeah. And I get why. I mean, I have a little thing where it's like, back in the day, we all found it fun to just bash the twerps on TV. It's really fun to look at CNN and be like, "Oh, you know, Wolf Blitzer, he's a tool," whatever, because that is the mainstream arbiter of gatekeeping that we all have, and it's fun to be anti-establishment. It's fun to be, "Oh, you got something wrong or you don't get it." I mean, you see this every day with The New York Times or with CNN. And in a way, it's a fine national pastime because it shows that people are awake, it shows that people are skeptical. You'd rather have that than like North Korea, like, "Oh, everything CNN does is perfect."
- Andrew Marantz:** 26:47 But if that becomes your entire persona, it just gets really tired. So this gets me to the power thing, right? I don't think... I've never been a huge, uncritical fan of the way mainstream media works. I'm kind of in it as a writer for The New Yorker, but I'm kind of also not because The New Yorker in another way is kind of this weird little literary artisanal thing, so it's not like I write for The Washington Post or something. And even, at those

legacy print publications print itself is becoming a more relegated thing, so, I have this weird dual lens onto to it.

- Andrew Marantz:** 27:21 One of the things about power is, we are so obsessed with the way that a story editor on MSNBC uses their power, or the way a New York Times reporter uses their power, which we should be. But also, their power is, as an individual, pretty minuscule next to the power of someone like Mike Cernovich, who actually can dictate on a day-to-day basis.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 27:43 All right. Now you've got me. So, explain this to me, because I read it in the book, and I had a hard time scaling that up.
- Andrew Marantz:** 27:51 Totally.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 27:52 Help me understand that.
- Andrew Marantz:** 27:53 Well, because it seems-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 27:53 Help my listeners understand this.
- Andrew Marantz:** 27:55 It really seems like it shouldn't be. It truly should not be the case that someone like Mike Cernovich is a more powerful media manipulator than someone who-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 28:03 Than Rachel Maddow.
- Andrew Marantz:** 28:04 Right. And, you know, there you could go toe-to-toe because she has a TV show, she has a built-in audience. But then if you start going down the chain, somebody, a reporter whose work is featured in a segment on Rachel Maddow, how about a segment producer at Rachel Maddow, you start going down the chain, at what point do you hit the singularity point where Mike Cernovich is more powerful, more influential than that person? It's way sooner than you would like it to be.
- Andrew Marantz:** 28:26 So, to break that down-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 28:28 That makes sense, segment producer. Okay.
- Andrew Marantz:** 28:30 But in a way, that's insane, right, because Rachel Maddow is one of the 30 most influential people on mainstream media. Once you start going down that list, somebody who's credentialed, who goes to 30 Rock every day and has 20 years of experience and has the right kind of... someone who is a legit member of the mainstream media.

Demetri Kofinas: 28:47 Well, is that the issue? Is it the issue that their credentials, or is it the issue that Mike is just creating just falsehoods? He's just been making things up.

Andrew Marantz: 28:55 It's definitely the latter. There's nothing special about credentials. It's just that, and again, this is where I don't want to romanticize the active gatekeeper. There's nothing about me intrinsically that thinks gatekeeping is cool, and I actually have this little ref in the book about how I'm such a reluctant institutionalist, and I resent these people for making me stand up for people-

Demetri Kofinas: 29:11 Well, here's the quote. "Of all that I resented about the Deplorables, one of the most irksome qualities was that they forced me to think like an establishment shell."

Andrew Marantz: 29:18 Exactly. There it is. So, like that, I hate them for that, because I used to think I was this cool, anti-establishment whatever, but at a certain point, it's like, the aesthetic catharsis that you get from being anti-establishment pales in comparison to the things that are being desecrated. It's one thing if it's just like, "You told me not to skateboard on that statue. I'm going to do it, anyway." Like, that's cool. When it comes to, "Okay, you told me to be nice to strangers, but I think the Statue of Liberty is bullshit and I'm going to just be mean to strangers and indulge my worst basis instincts," then I go, "Okay, it's no longer cool. Now you're just being an asshole."

Andrew Marantz: 29:57 Okay. So, to explain the Cernovich thing. And yes, the thing that's worrisome about these people is what they do, not their credentials, but the credentials are a shorthand for saying, "If you did half of the stuff these people do, your employee pass would be revoked at any meaningfully, reasonable, reputable institution."

Demetri Kofinas: 30:12 We've seen some pretty crazy shit on the mainstream TV outlets.

Andrew Marantz: 30:16 Yeah. At Fox News, yeah.

Demetri Kofinas: 30:17 Yeah. I mean, Fox News, for sure. I've seen stuff that Rachel Maddow puts out that I think is veered on the conspiratorial, but I agree that's it's done with more... probably, a bit more class.

Andrew Marantz: 30:27 Yeah. Well, and this is the thing, where, look, I've seen... Actually, speaking of Cernovich, I've seen him give a lot of talks.

His favorite thing to hit on. He gave a lecture at Columbia University about this, and there were a lot of protests outside because, why someone like that at Columbia. We should back up and explain who he is, but, his favorite thing to hit on is, "Well, the mainstream media makes mistakes all the time, and Russia is a big conspiracy theory." And he's right. It literally is a theory about a conspiracy. It's just that, when they're reporting on it, they're trying to get it right in ways that he's not, and they issue corrections when they get it wrong. I mean, they are literally reporting on a Mueller investigation, they're not making stuff up.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 31:00 But when you listen to the media outlets, when I was listening to the whole Russia thing, one of the things you'd hear all the time is, they'd say, "The Russians," or, "Russians," or, "Russians said..."
- Andrew Marantz:** 31:08 Right.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 31:08 And the reason they kept saying this is because they didn't have some material to back it up. They had to use vague language.
- Andrew Marantz:** 31:13 Right. Right.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 31:14 Now that whole thing, I don't know, I think the... We're digressing a little bit, but, again, the media, what even is the media?
- Andrew Marantz:** 31:20 Right. Well, it's meaningless at this point, and it gives people who are media insurgents or meta-media insurgents-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 31:25 Exactly.
- Andrew Marantz:** 31:26 ... much more fodder, because... And again, we should not take these things at face value. We shouldn't take anything on faith. The more of these categories break down... And this is, by the way, exactly what the GRU wanted. This is exactly what the IRA wanted. They wanted, "Well, you don't want me to say Russians, so I'm using specific acronyms for the institutions that couldn't use this to try to destabilize our view of truth." This is the goal. The goal of the Internet Research Agency is not to get us to believe everything they put out. It's to get us to disbelieve our own eye and ears.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 31:53 Yeah. Sure.
- Andrew Marantz:** 31:54 Anyway-

Demetri Kofinas: 31:55 Sow division and skepticism and doubt. Absolutely.

Andrew Marantz: 31:57 Right. And there should be skepticism, but again, there's a... I did a TED talk where I tried to distinguish between smart skepticism and dumb skepticism. I love skepticism. I literally... my whole thing in college was studying how to be a better skeptic, but there's a bad way to be a skeptic and to just say, "Well, everything I don't like is a hoax or a conspiracy theory," that, again, you know, the book isn't about Trump, but we live in this moment where we have a president who just says, "Climate change is a hoax because it's inconvenient for me." That poisons the discourse.

Andrew Marantz: 32:25 So, okay, to explain who this guy Cernovich is, and he's one of, as you point out, dozens of people in this book. He Tweeted right before the book came out. "I hear there's a book coming out about me and the thesis is that I'm mediocre." And I was like, "Actually, bro, the book's not really about you, but..." I didn't say that, I just sub-Tweeted him in my mind. But he's a very interesting guy. He's not a dumb guy, he's not like a 14-year-old troll in his mother's basement.

Andrew Marantz: 32:50 He's a guy, he's about 40 when I meet him, he lives with his wife and kid, and they have two kids and a dog in Orange County, California, and the reason I went to him and to the whole series of other people that I ended up going to is that, I called it a reductio ad absurdum, meaning, again, philosophy concept. A reductio ad absurdum is a thing that, it points out how the premises you are beginning with were flawed in the first place. So, our premise is, we have built up this informational ecosystem and it's going to basically show us what's real, what's true, what we need to know, and the fact that someone like Cernovich was, in my view, one of the most... 100 or 150 most influential Twitter accounts leading up to the election, of the president of the United States.

Demetri Kofinas: 33:32 How... What number?

Andrew Marantz: 33:35 I would put him in the top 100. There was this-

Demetri Kofinas: 33:36 Top 100 of the most influential Twitter accounts that the president of the United States was following?

Andrew Marantz: 33:39 No, no. No, no. Leading up to the presidential election.

Demetri Kofinas: 33:43 Are you serious?

Andrew Marantz: 33:43 Yeah. Well, because it doesn't matter who the president is following. First of all, the president doesn't real very well. Second of all, it's not about who he, as an individual, is following. It's about who is going to get him elected.

Demetri Kofinas: 33:53 The press is following.

Andrew Marantz: 33:54 Who the press is following. Who influential activists and voters are following.

Demetri Kofinas: 33:58 How do you quantify that?

Andrew Marantz: 33:59 It's very hard to quantify, and actually there's an MIT study that didn't put him in the top 100. It put Bill Mitchell in the top 100, and this account TEN_GOP, which turned out to be a front by the Russians that was a fake account that was run out of Moscow. So, there are multiple candidates for this, and then other accounts that are like the official handle of Ted Cruz, or the official handle of Fox Business, or whatever.

Andrew Marantz: 34:20 So, one of the basic points is that, whether you love it or hate it, it's just a mix of everything now, the way the algorithms have chopped everything up. There is no system any more. It's designed to be... There's this chilling Mark Zuckerberg quote, and maybe one of the reasons that it didn't shock you as much this stuff I did about the techno-utopians is because it's more familiar now, but if you really think about what they're saying, I quote this thing from 2010, where Mark Zuckerberg says, "We're going to rebuild all information around relevance." And what's relevant to you, a squirrel dying in your front yard might be more relevant to you than people dying in Africa.

Demetri Kofinas: 34:56 Yeah.

Andrew Marantz: 34:56 That is a sociopathic way... It's a great way to run a business. I mean, it's a phenomenal way to run a business. That's why it did so well, but it's a sociopathic way to run a civic informational organ. That is not giving people what they need to know. It's the exact opposite. And it's all based around emotional engagement. So, people like Cernovich, Bill Mitchell, all these people that I'm mentioning, they know how to hijack people's neurocircuitry to get them to pay attention to stuff.

Demetri Kofinas: 35:22 Which is exactly what Mark Zuckerberg does.

Andrew Marantz: 35:24 Yes. And Emerson Spartz, and all these people. That's why they all deserve to be in the same book.

Demetri Kofinas: 35:28 Right. I guess my point was, and maybe this was my own bias, because the reality is that we live in America and in America there are certain objective metrics of success, and you can dislike someone but if they've made a lot of money or if they have a lot of power, on some level you respect them, you know what I mean, or you respect them more than, let's say, someone else. And it's very difficult to respect the Deplorables, right? But in some ways, the Deplorables are doing much the same thing that some of these other people are doing, but they're just super-successful at it, they're way smarter, some of them are worth billions of dollars. A good example was something like Emerson Spartz where his company, all he was doing was exploiting the Facebook's algorithm and helping companies to exploit it and just make money off of that. He's just basically siphoning attention off the internet.

Andrew Marantz: 36:16 Totally. And I've had a few people say he's the most despicable person in the book, actually. But there-

Demetri Kofinas: 36:20 That's interesting.

Andrew Marantz: 36:21 Yeah. It's all a matter of... I try not to signpost, "Okay, here is the person who you have to hate the most."

Demetri Kofinas: 36:28 Sure.

Andrew Marantz: 36:28 And I think it's cool that people have different ways of reading it, and I think that's as it should be. So, to put a loop on the Cernovich story. So, I tried to go into everyone's back stories. I went to a tiny town in Illinois where he's from, and his dad works on a junkyard there, his mom never finished high school. I tried to get into these people's back stories and their weird, personal lives. His wife also worked at Facebook and got a bunch of money in the IPO, so, all of this stuff is extremely intertwined. At the same time that his wife was paying his bills, he was having this antifeminist awakening and saying, "Feminism is enslavement, and I'm reading a lot of Nietzsche and he's telling me to an uber-man," and all this stuff.

Andrew Marantz: 37:05 You're shaking your head. It's a little bit sad. But it's real for people when they go through this radicalization process. I wanted to reflect. I didn't lose my moral compass into being like, again, with the neutrality thing. I know how I feel about this, but I wanted people to have enough of a sense of how it could feel real to someone. So, he ends up being this iconoclastic antifeminist blogger who, through learning the tricks of trolling and attention baiting and all these things on the internet, builds his own brand and comes up into 2013, 2014,

through Gamergate and all these other things, to become... You talk about entrepreneurial success. I mean, he's not Mark Zuckerberg, but he takes these things that really should be relegated to the fringes and pushes them into the mainstream through the sheer force of his will, and frankly, a weird disgusting kind of talent.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 37:55 So, that brings us to a question I have to get it off the personal, for a moment, which has to do with masculinity, and I do want to go back to the feminine, also, because the women in these movements are a very particular type. You could really identify them. They have characteristics, and I'm curious about that, but-
- Andrew Marantz:** 38:13 And we should do the gender thing. I just want to make sure that I convince you and your listeners about his power, because up until this point, it does seem a little bit sad, like beating up on the guy who never quite figured out how to make an honest living or whatever.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 38:27 How much was he making?
- Andrew Marantz:** 38:28 Well, he was making... He said, a lot, and he would send me bank statements and stuff, from his books. He has this self-help book for men called Gorilla Mindset. That's just basically... I mean, whatever. It is what it is, and that's partly because of the Amazon algorithm, he's able to hijack all these algorithms. He's able to hijack the Amazon algorithm to sell books. He's able to hijack Twitter and Facebook to push memes into the mainstream. And the point is, by the time... This is all his back story. By the time I get to his house in Orange County, California, I'm able to sit next to him in his living room and watch him go, "Okay, it's Hillary versus Trump, I want Trump to win for all these reasons. And my reasons might be more high-minded and I might be worried about Hillary being corrupt, or whatever, but I know that that doesn't get people at their emotional core, so I want to create an association between Hillary and disease, or disgust, or fear, or terrorism."
- Andrew Marantz:** 39:16 And I would watch him, just day after day, sit there, open up his iPad and go, "Okay, I'm going to do a Periscope video, I'm going to livestream to 2,000 of my followers. Just the hardcore inner circle fans. We're going to talk in the comments. I'm going to talk, they're going to type back at me. We're going to come up with a hashtag. Once we agree on a hashtag, we're going to go post to Twitter. That hashtag will trend. Once it trends, all the journalists will see it. It will get on the Drudge Report. From there it'll leap to Hannity. From there it'll leap to CNN." And

then, literally, I would watch him be able to do this with such ease-

- Demetri Kofinas:** 39:49 Every day, he could do this? He would do this every day?
- Andrew Marantz:** 39:51 Multiple times a day. I mean, he would do four or five Periscopes a day.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 39:53 These guys are driving the new cycle, is your point.
- Andrew Marantz:** 39:55 Constantly. To the point where I would wake up and read the newspaper and go, "This news story has Cernovich's fingerprints on it." To the point where I wouldn't have believed it if he had told me. I would have been like, "Oh, this is swagger. This is bluster." But I watched it happen. So that's what I mean by power. Nobody's credentialing him, and if they knew, frankly, how they were being manipulated, they wouldn't be playing into it, but because he's been able to reverse engineer these algorithms, no one had to give him that power, he just takes it.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 40:21 Yeah. I mean, again, I read the book. I believe you. But I don't believe it.
- Andrew Marantz:** 40:25 It shouldn't be, it shouldn't-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 40:25 It's one of those things.
- Andrew Marantz:** 40:27 ... it should not be the case.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 40:28 Yeah. And I think this book is actually a really important contribution to this attempt to figure out what's happening.
- Andrew Marantz:** 40:34 Right. So do the math, kind of thing, because it's important.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 40:39 Yeah. Because I think it's interesting, and it's something... This thing again, to what's happening, I wondered to what degree there is a repression of, or an insufficient road map for men, and for masculinity. I have a certain idea of what masculinity is, I don't need that to be someone else's, but I feel like, in our culture today, a lot of what I think is masculine, I often feel like I'm being told that that's bad. That's a very common thing that I have with my friends, or a feeling that I have with my friends, and I feel like a lot of these guys are tapping into that.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 41:12 Of course, they're not masculine. This isn't masculine what they're putting forward, but I feel like there is a crisis of masculinity, and one of the things that I thought about as an

analogy is like in the Odyssey. When all the men leave Ithaka to go to fight the war in Troy, and what happens to Ithaka as long as Odysseus is gone, as long as the king and the men and the fathers are gone, the boys become suitors and they become rambunctious and they tear up the castle.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 41:36 I do feel like there's a crisis of masculinity and so I feel like I see this in a way with these folks. What do you think about that?
- Andrew Marantz:** 41:44 Yeah. It's an interesting set of things. So, I worry about a crisis in masculinity, and particularly in white masculinity in the sense that it leaves people vulnerable to all kinds of radicalization. I guess my emphasis might be less on worrying about people demonizing it or saying it's bad, and more on a deeper... in a similar way that I think you were accurately saying that Trump is a symptom, not a cause. I think a lot of the ways that the superficial discourse around gender stuff feels corrosive or degraded is a symptom of a much larger cause of how our entire national discourse is corroded.
- Andrew Marantz:** 42:23 So, I do worry that there's a crisis in masculinity, but I wouldn't lay the blame at the feet of people who are calling out so-and-so for stepping across a line. I mean, obviously, that stuff can be excessive or whatever, but I would put it more at a deeper level of just like, how did we arrive in a place where feeling a certain type of identity affiliation is the only thing people have in their lives that feels meaningful? How can we create a better sense of meaning production other than, I can bench a lot or I can fight a lot or I have a lot of guns or all these sort of weird phallic substitutes.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 43:03 Yeah. Yeah.
- Andrew Marantz:** 43:03 That feels like a crisis to me and it feels dangerous, and I know it's dangerous because I've seen a lot of people, both men and women, but there is specific to each identity, get so worried that they don't have anything in their core that they just follow these fantasies. I mean, literally, the most debunked ideas in modern history start to seem appealing to them. When you are a white kid in your teens and you don't have anything to feel allied to spiritually, intellectually, morally, civically, and then, for some percentage of those kids, they're going to see whiteness and maleness in a narrative that's been told to them that you don't have to apologize for anything. The secret is that you are actually supposed to inherit everything without trying, and that the people who are withholding that from you, be they feminists or Jews or whoever, they are the real conspiracy, they're the real enemy. I worry terribly about that.

Demetri Kofinas: 44:01 Right. That is something that you cover in the book, and that's a real issue. I don't know how big of an issue it is, that's a different question I have which is really, how powerful these folks... And is that even really the question? Is it how powerful they are, or is it, because, of course, the Nazis weren't powerful until they came to power, or... It didn't happen overnight.

Andrew Marantz: 44:17 Right.

Demetri Kofinas: 44:17 This thing about the vulgarity, for example, another common thing. The vulgarity that these people deploy, and it feels like the vulgarity that you see on the subreddits, it feels like that's also a reaction to something being suppressed. Some kind of aggression that's being suppressed, or something. Maybe it's also an accumulation of the failures of a large cohort of society that can't get a girlfriend, they can't get a job. I mean, that's a huge part of it as well, but let's take Joe Rogan for a minute.

Demetri Kofinas: 44:50 One of Joe's appeals for guys like me is that he represents much more of the traditional, masculine, archetype that I'm familiar with. Like when he talks about girls, when he talks about sex, when he talks about fighting. That's something that I find relatable, and I wonder and I'm curious what do you think about this. It feels like, on some level, though it's not perfect, women have progressed into fit their new roles better than men. Because for women, I don't know if there's a similar assault on femininity, because for women it's like, "How do I balance being feminine and being a woman, a traditional woman and being a mother with, now, being an empowered career woman, which is something I want," and with men, it's really unclear.

Demetri Kofinas: 45:38 Those dual roles aren't really clear. It's not clear, certainly, that men have accepted the other role, which is not really clear what that is, and of course, women don't find that necessarily sexy. So there seems to be some kind of... I don't know what the word is, I don't-

Andrew Marantz: 45:51 Attention.

Demetri Kofinas: 45:51 I don't want to use crisis. There's something that's not working in our society around gender roles.

Andrew Marantz: 45:57 I see. Yeah. I mean, I totally get the appeal of Joe Rogan's show. I listen to it a lot. There are parts I like better than others, but I get the appeal. I guess society keeps changing, right, and the internet is supposed to be this thing that just reflects all changes seamlessly because it's supposed to be the case that

when we bring somebody together this is where the techno-utopianism comes in. When we bring people together, when we allow voices to flourish, there is this assumption that it's all going to work itself out, and that assumption was always flawed.

- Andrew Marantz:** 46:34 So, the reason that the book is called Antisocial, and the reason that the subtitle is Online Extremists, Techno-Utopians and the Hijacking of the American Conversation, the online extremist is just one little part of it. The techno-utopian idea that tells us that the national conversation is going to keep growing toward some shining future, the arc of history is going to keep bending toward justice, that was always a flawed idea, and that was the techno-utopian idea that, look, yeah, gender roles might be changing and it might be confusing for people, but let's just throw all these voices out there and they'll find a way to coalesce.
- Andrew Marantz:** 47:06 And that didn't happen. It's not happening. So, in terms of whether the way to solve that is to go back to hunting with bows and arrows in the woods of Los Angeles County or whatever-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 47:17 Fascinating that that has taken off as a thing.
- Andrew Marantz:** 47:19 ... yeah, or whether that is just a weird throwback thing like hipsters playing records and it's all just playacting and trying to get at something that's a little more ephemeral, or whatever-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 47:29 And that's what it is.
- Andrew Marantz:** 47:29 Sure. But the point is, the internet is not going to iron out those wrinkles for us. We have to do it ourselves, and it's a lot harder than it seemed to be at first. And so, all these people like Mark Zuckerberg and Jack Dorsey who are trying to just throw the gates open wide, have this widespread marketplace of ideas and just outsource the difficult part to the marketplace of ideas to work it all out, we don't even have a marketplace, an actual financial marketplace that just works stuff out on its own, so why would the marketplace of ideas work this stuff out on its own?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 47:57 It's interesting. The question is also, how does culture change? In the 1960s for example, there was a huge cultural shift. We did have television, that played a huge role, but how much of it is ideas and how much of it is... It's unclear because in some cases the momentum, there are guys for example that aren't

going to change, right? And they're a certain age. They're not going to change. Either their ideas aren't going to change or they're economically set in their ways. So, it's really not clear to me how cultures change, but do you feel this thing that I'm expressing, this kind of... again, I don't want to use the word crisis because I'm not sure if that's the right word, but this thing, you mentioned it. I mean, like bow and arrow shooting animals in the woods, right?

- Andrew Marantz:** 48:41 I actually think that a lot of what we're experiencing is, sure, there are people who aren't going to change, but again, the reason that I'm harping on the national conversation element of this and the reason that so much of the book is actually not about... There's a lot about individuals in the book, but when I come to the conclusive stuff and the threading throughout it, it's much more about this notion of cultural vocabularies in a cultural discourse. The reason I do that is because my theory of how history changes is not about great individuals showing the way. My theory of how things change or how things are constituted is about systems, and we're embedded in systems of thought that, sure, there are individual lags and lapses, but there are people who you never thought, and we all know people like this, who we did not think were going to be okay with same-sex marriage. And then within a space of eight or 10 years, it just became a thing that everybody had to be okay with.
- Andrew Marantz:** 49:35 And they might grumble about it, but they keep the grumbling to themselves and they're more ashamed of it now than they used to be. And I'm not saying shame is always a good thing, but it's not always a bad thing, either.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 49:45 Well, that's also a great example, because gay rights has moved at a lightning pace.
- Andrew Marantz:** 49:51 It's crazy. This is why I talk about the Overton window so much in the book, that we're used to thinking of Overton window shifts-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 49:55 Tell our audience what that is so they know.
- Andrew Marantz:** 49:56 It's a concept of, and it's related to the concept of cultural vocabularies. It's a concept of, what is acceptable versus what is controversial versus what is unthinkable. If it's unthinkable, it's outside the Overton window, but the Overton window can move, that's why it used to be unthinkable that two people of the same sex could be married. Now it's basically unthinkable that any politician would oppose it.

Andrew Marantz: 50:17 Now, we like to think of it going in that direction, because that's the nice direction. But, my point throughout the book is that it can shift in any direction, and we like to tell ourselves, going back to what we were talking about earlier, these people are so fringe, they're nihilists, they're misogynists, they're whatever, they're Nazis. Why are we talking about this? This stuff is unthinkable. But as you point out, the actual Nazis, it was unthinkable until it wasn't.

Andrew Marantz: 50:39 So, I'm not saying that we're going to fall to some Fascist dictatorship tomorrow. What I'm saying is, we've got to be aware of the directions that our vocabularies are going in, and not just have this blind faith that they're always going to go in the right direction.

Andrew Marantz: 50:52 Now, the reason I started talking about Overton window stuff is that, yeah, gender roles are changing, and the racial makeup of this country is changing, and I think that creates a lot of tension and a lot of fear in people, particularly the dominant people who see it as a loss. But my larger view of the crisis in masculinity and the crisis in whiteness is that a lot of this stuff is driven by, yeah, you're losing some of your power and that it's going to be messy, it's going to be personally painful in a lot of ways, but I don't see that as a departure from some golden age. I see it as a departure from oppression, frankly.

Demetri Kofinas: 51:24 See, that... I think you just nailed something that I wasn't really conscious of. I think I dispute the idea, or, I hear this a lot, this idea that white people were the dominant race in America for so long, and that now they're becoming a minority, or they are. They're not yet, they're going to be, right?

Andrew Marantz: 51:42 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Demetri Kofinas: 51:43 And that a big part of this just reflects the change in power dynamics between races. I feel like that actually misses the larger point, where that's not where the power is. It seems to me that there is... I talk about this in the rundown in terms of dispossession. There is a dispossession in the country, but I think that has much more to do with education and wealth, than it has to do with skin color. In other words, what I see is that we have the biggest gap in wealth since the Gilded Age. And I think a lot of the people that, let's say, watch Alex Jones, or Tucker Carlson or whatever, and are angry, I wonder, to what extent are they angry because they think that some guy who's darker skinned than they are is getting a shot at their job, and how much of it is because they feel increasingly like they're screaming at a screen, and they can do nothing, and there's a

certain class of people that's getting wealthier and wealthier and they're setting the rules and they're setting the norms of discourse, and they feel increasingly powerless.

- Andrew Marantz:** 52:41 Sure. I think that's totally valid. I guess the question then would be, why is that populist rage being channeled into Tucker and Alex Jones instead of into Bernie and Democracy Now?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 52:50 It's a great question. So, first of all, you highlight Sandra Fairbanks in the book. She was a Bernie supporter, and then she flipped and became a Trump supporter. That's an interesting phenomenon, too, right, that there were people that were on Bernie's side and then went to Trump's side.
- Andrew Marantz:** 53:02 And a lot of these people... I mean, nobody's born alt-right, right? This is a new thing. A lot of these people come from the left. Most of them, probably.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 53:06 So, how much is Trump's support a reflection of people that are... because Trump doesn't have any ideas. He was a Democrat.
- Andrew Marantz:** 53:15 Right.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 53:15 No one thought of Trump as a racist until he became president.
- Andrew Marantz:** 53:18 Well, he was a racist-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 53:19 Well, I guess some people that knew about it, went into his buildings in the Queens, or whatever, but most people didn't think about Trump like that. That wasn't his brand.
- Andrew Marantz:** 53:26 Right. But that's because we're suckers and we fall for branding instead of paying attention to what he said all along.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 53:30 He's an empty vessel, isn't he? Does he have any ideological beliefs?
- Andrew Marantz:** 53:33 I think he's been a racist the whole time. I don't think he's been a very effective one, but-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 53:36 Well, you could say, what's it called? When Pat Buchanan described Nixon, he described him as a country club anti-Semite.
- Andrew Marantz:** 53:41 Right.

Demetri Kofinas: 53:42 Right?

Andrew Marantz: 53:42 Except that, when he was in the Oval Office, he stopped talking like he was in the country club. We have a lot of tapes of him being a very not-country club anti-Semite.

Demetri Kofinas: 53:50 Yeah, no. He was disgusting.

Andrew Marantz: 53:51 And so was Buchanan.

Demetri Kofinas: 53:51 Yeah.

Andrew Marantz: 53:52 So the thing is, these things have been accepted. You talk about the Overton window. Again, we tell ourselves this story of the American Exceptionalist myth that, "Oh, a white supremacist in the White House. That's unthinkable." It's actually unthinkable that we've had anything but white supremacists in the White House. It's happened like three times.

Demetri Kofinas: 54:07 That we've had anything other than white supremacists.

Andrew Marantz: 54:09 Right.

Demetri Kofinas: 54:11 What do you mean? Who...

Andrew Marantz: 54:12 Well, everyone up through Woodrow Wilson was proud of it.

Demetri Kofinas: 54:14 Right.

Andrew Marantz: 54:15 I mean, it was just part of the country.

Demetri Kofinas: 54:16 Well, he's famous for it.

Andrew Marantz: 54:17 Right. But I mean, just also historically, it was just part of the country.

Demetri Kofinas: 54:19 Sure.

Andrew Marantz: 54:19 And it just, obviously-

Demetri Kofinas: 54:21 But what about like Bill Clinton, what about George Bush, both senior and junior?

Andrew Marantz: 54:25 Yeah, those would be the three. And Obama.

Demetri Kofinas: 54:27 And Obama. Because you're saying, Reagan. But here's a good example. The Bushes were elite. Elitists. And they were way more powerful than Reagan.

Andrew Marantz: 54:36 Oh, they weren't great people.

Demetri Kofinas: 54:37 Yeah. And I guess, I'm just... I don't know-

Andrew Marantz: 54:39 And they were all... They all played racial politics in ways that I think we would and should find disgusting now. I mean, Sister Souljah, all the stuff Bill Clinton did, locking up more black men than any other president in history. I mean, no one's hands are clean in this. I'm just saying, it's just weird that we're surprised by this stuff.

Demetri Kofinas: 54:54 Right. And George Bush senior had the-

Andrew Marantz: 54:56 The Willie Horton.

Demetri Kofinas: 54:56 The Willie Horton gaffe in Boston.

Andrew Marantz: 54:58 Yeah. Yeah.

Demetri Kofinas: 54:58 Right. Andrew, stick around. We're going to go to the overtime. I'm doing my best to [crosstalk 00:55:03]

Andrew Marantz: 55:04 We got a lot more to talk about.

Demetri Kofinas: 55:04 I have interrupted you way more than I normally do-

Andrew Marantz: 55:06 No, this is good.

Demetri Kofinas: 55:08 ... and I'm not sure. I'm not sure, man. I'm a little overwhelmed.

Andrew Marantz: 55:10 I want to get to all the stuff on your pages.

Demetri Kofinas: 55:12 It's all great. I'm really excited. I want to continue this conversation, because this is actually the meat of what I find most interesting. For regular listeners, you know the drill. If you're new to the program, head over to patreon.com/hiddenforces where you can get access to this week's overtime where Andrew and I, I'm going to continue this conversation. There's also a link in the description to this week's episode that you can click on that will take you to that page.

Demetri Kofinas: 55:35 You can also get access to a transcript of today's conversation as well as the rundown which Andrew... Andrew, what do you think of this rundown? This is you, Andrew.

Andrew Marantz: 55:44 I'm loving it.

Demetri Kofinas: 55:44 Did you see you?

Andrew Marantz: 55:44 That's not me. That's my cartoon.

Demetri Kofinas: 55:46 Well, this is you. But this is you, actually, right here.

Andrew Marantz: 55:50 You guys got to check this out. This is... You put a lot of work into this, man.

Demetri Kofinas: 55:53 Yeah, man. This is Adam Driver in... what's the movie again?

Andrew Marantz: 55:56 BlacKkKlansman.

Demetri Kofinas: 55:56 BlacKkKlansman. There's David Duke played whatever his name was.

Andrew Marantz: 56:00 Dude, I would love... I mean, that is like my dream to be that character.

Demetri Kofinas: 56:04 So you can gain access to the rundown as part of the Super Nerds subscription or the transcripts are available to Autodidact and Super Nerds, and everyone has access to the overtime, including a link to the RSS feed, that you can put into your favorite podcasting applications and listen to this just like you listen to the regular episode.

Demetri Kofinas: 56:21 Andrew, stick around and we'll be right back.

Andrew Marantz: 56:23 Yeah, let's do it.

Demetri Kofinas: 56:25 Today's episode of Hidden Forces was recorded at Creative Media Design Studio in New York City. For more information about this week's episode, or if you want easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io, and subscribe to our free email list. If you want access to overtime segments, episode transcripts and show rundowns, full links and detailed information related to each and every episode, check out our premium subscription, available through the Hidden Forces website, or through our Patreon page at patreon.com/hiddenforces.

Demetri Kofinas:

57:05

Today's episode was produced by me and edited by Stylianos Nicolaou. For more episodes, you can check out our website at hiddenforces.io. Join the conversation at Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @hiddenforcespod or send me an email. As always, thanks for listening. We'll see you next week.