

What's up everybody? I had every intention of releasing a guest recording this week, but I found myself pulled down a series of dark rabbit holes that began with me getting up to speed on everything that has been public knowledge and then some about the stablecoin USDT, otherwise known as Tether, after getting a flood of emails and calls from listeners who were all sending me the same article, published by an anonymous author on Medium that was resurfacing claims going back to at least 2017 about Tether and its sister company Bitfinex, for which the two are currently under investigation by the southern district of New York and the New York attorney general's office – an investigation that officially began at least as early as 2018, so this has been going on for a while.

I spent all of Sunday painstakingly going through each and every link in the Medium post and following that up by listening to a series of podcasts including two with Bennet Tomlin and Larry Cermak hosted by Patrick McKenzie and another featuring CasPiancey and Matthew Graham hosted by Richard Yan, both on the Blockchain Debate Podcast, which is a phenomenal resource by the way for anyone who is interested in hearing people debate ideas that you normally never hear in crypto because of how tribal everyone tends to be...and how invested they tend to be in their positions.

But it was a recent, joint appearance that Tether's CTO and General Counsel made on the "What Bitcoin Did Podcast" that really set off my alarm bells. These guys could not give a direct answer to some of the most basic questions you can imagine. And their attempt to explain how Bitcoin ends up on their balance sheet was painful to listen to, which is particularly unfortunate because criticism of Tether has been labeled as an implicit attack on Bitcoin. And this is somewhat confusing to me, not least because if claims of market manipulation are accurate – in other words, if USDT is being used to pump the price of Bitcoin, then I can only imagine how much more manipulation is happening across the entire crypto ecosystem. If I was going to print tethers to engage in a pump and dump, why would I focus my attention exclusively on the asset with the highest trading volume and presumably the largest float by market cap of any other cryptocurrency? I'm not saying it isn't possible, but if it were the case that Bitcoin's price is being manipulated then everyone should be concerned, not just Bitcoiners.

So, after spending the entire day looking into this, and given the interest surrounding it, I decided to do an episode on it. And that episode is still going to happen, but I want to explore a much larger concern today, which was exacerbated by my experience looking into Tether and which feeds directly into this larger narrative of social discord, political divisiveness, and foreign interference that I've tried to develop on this podcast.

As I've said on many occasions, I feel like our society is rapidly coming apart and people seem to be frighteningly ok with it – not just ok with it, many are feeding into it by feeling entitled to attack others who don't identify with their particular ideology. And this is true in politics, as well as in markets, but where is it especially true? It's especially true in story stocks driven by millennials and in cryptocurrencies, also predominantly owned by Millennials and Zoomers.

And why is that? I don't think there's a straight forward answer – I think many factors are involved including this generation's native engagement with social media which drives so much of this discord – but I think a huge part of this is that an entire generation of Americans who are about to become the largest voting bloc in the country are also the most impoverished, disenfranchised, and structurally disadvantaged generation in a hundred years.

And why is that? How much of this is a result of explicit policies put in place over the last 20 years meant, in one way or another, to extend the life cycle of a party that should have ended with the bursting of the tech bubble in 2000, and most certainly with the collapse of the financial sector in 2008? But rather than reform the system, policymakers, politicians, captains of industry, and anyone else with power, at every turn made decisions to clearly favor capital over people. And not

just any people, people who had yet to accumulate assets. People who were not yet meaningfully invested in the market, because they were just beginning their careers. People who had racked up ten's and even hundreds of thousands of dollars in student loans, and who could hardly afford their rising rent payments let alone a 20% down payment on a mortgage. Millennials, in other words. And trust me, they are fully aware of it, they are not OK with it, and despite the hopes of Baby Boomers who are most responsible for engineering this multi-decade after-party, they are not going to be ok with it. It's no coincidence that Millennials treat the stock market like a casino and see cryptocurrencies as their ticket to financial freedom. Investing in Bitcoin isn't seen by my generation as a speculation, it's seen as a ticket out of a system that is structurally disadvantageous to us and which is built to extract our income in the service of debts owed to the previous generation.

So when people question the foundations of Bitcoin's narrative or even suggest that its price might be manipulated, the response by the community is often times to attack not the substance of an argument or the merits of the criticism, but the integrity and intentions of the skeptic. I cannot tell you how many vicious attacks I've seen of Tether skeptics in the last week, but even the more tame rebukes are so demeaning to people who in many cases genuinely look at the facts and listen to the company's executives and think "hmm...how is this not really, really shady? And sorry, how is this remotely consistent with reforming the financial system?"

It's not. And that's because Bitcoin is no longer about reforming the financial system. Bitcoin is being financialized, which is why you see so many of its most ardent exponents pushing for it to become more integrated into our financial system, not less. Because this isn't about building a better system. It's about preserving wealth, and for many people, getting rich. And while the "have fun staying poor" tropes can feel pretty gross, beneath all of that is a real, generational crisis that has turned the most vigorous and vital segment of society into a voting block of speculators who have absolutely no trust in government and see their best option as exiting a system that depends on their very participation in order to function, not only economically, but politically and geographically.

And this brings me to my larger point of concern, which is not about bitcoin or the STONK market, but rather, national security and how our internal divisions and our inability to trust our government are putting our nation's security and the security of our markets, our economy, and political system at risk.

The recent storming of the capitol building was a direct assault on our most basic government institutions. And the recent inauguration-day attack on Democratic Party offices in Portland by left-wing agitators is evidence that this is not only a right-wing phenomenon. The country is radicalizing and these groups have become the ideal breeding ground for political terrorism and by extension a playground for foreign interference. The more time we spend demonizing the opposition and deplatforming them, the more we push them underground. The more time we spend attacking one another and our government, the more vulnerable we become and the less attention we devote to trying to fix the problem. And that problem is not one that we can address as individuals. Sure, those of us with money and access to capital can and certainly should try and make the best investment decisions for ourselves and for our families, but those attempts do not scale very well. They don't do anything to advance our national security or to alleviate the discontent that is causing people to congregate into underground political movements or pile into speculative assets depriving the real economy of badly needed investment. We've seen this play out before, not just in this country, but in other countries, and it doesn't end well.

I'm a citizen of two nations and I love both of them very much. I'm not gonna lie, I didn't always feel this way about America, but the last four years have turned me into a patriot in a way that I never imagined possible.

I've spent most of my life criticizing the government, first for its military adventurism and later for its financial malfeasance and corruption. I eventually bought into the idea after 2008 that government couldn't do a single thing right, and that the less we had of it the better. I've spent the last four years learning why this was not only an overly simplistic interpretation of the causes of my government's failures, but also a dangerous resignation of my own responsibility to my country for its prosperity and survival.

Going forward, you are gonna hear more episodes from me dealing with these issues, head-on, and that's going to mean not only taking stronger positions on issues, but also not aligning myself conveniently with one ideology or another. I'm gonna rely on the depth and breadth of research and analysis that I've done on this podcast to begin to put together the pieces of a story that hasn't been properly understood and which carries enormous significance for our lives and for the future of our country.

I believe that we have entered what will turn out to be the most consequential decade of my lifetime, and I'm simply not interested in sitting this one out.

As always, you can learn more about the Hidden Forces podcast by visiting our website at [Hidden Forces dot IO](https://HiddenForces.io). It's the best way to go through our content library and figure out what subjects you want to learn more about, who you want to listen to, and what you want to read.

This is not an add supported podcast and I rely entirely on the contributions of listeners like you who want to dive deeper into the subjects I cover every week by subscribing to our premium content, which includes a podcast overtime feed, transcripts, and highly detailed show notes that are often times over 20 pages long.

There are links in the summary section of this podcast to both the Hidden Forces website, as well as the Patreon page at Patreon.com/HiddenForces where you can subscribe to all the premium content.

And with that, I wish you all a great week and I very much look forward to the conversations that I'm going to be having with my guests and to sharing those episodes with all of you in the months to come.