

Death Panel Presents: Medicare for All Week

M4AW Episode 06: Ryan Grim on Congress

[Episode Transcript]

SPEAKERS

[Beatrice Adler-Bolton](#), host of the Death Panel Podcast
[Ryan Grim](#), DC Bureau Chief of The Intercept

TRANSCRIPTIONS

Shy Fudger

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 00:00

Welcome to The Death Panel! This is another interview as part of our special Medicare For All Week. Today we are sitting down with Ryan Grim: DC Bureau Chief at The Intercept and author of the recent book, *We've Got People*, which came out May of last year. Right, Ryan? Is that correct?

Ryan Grim 00:17

Yep, that's right.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 00:18

So Ryan, we're so happy to have you on. Especially possibly because we read your articles all the time to see what's going on in Pelosi's office, and we are excited to have you here because I feel like your reporting kind of covers a huge aspect of this issue, which is, one part of the work that you do covers the internal warfare that goes on within the party. Then also you cover the actual sort of shift in the electorate and intellectually, like where people want to go. Do you mind just for audience members who might not know who you are, backgrounding what you do, I guess?

Ryan Grim 00:59

Sure, right. So I'm part of the Washington press corps, but I'm kind of an unusual member, because I don't really hide my politics necessarily. And I probably have more eclectic politics than most Washington reporters, it's not like they all agree with me and are hiding it.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 01:21

That would be cool, I wish that were the case.

Ryan Grim 01:23

That would be fun, although be less employment for me. So I started at Washington City Paper, which is the city's alt weekly, and I feel like I kind of try to still bring an alt weekly sensitivity to journalism. Which is skeptical of power and a little bit- you know, alt weeklies really rose in the era of punk rock. And that's not my personality, but it is kind of my politics. And so I was at Politico for a couple years, and so I really do have a foot in the Washington establishment camp. I know those people. I get along with them on a personal level, I understand their incentives and how they operate. And I spent eight or nine years at the Huffington Post, and been at the Intercept for the last two plus years, which, in both of those places, to varying degrees, keep a foot in the mainstream. I don't know if Z Mag still exists, but there's been a lot of good radical magazines over the years, but, a lot of them are speaking just to other radicals, and not being read in Washington and New York, where decisions are being made. So we try to kind of bring a more radical adversarial approach while still being taken Seriously with a capital S by people in power.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 02:54

Yes, that's a very tight line to walk. I think you do pretty well, though. And I think what we all appreciate here at Death Panel about your writing is that you do a really good job lifting up the rock, and showing people what's underneath. One of my favorite things that you wrote in this past year that came out was about the Nancy Pelosi's- I forget what his actual position is- but Wendell Primus, at Pelosi's office, and all of the wonderful cozy things that he has said to insurance executives. So I think right now a good way to start this is that, I think democratic leadership in general is a little more anxious about losing their leadership or losing their power than they are about anything else. You are in the actual press corps in DC. Do you mind talking a little bit about where we're at right now in the middle of the election with issues like Green New Deal and Medicare for All?

Ryan Grim 03:51

Right, yeah. you're describing this phenomenon that has kind of existed for probably for millennia in politics, and now we see it really coming to the surface with the current Democratic Party establishment. The best articulation of it came in the early 1900s. This political boss in Philadelphia was making a bunch of decisions that were going to be thoroughly destructive to the party, he was a famous boss, but I can't remember his name. One of his lieutenants said, you know, "if you do this, you're going to destroy the party, and you're going to destroy the city." And he said, "Yes, but I will rule over the ruins." And that is kind of the attitude that a lot of Democratic establishment figures have. Because if you game it out, and you think about the different potential outcomes of an election, let's say there are three, two of those three are okay with the Democratic establishment and the third is not. So the first that would be okay with them is that they win the nomination and they win the general election. Now they're in power. Of course, that's wonderful for them. Second, that would be okay with them if they win the nomination, but they lose the general election, because then they still control the the party apparatus, ruling over the ruins there. The outcomes that would not be okay with them would be an insurgent candidate who's outside of their sphere of influence winning a nomination and winning a general election. In some ways, a fourth one that might be okay with them is if an insurgent won a

nomination that lost the general election, and then they could use that to discredit their internal opponents for the next 40 years. They still talk about McGovern.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 05:51

Yeah, I was just about to say! In your book, also, you bring up the Jesse Jackson example as well.

Ryan Grim 05:56

Right, yes. They were. And that was an interesting example. And people, if they read my book before Iowa, and Bernie happens to win Iowa, they will be able to get a glimpse of the kind of meltdown that's going to happen inside the Democratic Party, and the reaction that's going to burst out trying to derail the nomination when they realized that he might actually win it. You know, you're starting to see that now.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 06:27

Yeah. No, I think the seventh debate was pretty obvious of that, with all the CNN, I would say their advertising push that they put together. That Liz Warren story.

Ryan Grim 06:39

Right. If you think that's obvious, though, wait till you see what they have in store.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 06:44

Oh, God.

Ryan Grim 06:44

You know, during the '88 Primary, when Jesse Jackson after three dozen primaries and caucuses won shocking upset in Michigan, to come poll to a delegate tie with Michael Dukakis, it was just a complete public meltdown. And an effective one. And it pushed enough Democratic voters away from Jackson so that they could nominate Dukakis. They were even planning on bringing Mario Cuomo to the convention.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 06:44

Oh my god. Another Cuomo.

Ryan Grim 06:48

Cuomo's daddy! If Jackson didn't have a full 50% they were going to deny him the nomination, and give it to somebody like a Cuomo. So maybe Bloomberg is the corollary, this time around.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 07:30

Is the new Cuomo. Oh my gosh, yeah. That's gonna really upset Andrew, but I would love to see Andrew get upset. But maybe over something else, like Bernie Sanders being the nominee. So we're in this current, I would say, deja vu state of-

Ryan Grim 07:47

Right, except the big difference is, and this is what I get into the second half of the book, the big differences that unlike Jesse Jackson, the current movement has the ability to aggregate small dollars, in a way that allows a left punch back. Back in '88, they were just absorbing punches.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 08:06

Yeah, we have a little bit more than a 1-800 number now, Twitter is very helpful for that!

Ryan Grim 08:11

Yes, exactly. Right. That was Jerry Brown's solution in '92, was an 800 number. And so right now, now you can actually-

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 08:19

So now we have the movement, we have people, as your book is called! Sorry. But yeah, so we're in this current state where you would assume that we're in a *deja vu*, because that's very much like what a lot of other media narratives are sticking to. Obviously they're not saying, "Oh, this has happened before," but it's the electability question, the pay-for of Medicare for All, the feasibility dog whistling, racist talking points, or mildly racist talking points into people like Biden or Buttigieg's speeches in order to do those same things. But what people aren't saying is actually what's different now. And I think a lot of that also has to do with where we're at in Congress, now. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the reporting that you've done over the past, maybe year, about how Congress and the Democratic establishment has been dealing with this progressive flood from the left.

Ryan Grim 09:18

Right. Well, in a lot of ways they haven't. And it's one of the most frustrating, and kind of galling divergences that you see in US politics today, and that's the gap between- not between necessarily- forget the Republican Senate. Everybody says, like, "what are you going to do about Mitch McConnell?" That's absolutely the wrong question. Yeah. the right question would be, "what are you going to do about Nancy Pelosi?" If you look at what they're talking about on the campaign trail, and compare that to the symbolic legislation that is being negotiated in the Democratic House of Representatives, they are in completely different worlds. Yeah. Pete Buttigieg and Joe Biden's proposals out on the campaign trail would be so far to the left of what even the Congressional Progressive Caucus is pushing for in the house today, that they wouldn't even be up for consideration. And because nothing that the House is going to pass is going to become law, the media haven't focused on- and I don't blame them- haven't focused on the debate in the House very much. But for instance, in 2018, Pelosi took the house back, arguing over drug prices. Trump was the number one issue. Number two was drug prices. And so they wanted to pass a drug price bill, they were actually trying to do something that would become law. That appears like it may not happen, so instead they're writing legislation that they can say, "Look, give us the full majority in the White House, and this is the kind of legislation that we can enact into law." That's their theory of the case. That's their argument for why they should be in the majority. So if you look at that, rather than looking at what people are saying out on the Presidential campaign trail, it gets much more depressing. The House Democrats were pushing this bill- and now finally passed a bill- that finally allows the government to negotiate using the weight of the Health and Human Services Department with drug companies to lower drug prices. But Pelosi was trying to limit it to 25 drugs a year. You know,

there are thousands of drugs. The American healthcare system is already just a massive lottery. And just like a massive lottery, almost everybody loses it. And so again, it'd be a lottery. Like if the prescription drug that you happen to need happens to be one of those 25 that they negotiate a discount for, then, congratulations, you won the American healthcare lottery. You haven't totally won everything because you need that prescription drug for whatever you didn't win. The Progressive Caucus fought mightily, threatening to take the entire thing down, and they were able to push the number up slightly, the number of drugs that would be negotiated.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 12:32

Barely, though, yeah!

Ryan Grim 12:33

And what didn't even make it in was surprise billing. Think about that. The Democratic House, in a symbolic piece of legislation, can't pass a bill that says a hospital can't completely steal from you.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 12:50

Yeah, which is kind of amazing, especially in the context of everything that has come out, like, with the Zuckerberg Hospital in San Francisco, or the hospital in VA that was suing its own employees who had come into the emergency room, yeah.

Ryan Grim 13:04

So if you're following that, it can be very disorienting and demoralizing. Because you say, well, these are the lawmakers who 95% of them are going to get reelected. So these are the guys and women who are going to enact Medicare for All?

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 13:25

No, probably not.

Ryan Grim 13:28

I mean, so the argument- and I interviewed Sanders in September and pressed him on this. I said, Richard Neal, the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee is staunchly opposed to Medicare for All. You can't do Medicare for All without running it through the Ways and Means Committee. Pramila Jayapal has- we're going to war with him just to get them to have a hearing. And as we reported, he had a meeting with his committee members the day before the Medicare for All hearing that was forced down his throat, and ordered all of them not to use the word, "Medicare for All" during the Medicare for All hearing.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 14:05

Right. And that was also after the whole thing where they were trying to restrict who could testify, right? No activists, no one that's ever worked on a campaign for universal programs before. And you had to have someone as sick and dying as Ady Barkan to get them to go back on it.

Ryan Grim 14:23

Right. And so I asked Santos and there's a primary challenger to Richie Neal, who is the mayor of Holyoke, Massachusetts. The town passed a resolution endorsing Medicare for All, he's running on Medicare for All, and Sanders has not endorsed him. And I understand-ish why, because there are relationships within the institution that are important. But that's not a political revolution. If you wait until Sanders is already president to start challenging the Richie Neals of the world, you may lose the Senate by 2022, or maybe you lose the House by 2022. So it is frustrating, because as you look at the legislation that House Democrats are crafting now, and you ask yourself, "Well, okay, what is the force that's going to change that political dynamic in 2021?" You say, "okay, the answer is Sanders winning the White House will change the way that they understand politics. Maybe?" But, it's really putting a lot of faith in that to postpone endorsing other elements of the revolution along the way.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 15:43

Yeah, I mean, I think neither the CPC alone nor either single branch could do any of this. And it's actually cool. I'm going to be speaking later today with someone who's challenging- what's her name- Diana Degette in Colorado, and one of the things that we were talking about is- her name is Charlie Madison Winters- is Degette is not really serving the community, has been in there for 20 years, is an easy re-election every single year. And the best thing that she's done is go for drug prices because of a personal narrative of her daughter with type 1 diabetes, and even in the stuff that she says about it, around town, it's like the community is suffering. Everyone is miserable and has no health care or no housing, and it's another band aid. And I think from the perspective of organizers, people are very worried that I think that without Sanders we can't do this, one, but also that it's a legislative impossibility and that is also something that's drummed up often from the establishment. So do you think that the CPC could actually be an effective vehicle for change, or are they not enough?

Ryan Grim 17:00

They could be, well, there's the question of is it not enough, or is it too much? You know, as AOC has criticized them for, there is no litmus test to get into the CPC. If you feel like you want to be in the CPC, and members would have lots of different electoral reasons for wanting that brand, you're in. Pay your \$5,000 to the CPC pack, and then boom. And so they've got more than 90 members. But, how many of them are going to be there when you need them? And the answer tends to be not many.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 17:02

Well, I think in the drug price and the budget bill, we saw that it was not really-

Ryan Grim 17:40

Yeah, that's right. But on the drug price bill, that was the first time they really threatened to take the whole thing down, and nobody believed them. In fact, over the weekend, I had members of the leadership staff texting me, "Are these guys serious?" What do you mean serious? They've been saying that they're serious. "Well, yeah, they've been saying they're serious for years." I think they're pretty serious this time. And they were stunned. That's where their relationship is, that they'd literally be asking me, "Really? The CPC, they're actually going to follow through on a threat?" And they did, and they got some concessions. So, they at least now proved to the rest of the caucus that, "Look, if we make a threat and stick by it, make it serious, we can actually improve a bill. We just have to be willing

to do it." So you know, it has to be something like that. Whether they're constitutionally capable of it in the long run, I don't know.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 18:45

Can we talk a little bit about the staffers in leadership? They obviously have a lot of influence on what policy actually makes it to anywhere. Is the Washington establishment right now- what are they actually concerned about? Are they worried about people who can't afford medical treatment, or who have no homes? Or is it more about-

Ryan Grim 19:09

Yes but, they feel like if they're too public about that worry, that the ghost of Reagan is going to come back and they're going to lose the majority. And it's that old line that you can't do anything good for people if you're not in power. And that becomes a self fulfilling kind of cul-de-sac of just seeking power. You know, it's very easy to see how that would devolve, and because of course, it's true. Like, if Republicans are in power, then yeah, you're not going to be able to do anything, for the most part, to help people. And so then it just becomes easier and easier to justify every compromise with your principles in order to obtain that power, and that by the time you get it, you're not able to use it anymore because of the way that you acquired it.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 19:59

Right. So if it's not people that's the problem, then what is the problem that's holding them back? That's stopping them from feeling like if they move to push forward legislation- even as you were saying, like, closer to what Pete Buttigieg wants than what's actually being proposed- what's holding them back? Is it the threat of not having the money for the fundraising portion of it? I mean, in your book, you talk a lot about the changes in the DCCC in the 80s.

Ryan Grim 20:30

Well, it's more there's a big fear, not that they won't get the money, but money will be spent against them that could kill them. And so, money does a lot of its work in the shadows and in the never having been spent. And so, if you're going to take on an industry and you know that if you do you're likely to get attacked by them with hundreds of millions of dollars, you're like, "Eh, maybe I don't take on that industry." And that's a much softer and gentler way of corrupting yourself. Because you're not doing anything, you're not-

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 21:10

Right, you're not hurting anyone actively-

Ryan Grim 21:12

You're not hurting anybody, you're just not doing something that probably wasn't gonna work. You know, you can convince yourself that the votes weren't gonna be there, that the health insurance industry was going to win anyway. And, "yeah, you know what, didn't that guy show me a poll that there are some people that don't even like this?" And so then you're like, "Yeah, you know, what, let's make sure that we're using the political capital that we have the most effective way to help the most

vulnerable people that we can." And then next thing you know, you're not convinced of that idea, so now you become hostile to anybody who's doing the opposite. And you become extra hostile because you've kind of made a compromise, and so there's a little bit of self loathing that's starting to sink in. And then that projects as anger and hostility towards the left to you're like, "I've been fighting for Medicare for All since you were in diapers," you know stuff like, "my basement is full of signs for Single Payer." And that comes from a genuine place of mingled emotions and expresses itself in ugly ways. So the way that money corrupts is a lot more sophisticated in a way, in the way that it works on your psyche and your soul, than just, "If you do this we'll give you money."

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 22:29

Right, yeah. I mean, so would you say right now that we don't really have the legislative possibility at the moment? Or do you think that that argument is part of that-

Ryan Grim 22:42

I think if a Democrat won the White House, they would definitely have a window to rap to significantly expand public health insurance. I don't know exactly what form that would take, but I think that that would be doable. You know, it passed the house in 2009.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 22:58

Right, exactly.

Ryan Grim 23:00

You know, it had 50 plus votes in 2009. So I think there is hope on that front.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 23:06

I mean, I think one of the things that our audience would be curious to hear about is, who is their real enemy in this? And how do they start to learn how to maybe identify ways of preventing- maybe not preventing people from getting into office who are thinking this way- but preventing this style of manipulation of public policy by private industries?

Ryan Grim 23:29

If people feel politically protected, if people feel that they have access to campaign financing, and the ability to defend themselves effectively from attacks, then they're going to end up doing the things that are most popular with the public rather than risk aversion related to fear of corporate money. So setting up those structures that can provide the financing and the organization for people who do the right thing is really important.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 24:04

Right. I mean, from your perspective, are there weak points or ways beyond just what we're doing now that would tip the scales, or start moving to break this cycle that we seem to be stuck in?

Ryan Grim 24:19

I think the wine cave was a bit of a watershed moment, in the sense that it was the first time that I can think of, ever, that campaign finance really landed a blow on someone. And potentially a fatal blow, depending on what you count as the fatal blow, and assuming that Buttigieg has been fatally wounded. Then, you could go back and point to a number of different things, but that's certainly one of them. You know, he was climbing then, and he was at the top. But it really tattooed his face in a way that had a political resonance that never has in the past. So, long term, the question is whether you can tattoo Republicans with that corruption as well. And I think it's possible, I think it would be possible to have, in the not too distant future, a two party system where one of the parties is mostly small dollar funded, and the other is not. And for independents and swing voters, that's something that they can understand.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 25:27

Right, exactly. I mean, you've been researching this a long time, and particularly looking into the career of people like Rahm Emanuel, who's brother writes tons of op-eds against Medicare for All, and also advocates for people being euthanized at 70, or whatever. Zeke Emanuel, Ezekiel. So have all these guys from the 80s, who took lessons from Republican tactics at the time and applied them to the Democratic machine. So we've got one problem on that end, where we have the remnants of that, that are still trying to maintain power and do the least harm. How do we actually- after everything that Republicans have publicly owned up to- even including, I think a judge that Trump appointed today said that using a transgender person's pronouns in a court of law was just a courtesy and not required- so how do we even go after these people? I mean, you report on them all the time. What's your thought on that?

Ryan Grim 26:37

No, I think a lot of that stuff has to just come in the wake of taking power on a broad progressive message, and then, you end up filling in a lot of those spaces behind you. In other words, for instance, I think if Mitt Romney wins the election in 2012, maybe you don't get gay marriage in 2013. So electing the first black President in 2008 on this hope and change, multiracial coalition message, even though it didn't deliver legislatively like people had hoped, it resonated with the culture and changed the politics of the culture, in that it moved things. It allowed people to come in behind that and say, "Yeah, you if you agree with this, then what about marriage equality?" for instance. And even though Obama wasn't publicly for marriage equality when he ran, it helped shift those politics. So I think if you sweep into power with a broad mandate, then things fall in line behind that. And it kind of defeats some of the opposition to it without even having that fight. Whereas if you try to have that fight on the front- think about it as a battle line, and the people who want that charge ahead into the battlefield and take on the entire army on the other side of the field, they're gonna get chopped to pieces. But if they come forward as part of a huge wave, then they're going to have a much better chance of being part of a winning team. And I think that probably long term will be one of the bigger challenges and always has been a big challenge for the left. Because the right is pretty homogenous collection of people. It's white men and some white women who are trying to protect their wealth and privilege. And so it's much easier to organize that. Whereas the left is civil rights groups, environmental groups, and on and on. I think the left has done a lot better at incorporating a non entirety version of intersectionality, in the way that everybody kind of understands that their struggles are all linked together. And so that's a big step forward. And so that has been a challenge for left, and the people are recognizing it, the problem

becomes, in a lot of groups, there is a there's a pull toward the most radical member of that group. You know, everybody wants to be in line with the most radical position that is tenable, and so that's how you can wind up with a lot of infighting among groups. And if that happens before the left is one, the right is happy to exploit those. On Twitter today, Donald Trump is having a fun little field day with Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren or whatever. He loves to say, like, "Oh look, they're trying to try to steal it from Bernie again." You think Donald Trump has any sense of fair play, or was actually rooting- he just loves, they love to stoke the division.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 30:09

Yeah. So general attitudes from leadership towards eliminating private insurance as a whole, if we took the industry out of it as a factor, and the fact that they all expect the industry to lobby so hard against it, then most people would probably support everyone having health care coverage. Non-means tested, free at the point of service, etc. You know, it's a lot of people to basically get out of office or get out of a job in order to have that movement enter the establishment, but I do feel like stuff like AOC's pack that she started are kind of hopeful. How do you see that having some positive impact, considering that the the CPC hasn't been super willing in the past to actually exercise their power?

Ryan Grim 31:04

You know, they're feeling pressure from the left as well, to start to deliver. They also, for the first time really do have people Mark Pocan, or Pramila Jayaapal and Ro Khanna, who are serious about what they're doing. Which might sound harsh, but the CPC for a long time was not very effective. So yeah, I think that there's definitely hope, people are doing what they can.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 31:34

Right. I mean, I think one of the things that Phil Rocco, one of my co-hosts and I talk about all the time is, is this new electorate or idea enough? Is the real answer we need to build multiple organizations or institutions like this? The answer is complexity. But the CPC as it is can't really- it's on those members to show up. And I think I see a lot of- particularly in 2018, I think we probably would have won regardless just as a reaction to Trump, right? But at the same time, the Democratic Party spent a lot of money to undermine justice Democrat candidates. So, where they going with this? What's their plan? Are they just trying to get everyone so miserable and tired or just shut out contracts or something? Like, I don't know.

Ryan Grim 32:34

Yeah, the DCCC now has this policy that if you work at all with candidates who are challenging incumbents, then you can't do any work for any other candidates, which makes it very hard to make a living as a consultant. And so, they may end up creating a small industry of people on the left who know how to do the basics in a way that the left doesn't have now. For instance, challengers are having a very hard time finding people who do FEC compliance work. You know, it's a pain to file with the FEC. And you get it wrong, your opponent will find the error and will light up your campaign, could end your campaign, make you look like you're corrupt or stealing or something. And so getting those filings right, keeping your records right, is extremely important. And so there's, in a industry of people, lawyers who do FEC compliance work. Consultants get a bad name, like all consultants are just grifters. But, some

consultants are just accountants, or lawyers who are helping you follow FEC law. And the campaigns need those people, or mail for instance. I'm sure some mailing consultants rip off candidates, others are quite good. You know, there is a real art and science to knowing how to produce the best mailer, where to find the union print shops, all of that takes skill and time. And then after that, figuring out how to target them. Who should get these mailers? It's not, where do I get the addresses? These are skills that people have developed over the years and now the DCCC is trying to make sure that that candidates who already are facing enormous obstacles in trying to unseat an incumbent, have to do it without any of that either.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 34:57

Yeah. I mean, do you see a space where something could really come to exist robustly coexisting with the DCCC or that it's just-

Ryan Grim 35:07

-they have to take over. You know, if Bernie Sanders wins, and there could there certainly could be a play with DCCC after that. But that's-

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 35:17

This is a long project. Yeah.

Ryan Grim 35:19

Right. We don't have that much time, so-

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 35:21

No, we really don't, unfortunately. I mean, one of the things that I think is great, though, is that it's a lot easier now to spot similarities in messaging across candidates and watch those dictated lines be delivered. I think the Soleimani assassination was a good example, where you had people refusing to use the word assassinate, and then that becomes a new cycle for a week, and that to me very much feels like part of it. As does the numerous people, like my personal favorite Matt Yglesias of Vox, who likes to harp on the legislative impossibility argument. From your perspective, is that necessarily true or are people like- you don't have to say him specifically, I'm saying him- but are people who write like the way that Matt Yglesias does and operate that way just part of that leadership network, or their root system, shall we say?

Ryan Grim 36:24

Well, in some ways, what they're doing is they're predicting and analyzing the future based on the past- which is based on their best reading of the past, which is- that's a completely defensible thing to do.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 36:42

I'm sure he means well, yeah.

Ryan Grim 36:45

Probably not always. I'm sure plenty of times he means to actually make people mad on purpose.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 36:51

Oh that's for sure. That's a personal flaw. He just loves attention.

Ryan Grim 36:57

Yeah, so that type of analysis doesn't account for a changing world. And it might end up being right, but it also might miss major shifts that are going on, because we're in a very confusing time and nobody can really predict the future based on the past right now.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 37:21

Yeah, totally. I mean, do you feel like that part of the problem is that a lot of people in these jobs, working for leadership, actually are not really experiencing a lot of the things that are the more working class experience- like, with rapid insurance cycling, or just not being able to possibly even afford to go get treatment in the first place? Because I mean, Congress and their staff have pretty decent insurance from what I understand. And it seems to me that there's sort of a disconnect in the understanding of the urgency of the situation.

Ryan Grim 38:05

Yeah, I think that's right. And part of it goes back to the US never having a worker's party. You know, the two party system developed before there was really organized labor, and neither of the parties has ever- as the Democrats have, in recent years represented workers, but they're not really a party of workers. And as a result, you get a ton of people who are, like you said, a little disconnected from the problems that they're supposed to be addressing.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 38:36

I mean, you wrote about in your book about how essentially, when this shift happened in the 80s, that we're sort of looking at again now- and we talked about this with Adam Gaffney, too- how many times something like Medicare for All or a single payer system has come up. You had it at the very beginning of the AMA's founding, you've had people fighting for single payer and AMA fighting against it, we had during- what was it- Eisenhower, and then we had it again in the 70s', there was another push. I'd like to think that your book is a very inspiring receipt. So shall we say that this time is a little bit different? Do you want to talk about that for a second? Because I feel like that could be a really hopeful way to round out everything for the listeners.

Ryan Grim 39:24

Yeah no, I hope that's right. Yeah, there have been so many near misses and missed opportunities over the last century. Truman or then, Nixon almost did it, And then the ACA falling short. But, in the wake of the financial crisis, which has kind of radicalized an entire generation, you're seeing new possibilities open up. A lot is going to hinge on on this next Few months of the Presidential primary, because there isn't much of a bench after Sanders and Warren. Because of the way that the Democratic Party basically shut out progressives, it lost several generations of possible talent. Nobody in the left could really rise in the inside the democratic party after 1980. And so, that's 40 years of lost talent. And So, that's why you have Warren, who used to be a Republican, so she kind of snuck

around him. Sanders, who's not a Democrat. And then after that, you've got AOC, there's a 40 plus year gap between- 50 almost- no, I guess, really? 50 years. Yeah, Sanders is about almost 50 years older than her and that's why. Because all the party was raising was Rahm Emanuel's instead. And so, it's good that the new new generation is coming, but I don't know if they're coming fast enough.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 41:15

Do you feel like the generation that are the same age as Rahm Emanuel- I'm thinking about my mom specifically who, she and I gotten a big argument on New Year's Eve, because, she said, "we really need this. What happens if it doesn't happen? Like, we're gonna just have to vote for Biden." Like, well, yeah it sucks, but that's why we're fighting, and she went into sort of talking about the despair she'd experienced her whole life, essentially. Every single person she voted for was a disappointment, and she's like voting in Chicago, and New York, and Los Angeles. And yeah, we've done nothing but disappoint a lot of boomers who- maybe the surviving left boomers or whatever. And I think that that's one of the bigger hurdles that we actually have to get over in the movement, is blaming identity groups or blaming a generation for something that also happened to them, not that they necessarily did, you know?

Ryan Grim 42:13

Yeah. No, I think that's well said.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 42:16

Is there anything we didn't get to that you wanted to talk about? I don't want to take up too much of your time, because I'm sure you're really busy. But-

Ryan Grim 42:22

No, I think you covered it pretty good.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 42:25

We really appreciate you coming on. Everyone on the Panel is very sad that they couldn't make it today. But Phil's actually doing some very important work, so I told him, he was not allowed to stop doing his interviews. Because he's doing a study right now on the implementation of the 2020 Census. So he has been talking to people in Alaska who are having a lot of problems. Yeah, I think he said something the other day, like "I'm a little concerned, there is essentially a full lack of federal government in certain aspects of running Alaska right now, and nonprofit organizations are trying to step in and it's going really badly." So, you know, but we really appreciate you taking the time, and we appreciate the work that you've been doing. So, thank you.

Ryan Grim 43:15

You got it. You got it.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 43:17

Thank you so much, Ryan. I appreciate it. Have a wonderful weekend!

Ryan Grim 43:21

Okay, you too.

Beatrice Adler-Bolton 43:22

Okay. Take care. Bye.

Ryan Grim 43:24

Bye.