

Interviews with Assange Legal Advisor Renata Avila, Journalists Glen Ford, Max Blumenthal and More in new Assange: Countdown To Freedom

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[00:00:00] OK, so we're rolling here. Three, two, one. And let's go.
Randy Credico:

[00:00:06] "WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been arbitrarily detained by
[voice of representative of UN panel] Sweden and the United Kingdom since his arrest in London on 7 December 2010. As a result of the legal action taken against him by both governments, the expert panel call on the Swedish and British authorities to end Mr. Assange[']s deprivation of liberty. I think the recommendation is quite clear, respect his physical integrity and freedom of movement and afford him the right to compensation."

[music]

[music]
[00:01:11] Well, that was Krystof Pershau [?] from the U.N., and that was three years ago, three years ago when we first started this Assange Countdown to Freedom was about three years ago and the guy from the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. And that's why I play that every so often, because everybody in government, you know, the U.S., the U.K., et cetera, are ignoring what he said there. Ecuador ignores it, did ignore it. They're out of the picture right now, I suppose. But we'll talk about that a little bit later. I just want to say, this is Live on the Fly, Randy Credico Live on the Fly, it's me here in the East Village, a beautiful studio at N.Y.C. podcasting.com in the historic East Village, very close to Tompkins Square Park. And really for decades, a century, a hotbed for political activism. Been arrested a few times here over the years. And so this is, of course, an exclusive for *CovertAction Magazine*, which was founded by my very dear friends, Bill and Ellen Ray and, er, they're no longer with us. And Lou Wolf, who is, and it's being run by Chris Agee, the son of the CIA whistleblower Phil Agee. And we'll be doing a show on that exclusively on our big CIA whistleblower from the past, Phil Agee and what he and his kids and wife had to go through after their revelations. So that'll be coming up.

I want to thank people. This is *CovertAction Magazine*. You know, this is our seventh, our seventh episode. And we'll be doing this hopefully right through the first phase of the of the Assange proceedings and all the

way through the second phase. It starts on the 24th in Warwick Majesty's Court [sic] or Belmarsh, in Belmarsh.

I'll be there. And I want to thank someone who found me a room there, Air BNB Kelly Lane, thank you Kelly Lane, because I didn't know where the hell to go, went out there for a couple of days. I know it's going to be like in Kansas, I'm going to be like somewhere in a deserted part of the world, right? And then I will be in London for one day. And I want to thank Kelly Lane. I want to thank Anonymous Scandinavia, who put together even as early as this morning here on Friday, he made a wonderful soundtrack of Julian Assange singing with Cahier 13 I think is the name of the group. We'll be playing that. That's special for Renata Avila, who was up from up from Guatemala, the great human rights attorney and human rights activist.

And she does so many things. She's been a legal advisor and participated in all of these Assange, all these various aspects, all the different legal angles that we're going to talk to her in about 15 minutes, with Renata Avila, very special guest. I read her, I read her chapter in the book. It's called *In Defense of [Julian] Assange* and it's edited by Tariq Ali and Margaret Kunstler. And I tell you, when I got to the end of that, I started crying. So it's a very moving chapter by Renata Avila.

If you get a chance, get that book, *In Defense of [Julian] Assange*. Later on, we'll have a book review on it. You can get that at OR Books. Also, I want to plug tomorrow night's event. This is what I'm here today for it, I'm not [inaudible] but we're doing this, want to get this out, this will be out shortly, at... tomorrow night at City College in Queens. Is it City College? City College in Queens? There is a huge event. CUNY Law School, it's CUNY Law School. I'm sorry. In Queens. Alright? So you look that up, you go to Courage Foundation and you will find the exact location and the time. I think it's at five o'clock tomorrow. No, it's at 2:00 p.m.. It's 2:00 p.m. on Saturday. Alright? And we have three of the speakers here today, Glen Ford, we have Max Blumenthal and Renata Avila, who I already mentioned, and Jim Goodale will be there as well. And there'll be some video, new video from I believe it's Noam Chomsky and a few others of that ilk. So that's tomorrow at 2 o'clock. I'm going to be there. And if you're in the city, make sure you make it to CUNY Law School in Queens. All right. It's a, it's a beautiful, beautiful show and very important. This is a very significant panel and discussion. And it will be moderated by Anya Parampil, who is a dynamic investigative journalist and a former TV host from a network we're not going to mention. Alright. What else do I have to mention? I think that's about it. We are going to I think we can call up, er, Glen Ford is not going to be here but Max and Renata will be here. And one of them is here, and we'll go to

that right now, we're going to go to play a little bit of music now. I'm just going to play this for Max, as Max spends a lot of time in Nicaragua. And I had this piece that was, er, it was 1984 at the Concert for Peace in Nicaragua. And I specifically brought this piece of music in and it's too late to change. So Max is not going to hear it but let's go to this. And if we could just call up Glen Ford and get this thing rolling.

[music]

[00:07:20] That was a, er, catchphrase, from, the, er what do you call it, from the Spanish Civil War, by those who were fighting Franco, it was 'No pasarán', and it's a beautiful rendition, I think he wrote it, you know, he just wrote it, that slogan...

Max Blumenthal: Carlos Mejia was really the voice of the Sandinista front, right?
[inaudible]

Randy Credico: I was there in '85 [inaudible], we're going to do a show on that a couple of weeks.

Now, so, we are now going to go, you're a few minutes late, Max, but it's OK because you were on the show last week. But we have... And I just want to say this. I mean, how do I beat this introduction? I told Cornel West that Black Agenda Report executive editor Glen Ford was gonna be on the show today. So he texts me this. "Give my dear brother Glen a big hug. He is a great freedom fighter and courageous intellectual."

How do I follow that, Glen?

[00:09:48]

Glen Ford: Why don't you just, um, give me the mike?!

Randy Credico: All right. I'm gonna give you the mike, Glen, thank you. Black Agenda Report does great work and it's very intense, it's very enlightening and up to date and it cuts through. It's, you know, there's nothing like Black Agenda Report. I had, I had the great pleasure of participating up at Riverside Church with Cornel West at a benefit back in 2010, 2011. I got a little wined up there but er, I don't mean with er, just with wine – W I N E – I don't know how I made it through the day, they shoulda tossed me out ...

But Glen, there's a great piece that just came out in the Black Agenda Report. And let me just say that it says this. This is the top of it. All right. This is the banner. "Julian Assange and his protégés have made common cause with Black revolutionaries in their zeal to lay bare the dictatorial nature of the omni-pervasive national security state and the sheer, racist barbarity of the U.S. imperial project." Now, this just came out and it

goes on, Glen, and I want to know, can you just like expand on that? What, you mean that he's done that?

Glen Ford:
[00:11:23]

Well, yes, of course. And in a racist society like the United States, black dissidents will, of course, face harsher persecution and longer prison terms than white dissidents. But the way we measure solidarity is in the actions of the dissidents and in the response of the State.

And maybe the best measure of the contribution of fellow freedom fighters is the ferocity of the State's pursuit and prosecution of those dissidents. And nobody has been pursued with more ferocity by the U.S. State, by the U.S. national security state, than Julian Assange. It is at the level of ferocity that the State pursued the Panther Party in the late 1960s. And it really shows how effective WikiLeaks has been in revealing the crimes of U.S. imperialism all over the world.

The effects around the world probably are not known to most Americans because Americans live in a bubble and they don't know or much care what happens in other people's countries. But the CIA and US imperialism do. And WikiLeaks had created great disruptions in the operations of U.S. imperialism. They released hundreds of thousands of documents, cables, confidential secret cables between U.S. diplomats and other operatives at their embassies and, er, communications within those embassies and the reporting back to Washington about what those embassies were doing. And by reading the WikiLeaks revelations, folks in those countries could learn who among their countrymen were collaborating with the U.S. or with the CIA, who were going along with U.S. interference in their country's workings. They could see how the CIA's tentacles were, in fact, meddling with their own domestic affairs and that made it much more difficult for the CIA. And so finally, the United States elevated WikiLeaks and Julian Assange as an individual to the status of a foreign adversary. And they thought that his threat to U.S. ... to the secrecy of U.S. operations was so great that they treated WikiLeaks as if it was a foreign country and then took the next logical step and claimed that WikiLeaks was in league with one of the main competitors with the United States in the world, with Russia. And that's where we get Russiagate and all that has er

Randy Credico:

It's been a nightmare for me, Russiagate, I can tell you that, alright, Russiagate has been a nightmare for me. But go ahead, that's a different story.

Glen Ford:
[00:14:52]

Oh, it's been a nightmare for us as well. Black Agenda Report was in that first blacklist that was released on the pages of *The Washington Post* only weeks after the election in 2016, in which *The Post* hosted an anonymous group called [inaudible], which made a list of websites, Black

Agenda Report was the only black site on that list, websites that supposedly were allied with or dupes of Russia. And that was the opening salvo of the new Cold War that has fallen upon us with Russiagate as the, as the excuse.

Randy Credico: Well, you know, Glen, you've answered a lot of what I was going to play for you, but I want to play it anyway, because this is a recent excerpt of a speech that Noam Chomsky gave. And so if there's anything that was missing from what you just said, please feel free to riff on it. This is Noam Chomsky. It's like 58 seconds long. And we'll get right back to you.

Voice of Noam Chomsky: Well, the Assange arrest is scandalous in several respects. One of them is just the effort of governments. It's not just the U.S. government. The British are cooperating. Ecuador, of course, is now cooperating. Sweden before had cooperated. The efforts to silence a journalist who was producing materials that people in power didn't want the rascal multitude to know about, OK. That's basically what happened. WikiLeaks was producing things that people ought to know about those in power, people in power don't like that, so therefore we have to silence it. OK. This is the kind of thing, the kind of scandal that takes place, unfortunately, over and over.

[00:16:59] All right, Glen. The floor's yours.

Randy Credico:

Glen Ford: Well, Chomsky was talking about how WikiLeaks revealed how U.S. imperialism really works, how it makes allies with friendly governments all over the world, but also with people, individuals, political parties that collaborate more secretly with U.S. imperial aims, that collaborate with U.S. meddling in their own countries.

And of course, those chickens always come home to roost. And WikiLeaks revealed the collaboration between – the effective collaboration – between the Democratic Party and the Trump campaign. This is one of the greatest ironies of Russiagate, that the WikiLeaks revelations showed that it was the Democratic Party, the Clinton campaign, that favored Donald Trump getting the Republican nomination. The Democrats wanted Donald Trump to become the Republican nominee because they thought he could beat them, that they could beat Trump. But [inaudible] because if they could run against Trump, then they could run solely against racism and Donald Trump's personality. And they wouldn't have to talk about bread and butter issues. They wouldn't have to talk about austerity. They wouldn't have to talk about jobs and the fact that real living standards in the United States had been deteriorating for 40 years. So they wanted to run against Trump. And the WikiLeaks revelations showed that they were encouraging not only other Democrats, but friendly corporate media to

boost the Trump campaign. And that's one of the reasons that Donald Trump got six billion dollars in free media play in 2016. That allowed him not only to trounce his competitors in the Republican primaries, but also to, in the end, beat Hillary Clinton. So these are great ironies that flow from the WikiLeaks revelations.

Randy Credico: All right. Well, you know, I got a couple more questions there, Glen. First of all, and I asked Cornel West last week, why aren't there more... when you see that... what WikiLeaks revelations, you know, the War Logs and the cables and all of these areas that they've focused on are countries that are nonwhite countries, basically. And minority countries, whatever you want to say. But what the conundrum for me is, why, being that the case, whether it be Iraq, Afghanistan and Africa, why... Latin America, why aren't there more black leaders and black politicians and black media out there right now? Because it's really necessary. Why aren't they now en masse in support of Julian Assange, knowing how ominous it would be if, in fact, he's brought here, prosecuted and sent to that supermax in Colorado?

Glen Ford: Well, first of all, there is basically no black media in the United States anymore. The black media has been on the decline for over the last half century and essentially does not exist, not as an effective social force in this country.

Randy Credico: Well, wait a second, Glen, Glen, one second. I'm talking about people like Eugene Robinson, alright? There are...

[00:20:56]
Glen Ford: [inaudible] that's not black media, that's the black person who works for corporate media and corporate media does its job. Corporate media defends corporate interests, defends capital. And the Democratic Party also is a defender of corporate interests, of capital. And the Democratic Party has a hammer lock on black political expression. So it's all tainted by the corporate Democratic Party and its interests.

And in the wake of 2016, in the wake of the assault against WikiLeaks, which then became an assault on free expression internally in the United States, but with the rigging of algorithms, Google rigging its own algorithms to show fallacious results, etc., we see the Democratic Party becoming the more aggressive party of war, the more aggressive party of censorship. And the Democratic Party brings along with it, as 'Amen corner', the black misleadership class, which is totally affiliated with the Democrats.

And we see the ridiculous spectacle of Melissa Harris-Perry and Joy Reid, black personalities at corporate media, the cable MSNBC, going into paroxysms of fury at a proxy for Edward Snowden, not even letting the man speak. Why? Why did this play well sometimes in Black America?

Because they were successful in linking Donald Trump and Julian Assange in the way that WikiLeaks was somehow allied with Russia and Russia was backing Trump's reelection. As I said, the great irony here is that it was, in fact, the Democrats who were the big boosters of Trump, the Democrats and the corporate media in 2016. They were trying to set Trump up as the Republican nominee so they can knock him down and treat him as a straw man. But instead, it backfired on him and Trump was elected. But the blame for Trump's election lies mostly with the Democrats, not with WikiLeaks, and Russia really had nothing to do with it.

[00:23:41]

Randy Credico: Right. We're talking with Glen Ford, the executive director, editor of Black Agenda Report, blackagendareport.com. Glen, you're gonna be in town tomorrow. I know this is gonna be a great event at 2 o'clock at CUNY Law School. Just one last question here. How ominous is it? The repercussions with a successful extradition and a show trial in the Eastern District of Virginia – how scary is that to you?

Glen Ford: Oh, it's quite scary. The whole scenario has been terrifying ever since ... before Black Agenda Report, we saw ourselves listed on that blacklist on *The Washington Post*, a newspaper owned by one of the top oligarchs in the nation who also does 600 million dollars a year in business with the CIA. So we see that the national security state is at the helm in the Democratic Party, the party that the masses of black folks are allied with. And that means that the basic leftish, progressive political character of black America, which has put black America at the forefront of all progressive dissent and all progressive movements in this country, is seriously compromised by that affiliation with the Democrats.

Randy Credico: Well, Glen, I am looking forward because you just said an earful of some very interesting and cogent stuff there. And it's really a benefit to have you as a voice. Black Agenda Report is a very significant and important media outlet. And we look forward to seeing you tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. at CUNY Law School in Queens, where it's at.

[00:25:43]

Glen Ford: It's going to be a really, a really good program.

Randy Credico: All right. Well, thank you very much, Glen. And we'll see you tomorrow. All right. We'll be right back. We'll be right back with two of the other speakers tomorrow. Renata Avila and Max Blumenthal. After a little bit of I don't know what I even have up here, but play it. [music]

[00:27:40]

Randy Credico: You know me, folks, ... every week, I play some kind of theme music.

We had Paul Robeson last week. I'm a person that lives in the past, I'm a nostalgic guy, alright? Wistfully looking back at my youth. And I was in Nicaragua back in the '80s for five years, for seven years, actually. I spent a lot of time down there. And it was like being in Paris or in Berlin in the '20s, up until '32, I suppose. But I miss those days in Nicaragua, because a lot of people there's a lot of hope there. At that time, a lot of hope back in the 80s. And that was when the Concert for Peace... Kris Kristofferson played there, a whole bunch of others, Mercedes Sosa. So that's today's theme. But we may change it.

We're going to play a tune here in a minute here that I ... that is new. And Julian Assange is actually singing in it. So we're going to get to that in a minute, but we are now, I mentioned Renata Avila, who was in Abu Dhabi in the last week, a beautiful progressive nation, city nation called Abu Dhabi. She's in town. She's a globetrotting human rights lawyer for many years and she's been connected legally with the Assange brilliant legal team for, I guess, five or six years now. I know you've known him since two thousand and ... longer than that, right? Since 2011. You've been advising him, 2010, Renata Avila, and she joins us here in the studio in the East Village.

Welcome to Assange Countdown to Freedom. Again, it's been three years since we last saw you.

[00:29:34]
Renata Avila:

Yes. Three years since that we last saw each other and, yes, you just mentioned, what you were saying of the nostalgia of the past? Now, Latin-America is back to the past, sadly, in a very, very, very bad way. But I think that hope has been replaced because we don't see the way out. If you see what's going on in the region right now it's quite, quite disturbing. And we need Julian around to help us save what is left of the possibility of changing things. So, yeah...

Randy Credico:

Well, you know, it's interesting because when you first met him, I saw that you talked about Operation Condor, which, er, it seems like that's happening right now, you know, when you had the coup in Argentina, you had the coup in Chile, you had what happened in Brazil, it was like, Uruguay, that whole region, Operation Condor, and it seems like that's almost, with the exception of Argentina and Venezuela, which is like very frail right now, and I think they're going to tip them right out and replace them with a new Somoza or a new ... when you get a vacuum like that, we're not doing it for the sake of democracy in Venezuela, right? We're not doing it for the sake of democracy in Bolivia or in Cuba. So it does look like it's getting very dim out there.

[00:31:04]
Renata Avila:

It is. Actually I'm based in Chile, in Santiago, and if you read – I mean, I

wish we had the cables of what's going on right now, to understand what is really going on behind closed doors because it's really hard to read the situation and it is, of course, the international community has stopped reporting about it. You don't have independent media in the country. It is just a very fragile civil society there, trying to figure out what comes next. [...] It is different from the '80s because now we're living under constant surveillance, we are very predictable – I mean, the moves of civil society and the mood of the population is really predictable and easy to manipulate by the transparency of the... I mean, we keep giving up on ... I mean, before, if you were an activist, you had like the surprise factor. If you think of the Zapatistas for it, for instance, the surprise factor like you, others will not know your next moves. Now we are organizing the next moves in social media platforms. So that makes the situation completely different from before. We are like giving, in real time, the list of names of our comrades, constantly, to those in power. And we are giving them every minute, you know, the location even. Yeah, it is a very different scenario and that makes me more worried than before because I think that we did not do a good job in Latin America to educate people on their history. And even if the information of the horrible atrocities by the US and their military in our country is out there, I don't know if the kids in the barricades in Santiago know what... know their history and who was behind that and what are they capable of?

[00:33:08]

Randy Credico: Right. Well, we know that you're from Guatemala, a human rights lawyer in Guatemala, it's almost like an oxymoron, it must be a difficult occupation to be, you know, because of the image that I have of Guatemala, I read Bitter Fruit, I know about United Fruit and I know about, you know, the Árbenz coup in '54 and everything that preceded it. And, you know, Rio [?] and all of that. And has it gradually become better for a human rights lawyer to live there?

Renata Avila: You know, not really. I think that what if I compare Chile and Guatemala, in Chile, they have the false sensation of things getting better. In Guatemala we didn't, actually. There, the transition to democracy was really fragile. And it never like things never got better, really. And I think that that gives us a better sense of what's going on, like now is really bad. But at least young people, indigenous young people, they're very aware of what's going on, and they know who to blame, who to point out, who the enemies of the people are. That's more clear in the case of Guatemala if I compare it to Chile, where they lived in this bubble of thinking that they were, like, heading to the right direction when they were, like, actually heading to a crisis.

But to answer your question, you know, like, er, not really. It's really difficult, it's one of the countries with highest number of assassinated human-rights defenders. And if they don't kill you, they will make your life miserable, basically, with [inaudible], with any tricks that they can do to block your work. And that's why that's why I decided to do my work internationally, because Guatemala is not the exception, that's the trend in countries of that kind, of that time.

Randy Credico: Honduras, El Salvador

Renata Avila: Honduras, El Salvador, like, lots of other countries. And so I decided that I wanted to dedicate my life where I could, like, I want to see systemic change happening, and I see the trends, I see the structures. So I think they need to target my bullets to bigger pieces in the superstructures, in the system – concretely, those inflicting the law [inaudible], those imposing austerity within the financial system and those imposing these new automated digital imperialism in the tech industry. So that's what I do, you know.

[00:35:57]

Randy Credico: Well, you know, you mentioned that the cables, the absence of the cables, you know, I suppose sources out there that would like to provide but they're afraid, now that Julian is totally immobilized, there is a dearth of cables coming forward. I mean, I know Wikileaks is still operating but maybe some people out there are fearful to give out cables if they have access to them. Is that what you're referring to?

Renata Avila: Well, yeah, I think that it's, I mean, it is not, I'm not afraid of lack of sources, I'm afraid of lack of courage of those publishing, to be honest. I think that's their missing element right now. I do not know, I mean, I know for sure that we are not lacking people willing to elevate alarms, willing to blow the whistle, willing to provide information about the things going on. What ... I think that the trust is missing. The other colleague was mentioning this before is in... where we have the courage [inaudible] missing is in media. To be honest, I don't know if, for example, so-called respectable newspaper was receiving a batch of documents revealing corruption of people they like or of countries that are very convenient for U.S. business, I'm not sure that they will be publishing it. I mean, you know, that's ... the record of killed stories is so vast.

[00:37:43] Yeah. That's what ... that was the difference of WikiLeaks. Even if it was a hot potato, even if it were something that will make the life of those publishing really difficult, Julian didn't hesitate ever for a second to publish relevant information.

Randy Credico: Yeah. You know, he said, he said last year to Cornel West that he, you know, has a problem with everybody, like Democrats, Republicans, because he goes after everybody. He doesn't like, you know, censor anything, right? He goes after whatever is there that's relevant, he puts out. Right. He doesn't kill a story. An irrelevant story he wouldn't put out but, you know, significant cables and sources that provide information he will put out regardless of, you know, where the chips may fall.

Renata Avila: Precisely. And that's why many, many journalists are uncomfortable with him because he's more courageous than them, you know? And I think that that has been part of the tension out there. I would say the very short-sighted attitude of many journalists of not defending them, but they are starting. I'm very happy that the journalist community is starting to wake up and to realize how serious this is for them, even if they're not, you know, doing the kind of journalism Julian embraces. They are starting finally to realize how bad this is, not for Julian, for all of them.

Randy Credico: This is basically a Trojan horse to get him. And like, everyone's like, alright, he's not a journalist. But then their next, once they're in, they're next, and you see that, you know, somebody with the exception of Ken Delaney and this idiot Jim Acosta, you see people, even Rachel Maddow and Ari Melber and others who now say, wait a second, man, maybe he's not our kind of journalist but, you know, this could affect us. So they're now like getting nervous about it. And you see like twelve hundred journalists who have signed that petition on behalf of Julian, which is a lot. And I think we'll get a lot more.

We're being joined right now, who just came in with my coffee. [...]
Well, coming in last night, you came in from, this is great, you flew like 6000 miles to be here, Max, you flew, I mean, you took the train, which is like even more difficult, alright? Because I've been on that train from D.C.

[00:40:23]

Max Blumenthal: This is American infrastructure, right? I mean, this is like you know, it's like the Flintstone-mobile, it's like Amtrak is powered by a thousand hamsters on wheels. It's like my train didn't leave, basically, I wanted to be at your show and I had to rely on American infrastructure so it's the choice between Amtrak and the Chinatown bus or Greyhound. Chinatown bus I could have taken, you know, but coming out of D.C. it takes like two hours just to get out of D.C.. So I take Amtrak, the train's delayed for an hour and then I stand there in line, and, you know, the line is longer than like a bread line at the end of the Soviet Union.

Anyway, the train's delayed indefinitely so I get on another train and it finally leaves, gets me here at like 3:00 a.m. and I find out that they released the delay for the other train. So anyway, if, you know, the United States is in a terrible state. We haven't built any infrastructure in a long time except for surveillance infrastructure. That's really the point, right? That's where a lot of the money is going to. And now Trump is trying to dominate space, he's trying to start a space force. What's that about? It's all about signals intelligence, it's all about, I mean, it's all about dominating the information space.

Randy Credico: Yeah, that's where you're really... By the way, Max is co-hosting the rest of this show with me. Max was on last week, we got a solid 35 minutes and he's on tomorrow so I have like, you know, I have a huge guest here, Renata flew all the way in. Why was it so important for you to come all this way to participate in tomorrow's big event?

Renata Avila: Well, I think that was the mission. It was a specific instruction that Julian left last time I saw him, he said, like, you know, if I am in prison, you have to become my voice. You have to become like, I will be, I will be like, I will not be able to do anything, I will not be able to speak up, I will not be able to do my job. I will be completely neutralized. So I rely on all my lawyers and my friends to speak up and to elevate their concerns around this case, because this case is really, really bad news from now on. I mean, we are at the beginning of a century and that will define how far we can go.

Randy Credico: Well, you've known him since 2008. And I read it in this book here, how you met him in Budapest. And there's a lot of misperceptions, misconceptions about Julian Assange. What are the most striking ones that you'd like to clear up? That people have of him, the myth of Julian Assange. They don't know him, you know him personally. And the last couple of paragraphs, I actually started crying when you left him the last time when you went into the Ecuadorian embassy. So just some of the misperceptions about Assange...

Renata Avila: There's so many, I mean, so many, like as a paranoid, beta person? Not at all. I mean, he's one of the most pleasant persons to share time with. He has a lot of female friends, actually. And that's another thing that pisses me off. He has a really good relationship with powerful, strong women and interest in people around him. He's a really curious person with excellent relationship with children, for example. He, I mean, many blame him of these very arrogant, narcissistic... No, he's a very, very good friend that you can rely on. Many people are not aware of his past. He was a single dad, you know, he took care by himself, it's not like, nothing extraordinary, we women do it all the time, I mean, but it is an important thing, he's a caring father, he cared of his first child by himself

since the baby was like months old until the kid was a teenager. So I think that if those facts were reported more often, we could relate to him like, you know, like he's a genius but he's also someone, like, of his... from working class.

Randy Credico: Yeah

Renata Avila: He's someone who used to... I think the most important thing is we think how society presses people like Mark Zuckerberg or Bill Gates

Randy Credico: Jeff Bezos...

Renata Avila: Julian is as talented, if not more talented than all of them

Randy Credico: combined... he's really brilliant

Renata Avila: but.. [inaudible] the difference, the main difference is that he used his talent for the public interest

Randy Credico: Right.

Renata Avila: And there are very few of those.

Randy Credico: Right. Because he could have done what, like Bezos ... he's got like a one, you know, you see once in a while, like a media capability that he has a talent, that he has, the way he's able to dissect and read things. Max is here with us, Max Blumenthal. Do you have ...

Max Blumenthal: Well, I was just going to, I mean, I was just going to note, based on what you told me about Julian, how, you know, at thegrayzone.com, which I edit, we interviewed, we actually had a piece by Pablo Narváez, who was in the embassy... Sorry I got his name wrong, it's Fidel, not Pablo. I'm thinking of somebody else, Pablo Navarrete, who you might know, I confused the two. Fidel Narváez was in the embassy, he was in the embassy, he was an Ecuadorian diplomat, and he was combating a campaign of disinformation spread by, I mean it could have been the CIA but it was Ecuadorian intelligence, the Lenín Moreno government, that Julian Assange had wiped feces on the walls, that he had been impossible to be around, and Pablo and another Ecuadorian diplomat that we know and we've interviewed, Guillaume Long, both attested to the fact that, under these impossible conditions, where he was confined to how many rooms – two rooms, three rooms? Two rooms, he actually forged close relationships with many of the embassy staff. He was meticulous, completely dedicated to his work. And I just would question how others would react in those... in such a situation.

And then, at the same time, we had a campaign of disinformation in U.S. liberal media. When liberals in the U.S. are challenged on their imperial imperatives, they become extremely authoritarian. And what they seek to do with Julian and this is ... it's the playbook of what they do in a country

that they want to topple, where they reduce the entire country to one figure and then they paint that figure as pathological. So *The New Yorker* visited Julian Assange in the embassy and wrote this long profile that ultimately portrayed him as a narcissistic psychopath and sexist and fused his relationship with Pamela Anderson to kind of entice the reader into a certain direction. Chris Hayes, you know, on MSNBC, he's said, you know, Julian Assange is a horrible psychopath but we have to, you know, defend his freedom. That's kind of what we hear from a lot of these hosts. Rachel Maddow, you know, she helped create the space for the extradition of Assange and now she wants to put the brakes on.

So, I mean, I wonder if you could address, in particular, the campaign which is directed at American liberals but particularly American feminists: that he's a rapist and that he is someone who is actually politically right-wing, that he's not someone who progressives could support politically.

[00:49:10]

Renata Avila: Well, that was engineered and it has been ten years, you know? 10 years of undermining Julian this way, like, I remember the first ... I was still living in Guatemala when the first comments were starting to, like, as he became visible. Because before his work was celebrated by these same liberals, Amnesty International gave him an award because of his work in Kenya. And he was celebrated, like, his fight against corruption was celebrated because it was targeting like, you know, countries in the global South. Then [it] started, like, you know, like from people from the U.S., specifically from U.S. media and tech media, at the time, I started hearing stupid comments like "Julian is bad with women". And I was like, I'm his friend, he's not, I mean, he's shy, you know? He's a computer person, he's not a people person in the sense that he will not be like this, er, highly social, but he was very dedicated to his job. And I started to worry because those rumors started to spread and then... – classically, in my country, if you want to destroy someone, you have three things that you can do. You can do something related to women, to taxes or to drugs.

Max Blumenthal: They say here, if you get caught with a live boy or a dead girl, that's the end of you.

Renata Avila: Oh, I didn't know that, and, well, in Guatemala it only takes a picture, you know, a picture with someone.

Max Blumenthal: Unless you're Jimmy Morales

Renata Avila: [laughs] Ooooooh! And Julian doesn't drink.

Max
Blumenthal: I know.

Renata Avila: Julian has no money. So you had only one option left, you know, like... My god, I dedicated so long to read all the documents available on that Swedish case. And it was really tragic because I think that it was a double purpose because [he] went shopping for the best jurisdiction to host WikiLeaks, without considering this potential [inaudible] vulnerability. Sweden was the perfect place. I mean, if you are someone who ignores completely the geopolitics and you're completely naive and believe [inaudible] the 'super-democratic' brand...

Randy Credico
or Max
Blumenthal: Olof Palme, right?

Renata Avila: And sadly, and sadly, Julian believed at that time and the people around him believed this story of the super-democratic Scandinavia, because the laws in Sweden are really, really, really good for freedom of the press. So he was looking for a place to have the most resilient, the most censorship-resilient hub to register WikiLeaks as our newspaper and live there, you know, like he thought, naively, and he didn't see this close connection of Sweden with the US.

And so they needed to get rid of him as quick as possible. Also, it is very interesting and many people do not know that the base of support of Julian was mostly female. At that time, so, WikiLeaks was not supported by foundations, by money from US philanthropists, you know, it was supported by an average donation of \$20 a month. Beautiful, you know, beautiful like that. If you think of an ideal of independent media, it's a little bit like the Bernie campaign.

Randy Credico: I was just going to say that: [impression] "I think I took that from WikiLeaks."

Max
Blumenthal: and PayPal has cut them off?

Renata Avila: It was, it didn't happen. It was just before, before this scandal happened. If an intelligence analyst was looking at, okay, how I destroy them. I alienate the main support base. I try to destroy the project to host WikiLeaks in the most accurate jurisdiction and I destroy the reputation of the only visible leader. And that's why, they did it one by one. They did it very quickly. They did it with the sex scandal, do you know. Of course, he had submitted, and there's some, also something that many do not know, many ignore, but at the moment that this scandal happened in Sweden, he had already submitted a registration form for WikiLeaks to become a Swedish newspaper and for him to be a

resident of Sweden. So they needed to get him out as soon as possible, you know. That was their avenue, that was avenue they chose. Interestingly, the first prosecutor dismissed completely the situation. I mean, she said, like, no way. There's no crime here. And she closed the case. And 10 years after, I mean 9 years and almost 10 years after the Swedish system, like, closed the case for the very same reason, there's no evidence, so, a law [inaudible] was used for a decade, with two purposes: to keep him captive and to destroyed his reputation. And precisely to, because we live in a, you know, there's no a scale of grades, there's no criteria, there's no ... You get so punished as a woman to support, just, in some spheres, just because you're voicing your support.

Max
Blumenthal:

This is the cul... this is the particular postmodern culture we live in, that Julian has spoken out against, and I won't say... I don't agree with a lot of the views that he's voiced, er cultural viewpoints. But if you voice these views in this culture, in this liberal culture in the U.S., a lot of people refer to it 'cancel culture', 'P.C. culture', 'woke culture', 'SJW' – 'social justice warrior' culture, I don't know what term I would use for it, but there is a very rigid culture that has been cultivated in and established in the academy in the US and has been sort of spread and marketed through corporate America, through national Democratic Party campaigns, through social media. And if you violate the kind of rigid norms, if you don't conform, you get canceled. And Julian, he was very outspoken on social media and said things that went completely against the grain in many ways. I saw him taunting people who adhered to this culture. But at the same time, the people who adhere to it, I see them as dupes who've been sort of propagandized, indoctrinated. It's very hard to resist this kind of indoctrination and liberal indoctrination is much more insidious and sophisticated than conservative indoctrination, which comes through the church.

So they are people who would have been his support base, as you mentioned, but they turned, they were turned against him. And in many ways, that 'woke' culture was weaponized against Julian to paint him as an insane right-wing libertarian fanatic. And, you know, then, of course, the effect of 2016, the Podesta emails, the DNC leaks, 'handing the presidency over' - he was blamed for 'handing the presidency over' through Mr. Back-channel to my left, to someone who said that he likes to grab women by the pussy... This, to me, seemed like the final blow, culturally, to Julian Assange, who really should be seen globally as one of the last living revolutionaries yet not on.

Renata Avila:

I have to say that it was not only to him, like, it affected an ecosystem that was pushing for something different. And that... and that's very important to highlight because... and it gradually got worse because the

things that we are fighting against consolidated their power. And I'm referring here to the big tech companies that now dominate completely the way we spread information, you know? Like, one of the important things that WikiLeaks was what this platform decentralized and not mediated by algorithms that are, like, shady and not driven by the maximization of engagement through advertising. And I think that that business model, I mean, it was working, I mean, it was independent media, funded by the people, decentralized, completely free from the constraints that advertising ... And that was attacked as a model ...

Max
Blumenthal: and the Freedom of the Press Foundation pulled out, am I right?

Blumenthal:

[00:57:40]

Renata Avila: Oh, yes, so, yes, you know, that's an interesting case that maybe I discuss tomorrow in detail if we have the time because it was a vehicle. We wanted to fight them, the financial censorship. We wanted it to be ... we wanted that foundation to be the most courageous foundation in the US. To start, like, supporting and defending the most radical media because we wanted it to be shut down because what Michael Ratner wanted, I mean, the idea was to get it shut down so we could take that case to the Supreme Court, you know? It was a case pilot case to test and fix the system that was doing corporate censorship on the ways to finance independent journalism. Sadly, it got ... that plan didn't go ahead and now is yet another foundation.

Max
Blumenthal: Yeah, right, and it's funded by Pierre Omidyar, am I right?

Blumenthal:

Renata Avila: I don't know who, I mean, probably on the ... I'm not saying that what they do is wrong ...

Max
Blumenthal: I am...

Blumenthal:

Renata Avila: I mean, they feel... but that was not the purpose, you know? We need, we need ... and now is too late, you know?

Max
Blumenthal: Yeah, well, you know, I was arrested on the false word of Venezuelan opposition, falsely accused of assault, I was ... It was completely phony, my house was essentially raided. I was put in jail for two days. I faced a trial. And it was retaliation for my reporting. They didn't like the reporting that I was doing, the Venezuelan opposition, so they targeted me. The police made no effort to investigate this. Then I was smeared in mainstream media. All these figures who have, you know, who are just supporters of empire said, you know, proceeded to say that I beat an old

woman up. They said it was absolutely true, so ... many of the similar tactics were being used against me.

And the Freedom of the Press Foundation announced that they will not take up my case because I was not in the act of reporting. And they announced that on Twitter and got ratioed. They got absolutely attacked by people who were outraged. And they said, you know, Jamal Khashoggi – not that I'm Jamal Khashoggi, but, you know, he wasn't in the act of reporting. Just what is the criteria here? So then they called me and I did a long interview with them and they asked me what was going on. And I told them and they said, well, maybe we'll look into it and they didn't do anything. And you know, what I see with these billionaire-backed NGOs, is actually an effort to supplant the model that WikiLeaks created, which was truly independent and people-powered. But it looks like they actually support freedom and democracy. I would also say the Committee to Protect Journalists, I'm going to speak about them tomorrow and their refusal to acknowledge Julian. But the NGO sector has not only betrayed Julian Assange, they are actually part of a conscious imperial effort to replace his model and just put it into the dustbin of history.

Renata Avila: Absolutely. I absolutely agree. I mean, and it was not the only case – *who* was really helping Snowden back then? I have dealt... Like, a part of my life is to, I mean, often I get these messages in the middle of the night, I have an emergency... and because, when you are a friend of radicals, of proper radicals, you know that your friends are going to get into trouble. And the NGO ecosystem, if you want to save the life of someone, if you want to spare them jail, is not the answer *at all*. I mean, we need to rebuild this ecosystem of international solidarity that is missing. I mean, I need to be able, like, an example: I need to be able, if you get in trouble, I mean, you are like, I don't know. You're in Honduras, you get into trouble – I need to be able to point you out at a safe house and then get you out of the country in 24 hours. That will be my ideal job because I'm tired of trying to get people out of the prison system because once they are in it is really hard to get them out, you know? I don't trust a single NGO to do that. I don't trust a single NGO to courageously support those... fast enough, quick enough, efficient enough. So I think that we need to rethink the model. I don't think that the NGO model is advancing rights...

Max Blumenthal: They're supported by billionaires who are cut-outs of the intelligence agencies to support reporters and activists who are advancing empire. So if those activists or reporters, particularly activists, are, you know, part of a group that's funded by USAID or the National Endowment for Democracy and they're trying to spread havoc against a leftist

government in Nicaragua or Venezuela, they will be supported by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, even if they're arrested for a few hours. If the journalist is, you know, working with the Nicaraguan opposition during a violent coup attempt, they will be supported by the Committee to Protect Journalists if they're nonviolently deported. But if they're someone who, if they're from Radio YA, for example, a radio station in Managua that was burned down by the opposition that the US was supporting, we won't even hear about it. So it's *completely* partisan. It's partisan.

Renata Avila: Yeah, and that's why I was saying, I have to clarify, yeah, I have to clarify, I was saying about my friends... So how can we, like, we need to build the alternative, and, you know, we need to start by saving Julian Assange. If our community proves that we can do it right, if our community proves that the unity that we are producing with this series of events, like the event tomorrow night at CUNY, if we prove effectiveness, if we prove unity, I think that that's the best starting point to save precisely the kind of people that you are describing. And we cannot, I mean, we cannot make mistakes here, because the Assange precedent is too important to be disorganized or to be, like, selective on whether to support him or not. This is a test case for progressives. If we cannot get him out, the message that we will be sending out is very bad news.

Randy Credico: I have to take a quick break. This is Randy Credico, Live On The Fly – Assange Countdown to Freedom. Just wanna take a quick music break and this is something modern, here, this is something very modern, this is Calle 13...

Renata Avila: Calle Trece!

Randy Credico: Calle Trece, of course, si claro! I was introduced to this music this morning by Renata. And we got it by Anonymous Scandinavia by this afternoon. And so we're going to play that and you can explain it ... and Julian, listen for Julian in this little clip out of this 4 minute tune. It's just about a minute long.

[music]

Voice of Julian
Assange: "We live in the world that your propaganda made
But where you think you are strong you are weak
Your lies tell us the truth we will use against you
Your secrecy shows us where we will strike
Your weapons reveal your fear for all to see
From Cairo to Quito a new world is forming
The power of people armed with the truth"

Randy Credico: Alright. Alright. So what was that, Renata? What I just heard?

Renata Avila: Well, it was it was actually recorded at the embassy with this icon of music from Latin America. And it was very interesting because it was, if you see the video online it is in Palestine, and so it was, like, a collection of all the struggles and the symbolism there, there is a parallel in the struggle of sovereignty of the Palestinian people and the struggle of sovereignty, of information, of Julian.

Randy Credico: So that was pretty hip! I mean, it just shows the kind of character that he is. I mean, I was in the embassy three times in 2017. We talked about dogs, we talked about everything outside of his work. And he did an impression of John Pilger, the guy has an incredible sense of humor. He really does, if he got to know him... I mean, just three times, and I really got to like him. You've known him for 12 years and I know how close you are with him.

Max, did you have a follow-up question?

Max Blumenthal: Yeah, well, I mean, just wanted to follow up on Renata's really important point about this being a moment to show solidarity with Julian. One of the things that we can do in the U.S., we have a presidential campaign in a Democratic primary that's really an ideological contest, is to actually put pressure on the candidates to make a statement about Julian.

We heard from Pete Buttigieg that he was troubled by Obama's clemency for Chelsea Manning, which is, you know, much more extreme than someone calling, actually, I mean, in this political climate than someone calling for Julian Assange's extradition, because that's the president, the Democratic president actually giving clemency to a whistleblower who was being tortured and was suffering immensely.

But we should, you know, there should be pressure on Bernie Sanders. The only candidate who's spoken out is, of course, the most demonized one, Tulsi Gabbard, who's been very strongly in support of Julian Assange. But we heard two days ago in the British parliament a call by Jeremy Corbyn for not extraditing Julian Assange and a question to Prime Minister Boris Johnson, will he do so?

Renata Avila: The interesting thing is that Jeremy Corbyn tweeted after he was defeated, you know... he's in the safe zone. And I think that this is a test, also, if, er, these calculations happen, if you think something and you don't speak up, if you think that it's wrong and you don't speak up while you're campaigning, this silence, this strategic silence, not to alienate people and lose a couple of votes will be the barometer defining your time in power. Because if you don't say the things now, you will not be able to say the things later, you will not be able to do the things later.

And I think that Bernie Sanders, I mean, and the other candidates should... it is a very important test because we are not talking here about the freedom of one person. We are talking about a basic piece of the architecture of freedom of expression in the future, because what this case is saying is, like, only licensed journalists in specific media will be able to speak up to power, to hold the army accountable, basically. And only American journalism will be able to do so, because if you're in Australia and reporting on the US, if you are Spanish reporting on the US your freedom means nothing for this country.

Max Blumenthal: Poor Australia, which is America's vassal in the Pacific.

Randy Credico: Well, let's continue with that. So Bernie Sanders has not said anything yet. Somebody should get to him because we're not going to get it from Amy Klobuchar, who supports mass surveillance. She was one of the senators that supported the extension of mass surveillance. But let me say... so you have Jeremy Corbyn – too late. But Obrador spoke out in Mexico and Lula in Brazil. You have some Australian senators that have traveled to London this week and you also have in Germany an interesting ...

Renata Avila: Yes, actually, that's a nice update. I mean, that's good news to share with the people. There's a very solid group of international observers attending the trial of Julian and mostly composed by European parliamentarians. I think that that's excellent news, because if, for example, in Germany it's not even just Die Linke, it is a multi-party coalition from a whole spectrum of ideology because European values reject with all their system that, in the West, in the heart of the West, journalism is being persecuted, tortured and silenced. That's unacceptable. I mean, that's very important sign of congruence because if Europe wants to keep, like, you know, pointing at them as this place where still some values are, like, prized and respected, this is the case that they need to ... where they need to show their real principles.

And that also is a very disturbing situation. If you consider the situation that no... that the Democratic candidates here are not speaking about that because it is not about Julian, is about the future. So that's what they think is acceptable – it is acceptable to prosecute journalists? Everybody voting in this country should be very concerned about it because it is saying that it is okay to prosecute [persecute?] journalists. It is okay to subject someone to torture, it is okay to repeat it again and re-weaponize the law to punish Chelsea Manning. I mean, it is unacceptable... the silence here is unacceptable.

The voters need to push this further to get them to show their true colors about this.

Randy Credico: Well, they should be circling the wagons rather than the firing squad on Julian Assange because they are next. That's the way I look at it. We have just, like, five or six minutes left, I think seven minutes left. Let me just ask you, if you can summarize in a few minutes, because I know Max has another question and I want to get this out there...

Both Max Blumenthal from the Grayzone Project and human-rights... international globe-trotting human-rights attorney Renata Avila will be tomorrow at CUNY Law School at 2:00 p.m., along with Glen Ford and Jim Goodale of The New York Times. And Anya Parampil will be moderating an extraordinary panel tomorrow at 2 o'clock. So please get out to ... we need a big crowd out there and there'll be some videos of Noam Chomsky and others, I think.

Also the Pentagon Papers guy – I can't ... my brain is soft right now.

Max
Blumenthal:

Ellsberg

Randy Credico: Ellsberg, Daniel... How could I forget? I'm getting old! So we'll be seeing all of that tomorrow. It's an extraordinary panel and it's going to be a great event. Let's just kind of give the audience out there a summary of where we are right now and what's next, OK?

Renata Avila: Yeah, yes. So we... And it's really good to have this event tomorrow because if you come I can explain in more detail and we can chat even after the panel and have to [inaudible].

But what's happening now? Extradition processes are very long in the U.K. and what's coming up next, on the 24th, it will be, like, the begin of extradition trial and it will start on the 24th with the arguments of the U.S.. That's a very important day because they will say what they have against him and I hope that everybody on the 24th of February is really upset about it because they will they basically say we want him because he is doing journalism we didn't like.

On the second day, the defense says, like, no way, you're not going to get him because he's a journalist and this is a political persecution and he's not extraditable.

On the third day is a summary and then they start evaluating whether the treaty between the US and the UK is valid to extradite him and it continues for two days, you know, like, this discussion on whether he is extraditable or not.

[01:15:28] And of course, the defense team will argue this is a political offense. He shouldn't be extradited. Of course, the US will say, no, we want him.

And, on the last day of the hearing, they will define ... other matters like secret ... the U.S. wants to keep anonymous witnesses. I mean, they want to keep secret the name of witnesses and they want to keep [inaudible], you know, really opaque, the situation. And so the defense will fight against that.

It is not a public hearing. I mean, it will not be livestreamed, we will only get the report of people like you and other journalists ...

Randy Credico: Right, it's going to be like being in a tollbooth, that's how small this court is ...

Renata Avila: But that is important because once we know all the cards would be at the table then, all the cards will be, like, presented by the prosecution and defense.

And then we really have two months to show all our solidarity, to show, to, like, really undermine the positions submitted by the U.S. government, because only in May, only after, like, a long break, on May 18th, the trial will resume and the discussion on the merits of the case will start and it will go on until the 5th of June and then the court will have some time to decide. And so we will not have probably the decision on whether he will be extradited or not until after the end of the summer. And then if, regardless of the decision, he can appeal. And it goes on, like, we have ...

Randy Credico: But in the meantime, he's going to be in Belmarsh Prison.

Renata Avila: Not only that, that's the other important point, I think that there will be, like, a huge pressure so he waits this time under house arrest, instead of prison.

Randy Credico: So they're looking to do that. The lawyers are looking for him, to...

Renata Avila: That will be, I mean, in the first place, I mean, he should be, like, er ...

Randy Credico: Pinochet! *Pinochet* got house arrest and he was wanted for killing 3000, 10000 people in Chile, many of them [inaudible] and they put him in a mansion!

Renata Avila: But, you know, this is a political case and they will do anything because the punishment is the process in this case. It has been already 10 years. I mean, Julian was 39 when it did start and now he's 48.

Randy Credico: It's really difficult. I know how close you are with them. And this is really a very sad case. What he has gone through. I mean, I know he is a resilient guy, we look at him, the guy is like, wow, but he's human and he's going through some of the most difficult... This is a persecution of

the highest order and he is a political prisoner and he's been [inaudible]. So people have got to show up tomorrow. We really have to show up tomorrow, please. And we have to mobilize, get people – it's the 'asses of the masses' need to get out on the streets. In London they're going to do it, in Australia, in Berlin, all over the world. People need to rise up because this is the most significant political... As Margaret Ratner said, she said the difference between this and other political prisoners, if he's extradited, just borders and crosses fascism.

Renata Avila: Yes. Yes. And imagine if we cannot hold them accountable, if we cannot report on the U.S. military, what will happen to countries like mine?

Randy Credico: Yes. Well, they'll have joint exercises in the phony drug war.

Renata Avila: Yeah. And I think that that's one of the reasons why the Germans are very concerned because their country is, like, is a big military base from the US, basically.

Randy Credico: That's what the Marshall Plan was about, wasn't it? [inaudible]

Renata Avila: Yes. I think that Europe has to be very concerned... But the U.S. has to be concerned about this. I mean, it's not looking good and it's not looking good for the future of democracy.

Randy Credico: People are unfortunately spending too much time on their cell phones. You know what I mean? And social media, rather than, I mean, you know, I'm talking about doing nonsensical stuff, but they really need to get educated here. If they're going to use that, they need to get educated. Am I right? They really need to find a way. If you're going to use social media, try to get information that's real.

And they can do it at the Gray Zone. You can do it at Black Agenda Report.

And Max, if you have one last question, then we're going to continue for a book report. I don't want you to go anywhere.

Max Blumenthal: A book report?

Randy Credico: Yes. Not by you! By Howie Hawkins, who actually supports Julian Assange. On this book here. So just another ... if you have any last follow-up question to Renata Avila.

Max Blumenthal: Well, we learned I think last year about UC Global, this private surveillance company, which was actually being used by the CIA through the Ecuadorian government to spy on Julian Assange. And I think that Julian was very well aware he was being spied on. But what the government did here, while accusing Julian Assange of violating the Espionage Act, is to actually embrace the very same behavior, worse

behavior than it's accusing him of. And to replicate the behavior that it applied against Daniel Ellsberg in the Ellsberg case.

So I have two questions. I guess the first question is, you know, how do you think the behavior of UC Global and the CIA could actually impact Julian Assange's defense?

And the other question I have is, if Julian Assange is extradited, will he be in the Eastern District Court of Virginia, where pretty much all major security cases are heard by a judge named Leonie Brinkema?

I've actually been in that court, witnessed some of the phony terror trials of the Bush administration. And these trials generally, they have something, like, a 99% conviction rate. So, you know, on top of the question about UC Global, what would Julian Assange face if he were extradited?

Renata Avila: You know, like, if this was a case as any other case and as a political case, one of the tests of due process is that you can prepare a defense and that the defense is prepared, like, in private, that it is not... And that there's a prospect of a free and fair trial by an independent judge or jury. And in the case of Julian, I think that the situation at the embassy eroded so much the possibilities and it limited our ability, it really limited our ability to prepare a case. And so it has been 10 years that the order said ...

Max Blumenthal: You can't talk to your client!

Renata Avila: Not only I cannot talk to my client, I was leaving my devices and my devices were bugged and the devices of all the lawyers were bugged.

Max Blumenthal: That's I mean, when you're talking to your client, you're talking to the CIA.

Renata Avila: And not only that, I mean, it was, for a lawyer, even operating inside the embassy was oppressive, you know, and we were, like, even, like, sneaking into the ladies toilet to whisper into the ear fundamental things for Julian. And even that was recorded. And that, I mean, if you cannot prepared your defense, it is contaminated. I mean, it is a device ... you cannot solve it. And I think that that's one of the strong reasons to declare all this process – it is not legitimate.

Max Blumenthal: That should be amplified. I mean, that, in particular, should be amplified. More people need to know about that. And the mainstream media should... because that's a very scary legacy...

Renata Avila: As the lawyer, it was one of the hardest experiences because we knew, we knew that we were, like, spied on. We didn't know until now for how many agencies, you know?

The other aspect is, like, it will not be a fair trial here. I mean, and that's one of the arguments. It is a political persecution, it is not a prosecution, it is a persecution, this case.

And I think that the second example is the way that Chelsea Manning is being treated now. I mean, if you put the two things together, it is obvious that this case shouldn't *be*. I mean, anyone believing in the rule of law and the right of a free and fair trial should oppose strongly this circus.

Randy Credico: At this point they really don't care. The CPS, the U.K. Crown Prosecut[ion] Service, which collaborated with the Trump administration, I mean, Trump is, you know, totally, like, laughed at by the British entire system. And yet they are doing his work as lapdogs. Right now, the CPS UK is actually a vassal entity under the U.S. Justice Department, under Barr. People gotta understand that. And why do they continue to collaborate? First of all, they do the thing ... they collaborated on or they instigated this bogus investigation by the Swedes. They're the ones that did it. Look at the FOI results that Stefania Maurizi was able to elicit, the complicity of the Crown Prosecution Service with the Swedish government, forcing them to keep open that bogus investigation – there was never a charge, it was just an investigation.

Renata Avila: You know how bad it is? I mean, right now there's this process trying to extradite that Sacoola woman, the CIA woman who killed a kid in the UK. I mean, she killed a kid. It's so dependent, the UK is such a... you know, like, it's reversed the role, now it's such a colony of the US. They are not even defending the right of, you know, justice of a British family. What can we expect? A CIA woman, you know, like, that's the level of independence that we can expect, especially when they are

Randy Credico: Anne Sacoolas, right.

Renata Avila: Yes, sorry, I got that name is wrong but I got the facts right! We don't know what her real name is, CIA agents, so...

Max Blumenthal: And the UK is doing nothing. She killed a 19-year-old British citizen.

Randy Credico: So you see that, the hypocrisy...

Renata Avila: That's the level of commitment. And something ridiculous was, like, you have the FCO promoting freedom of the press while doing deals with the Saudis who Khashoggi and doing... and going so fresh about having Julian Assange under such terrible conditions for so long. I mean, it was so

horrendous, the responses from them, that they will even deny the right of some minutes of sun at the balcony of the embassy. They were saying if he's at the balcony, we can arrest him.

Randy Credico: Wow, that's amazing. It's just, look, I could go on all day. But, folks, I want to hear... there's a lot more that Renata Avila has to say. And tomorrow you don't want to miss it, along with Max Blumenthal.

We're going to take a short break, we're going to play, when we come back, this whole thing with the SAMs [Special Administrative Measures], right? When we come back we'll play a tape with Julian Assange talking about what's going to happen if he does get extradited in the lack of communications that he will have. He was alluding last week [sic] in this tape that I have to Lynne Stewart, who did, like, four years in prison for violating the SAMs agreement. And let's just play this quick musical break and we'll come back with Ralph Poynter.

[music]

[01:29:27]

Randy Credico: Alright. Another golden oldie from the '80s and Nicaragua, Carlos Mejía Godoy, he and his brother played a lot of that music down there when I was in Nicaragua in the 80s.

Alright. Last week we had Ben Weisner on from the ACLU and he explained this whole SAMs thing. And before we bring on our next guest, I want to play it for you. This is not what Ben Weiser said, this is Julian Assange from 2015/2016. And we'll be right back with Ralph Poynter.

voice of Julian
Assange: "It's possible, depending on the shifts in U.S. politics, that I would be sentenced to death. Probably not but that doesn't mean there's not a risk of sort of a living death. In the United States, there's something called SAMs. And for national security cases, terrorism cases, they put people in SAMs restrictions, which is, you're in incommunicado detention. So even if you communicate something to the public through your lawyer, *the lawyer* goes to prison. And this has happened in the United States."

Randy Credico: As he said it. It's happened in the United States and it was Lynne Stewart who it happened to and she was convicted and sent to prison. And we have on the phone a civil rights activist for decades and the husband of Lynne Stewart, Ralph Poynter. Ralph, thank you for joining us.

Ralph Poynter: Well, thank you for having me, Randy. Well, this is perfect for you to be doing the program for the work that you have done around BAI and outside of BAI. So you're very familiar.

Randy Credico: Well this ain't BAI, my friend, we're not doing this... This is *CovertAction Magazine*. Alright? We won't edit that out, but this is *CovertAction Magazine*, Defend [?] Assange, you'll get this on many platforms.

But Ralph, the reason why you heard that audio there of Julian Assange referring to Lynne Stewart, your wife. So, she was connected... And I mean, I did about 100 benefits, if you recall, over the years. I did every single one of those at Rocky Sullivan's. So I want you to tell us – she got convicted and, you know, then she's sent far away from you. So tell us about the medical conditions, what she went through, the ordeal for the next... ensuing years.

Ralph Poynter: Yes, well, as you know, political people are treated differently than other people, as demonstrated in the trial of Sekou Odinga, when he held up his fingers before the jury and he said criminals in America are not treated this way, the way they tore his fingernails out and crushed his fingers. And from then on, when they capture political prisoners, the treatment is different, more severe, and we call them death camps.

And Lynne had a diagnosis of cancer, breast cancer, and she was due for treatment the week they sent her in. Now the lawyers, at the time, promised that she would get treatment in jail because there were many of us saying she should not go, she should go to the hospital and let them drag her out of the hospital. In the hospital – we call them death camps, because they torture our political people by denying them medical treatment. And then when they do get medical treatment, the conditions are outrageous: shackled, et cetera, prison guards in the room while you're getting treatment, et cetera. And so it was a terrible thing that she went through.

There were people who helped and it was you and Bob Lederer and other people sending letters. And this was Kevin Gilroy of the Partisans Defense. From every part of the movement, people recognized the death camp that our political prisoners are in. And the only thing that saved Lynne was people like yourself and the so much help that she got with letters, constant letters, and one of the things when she first went in, I had said she has done more for employment in the prisons because they had to put on extra people just to handle her mail. And it made a difference. And this is what we must do for our political prisoners. We must recognize they're being tortured. And there's so many outrageous stories. When she, you know, being shackled, she was an old lady and they had the loose shackles on her waist, on her feet. And she fell once and she came close to the ground, and she says but for two football-like guards caught her just as her face scrapes the ground, she would have been in terrible condition. And they had guards with M15s and the whole nine yards.

And her chemo went untreated for damn near two years. And our daughter, who's a doctor, who spoke, spoke out against what was happening. And she says her type of cancer is a type that, if you don't treat it, the person is going to die. And with the reaction of people to her picture that went out, it was the only thing you could recognize about her was her smile. And it was a very sad smile.

I can't explain it, other than torture. You're sick and you get no treatment. When I visited Lynne in Texas, that's Fort Worth, Texas, this was a medical center. She was so sick, she couldn't sit up. And so we needed two chairs and Lynne laid on two chairs and I was allowed to stand. They make you sick, basically, when you visit in prison.

And there was a decent prison guard, who was a senior prison guard, who allowed Lynne to lay on the chairs and visit. And one of the things that the prison guard had said, her daughter was a college student and looked up Lynne and said, you know, like, she knew that Lynne shouldn't be there.

And as Julian has said, Assange said, the Special Administrative Measures, that were first introduced to keep the Mafia from declaring hits from inside the prison, they use the Special Administrative Measures on those accused of terror. And then they went to Lynne Stewart. And Lynne Stewart said, listen, she said to the legal profession, I am the canary in the coal mine. If you let me die, you're in trouble. And they did. We didn't get the amicus briefs that we were expecting from the legal establishment in America because, by that time, they had scared everyone to death. There was no longer attorney-client privilege. And Lynne, who was a person who understood 'special measures', that is, against people of color, a different type of law for people of color, there was a different type of law for political prisoners, biased laws. And what I'd like to say is that everyone who hears this should get the address of a political prisoner, go to [the] Jericho [Movement], go to any of the political prisoner organizations and write a letter.

And Mutulu Shakur is in a situation where he may die. We have to get him out quick, OK. And that's why Assange is so important, that he raised this issue of the way that they treat political prisoners in America. And we have to, you know, now that we have the information, the response is force your political organization to write letters to the prison authorities.

And, er, I want to thank... it was a full movement, Support Lynne.

Randy Credico: Well, thank you – Ralph, we're running real late here. Thank you for that poignant story there and sharing with this audience what kind of prison

conditions and medical conditions someone like Julian Assange will be facing if he is extradited and the persecution continues in this country.

Ralph Poynter

Ralph Poynter: We must support Assange for doing that great work that he has done.

Randy Credico: Thank you very much. Ralph Poynter. Six decades as an activist.

Alright. Do we have him now? We have. So, I've been talking about this book here, it's called *In Defense of [Julian] Assange* and it's edited by Tariq Ali and Margaret Ratner Kunstler. And both of them have introductions in this book. And you have, like, John Pilger, you have Craig Murray, you have, right now we have Renata Avila in this room who has written, a beautiful story by her when she met Assange in Budapest. And so the person that did one of the reviews for this book, *In Defense of [Julian] Assange*, is Green Party candidate for president Howie Hawkins, also a long-time activist.

Howie Hawkins, can you give us a 4-minute – because we're at the end of the show – 4-minute book review of *In Defense of [Julian] Assange*?

Howie Hawkins: Yeah, I can. The book's called *In Defense of Julian Assange* and it brings out all the reasons why you should be in the fight for the freedom of Julian Assange and why it's a fight for the freedom of all of this.

It's got 41 contributors, it's 400 pages long. You'll recognize some of the names, like, Julian Assange himself, Noam Chomsky, Daniel Ellsberg, Chris Hedges, Matt Taibbi and Renata Avila, who I believe you have as a guest on your program.

And I think what's uniquely valuable about this collection is that it brings together an international group of contributors, including journalists and lawyers who have worked directly with Assange and WikiLeaks. And there hasn't been a lot of that we've been able to read over here in the United States.

I think the introduction by the editors, Tariq Ali and Margaret Kunstler, is a great overview of the current case and the issues at stake and that I think is worth the price of the book alone. It provides the details of the case, you know, the persecution and prosecution of Assange and WikiLeaks by the United States and its allies. But it also draws out the broader implications of this case. Things like an independent media and an open Internet, privacy rights, state surveillance, civil liberties and due process. And it talks about things like the intertwining of corporate and state power structures in the relationship between the imperialist countries in the global South and the Trump-Russia investigation. And what this case is doing to Chelsea Manning, who's been wrapped up

again in, you know, is right now in prison because she won't testify to a grand jury.

It goes into the philosophical tenets of WikiLeaks and Assange. So it covers a lot of areas. But there's no party line that goes across all 41 essays. The contributors do have their differences on some of these topics I just listed. What all the contributors are firmly agreed is that the indictments against Assange should be dropped and then Assange should be freed from custody in the interest of justice for him and freedom of speech and the press for all of us. Unfortunately, there is ... Can you hear me?

Randy Credico: Yes. Continue.

Howie Hawkins: Alright. Unfortunately, there is a party line between the Democrats and Republicans, that they're both towing on this case, you know? Trump tried to discredit the press as an enemy of the people. What he really has a problem with is that the press at least sometimes is the enemy of state secrets and lies. But Trump is not alone in this. The persecution of Assange is bipartisan. There's a good article by Kevin [inaudible] that details this, about how the Democrats were calling for the prosecution of Assange under that repressive 1917 Espionage Act and they were successful in getting platforms like Amazon, PayPal, Visa and MasterCard to ban WikiLeaks, which was a source of income for WikiLeaks. ... Pardon me?

Randy Credico: I said, that's all in this book called *In Defense of Julian Assange*. Right?

Howie Hawkins: It's all in there. And a lot more.

Randy Credico: And a lot more there, it's amazing. So you recommend people reading that book. We've got 30 seconds left, Howie Hawkins. And you are the only candidate, outside of Tulsi Gabbard, who is running for president that has spoken clearly, often and with great passion in defense of Julian Assange. And thank you for doing that. And please, maybe you will inspire some of the Democrats out there, because I'm not going to vote for someone that doesn't support Julian Assange. I'll tell you that. Seriously. I mean, I know how important this election is but if they're not going to support Assange, they're going to have a hard time getting my vote because that means they're anti-free-press. I know you're on your way to Maine for a speaking engagement there. I wish you well. Your website for president is what?

Howie Hawkins: howiehawkins.us

Randy Credico: Alright. Well, mostly people here are from Europe, so they won't be able to vote for you but I certainly will, Howie, alright, I live in New York. It's safe to do that. Howie Hawkins, my good dear friend, thank you for that

wonderful book report. And I know it's also at OR Books - has your book report right there. You can read it, share it and buy this book. Howie Hawkins, thank you once again, my friend.

Howie Hawkins: Well, thanks for having me.

Randy Credico: OK, pleasure.

Alright. Well, we got Howie finally. And that was very nice.

Any closing remarks, you'd like to make, Ms Avila, the great Renata Avila, the great globetrotting human-rights attorney...

Renata Avila: Oh my god not great at all!

Randy Credico: Oh I think... you know, Stefania Maurizi, everybody I know talks...

Renata Avila: I like to be trouble maker. But more than that, more than troublemaker, I like to save those in trouble?

I want to say, the last ... is that if you cannot make it later tomorrow, you can try supporting Julian by a donation. I mean, I think that is very important to support the Courage Foundation, his defense fund. I think that a small gesture... if Julian was free, I'm sure that you will invite him for a beer.

Randy Credico: Even though I don't drink, I might have a drink with him!

Renata Avila: Instead of a beer, have a coffee! You can show your solidarity by contributing to his defense fund and by not amplifying the smears against him. Educate the people around you, alert them that this is a very important issue and freedom of the press and that it is an issue that should concern all of us collectively. So, yeah.

Randy Credico: OK, well, one thing I... before Max, I have a minute left for you. But before I get there, I want people to know that there's a vigil every Thursday here in town at Grand Central, 4:30, you meet by the clock information booth every Thursday at 4:30.

And on the 24th, there's going to be a million events around the world. And we're going to we're going to give those people this space next week. So people will organize and get there. OK. In the meantime, Max, you got 45 seconds in conclusion before we sound off.

Max Blumenthal: In conclusion, having just listened to Renata, I just want to reiterate her call for solidarity and building a new infrastructure of solidarity beyond Julian but starting with this case and this is a global case that has global implications. For those of us who are in the U.S., we need to use the opportunity of this presidential campaign to raise our voices and to force the candidates to state their views, as Jeremy Corbyn finally has after being destroyed and with many of the same tactics that have been used

to besmirch Julian Assange. I think, you know, we need to hear from Bernie Sanders. But we're gonna be speaking tomorrow at CUNY, at 2:00 p.m. at CUNY. And I'll be speaking about some of the, you know, the billionaire-backed NGOs that have betrayed this case of Julian Assange and really trampled on the kind of solidarity network that he sought to create, as well as the journalistic network and, you know, information freedom that he, WikiLeaks, has given birth to.

Randy Credico: Well, Max Blumenthal, thank you. At the Gray Zone Project, it's great. And Glen Ford at the beginning. Ralph Poynter, Howie Hawkins and of course, Renata Avila, our special guest all the way from Abu Dhabi.

I'm Randy Credico. This is Live on the Fly – Assange Countdown to Freedom, in collaboration with the great magazine called *CovertAction Magazine*.

And right now, what I'm going to do is play something. In 2015... 2014, I was in Mexico visiting my niece in Mazatlán. And at that time I was there, there were about 55-60 students that were kidnaped and murdered in central southwest Mexico. And these were doctors, these were doctors, these were, like, very, very smart and good people that were there. They were the types that would become Doctors Without Borders, those were the people that were on that bus and they were murdered. And we don't know who did it. I'm sure there was a cover up and we'll never find out. But students from around Mexico gathered, they organized and they held rallies. And I was in the middle of a very posh square, this plaza in Mazatlán. And out of nowhere, a whole bunch of students just appeared, maybe a hundred. And they all had placards and they had a band. And this woman started speaking with music behind her. I actually recorded that and, with the help of Francis, Francis was able to download it for me and then I had it edited again by Anonymous Scandinavia, who else? And we're going to close with that.

And, until next week, thank you *all* out there. Please support *CovertAction Magazine*. And this was a 2-hours show, unbelievable. It went by quickly. Thank you both here and the others that were on. Goodbye, everybody.

[music]