



## **Glenn Greenwald on Voting for the Lesser Evil, Sanders, Assange & Civil Liberties during COVID19**

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**Zain Raza (ZR):** Thank you guys for tuning in. And welcome to another episode of The Source, where we interview whistleblowers, investigative journalists or policy experts. I'm your host Zain Raza. Today we'll be talking to investigative journalist, constitutional lawyer and the co-founder of The Intercept, Glenn Greenwald. Glenn Greenwald also published the highly classified NSA leaks exposed by Edward Snowden in 2013. Glenn, thank you for joining us and welcome back.

**Glenn Greenwald (GG):** Yeah, it's great to be back. Thanks for inviting me.

**ZR:** I want to begin with your personal situation in Brazil. How are you holding up personally and how is the general atmosphere in Brazil during Covid-19?

**GG:** I think Brazil probably has a unique situation in that there were a lot of world leaders who didn't take to the pandemic seriously, who disseminated misinformation or disinformation about it for political reasons, or simply because they were misinformed but have ultimately come around. That's certainly true of Boris Johnson, the prime minister of the UK, who obviously ended up hospitalized with the coronavirus. Donald Trump in the U.S., other Western European leaders who were very slow to react, if not resistant to reacting.

Here in Brazil, it's a much different situation, not only did Bolsonaro from the beginning, jump on board of that disinformation train, insisting that this was nothing more than a light flu, that Brazilians have no reason to fear it. He was actively and aggressively spreading disinformation saying that because of the climate in Brazil, it wouldn't be a pandemic, that Brazilians were not threatened by it. That we should at most encourage older people to stay at home, but have younger people go out into the workforce, which makes no sense because they return to home where they're with their parents or grandparents. And to this very day, he is encouraging people to ignore isolation and quarantine imposed by governors. He's attacking the governors of various states, including right wing ones who had long been his allies for following the science and imposing quarantines and encouraging social distancing. And he's been hyping cures that are obviously unproven and just generally doing exactly the worst possible thing and never changed, unlike even the worst leaders of other countries. And it really is endangering the Brazilian population that never had a functioning health service to begin with. Even prior to this pandemic they live in immense density by the tens of millions where the virus can spread very rapidly and just in general don't know who to believe. And just today, Bolsonaro fired his health minister, one of the few officials in his government

who's been willing to insist that the science be followed, who's been contradicting Bolsonaro about isolation and quarantine, and some of the purported cures or treatments of Bolsonaro has been hyping. So it seems like it's only getting worse. Our personal situation is, you know, we're in isolation together as a family, my husband and my children, we're all as of now healthy and so as long as that's the case in the pandemic, you have to be grateful. But the situation in Brazil is really bleak because of Bolsonaro, principally.

**ZR:** In Germany, for example, has coped pretty well now with the coronavirus. And I would say it's due to the healthcare system over here, although since 1985 hospitals are being privatized and there's been a lot of criticism on the way Germany's healthcare system is being dismantled [such as] intensive care units. I think it will be interesting to know for our European viewers how the healthcare system is in Brazil. Could you provide a general opinion about that?

**GG:** Well, Brazil has long been plagued, the worst problem by far than it has is severe wealth and income inequality. The rich, poor gap is bigger than probably in any advanced democracy. And Brazil is an advanced democracy. It has the seventh largest economy in the world. It has the fifth largest population. It's not a poor country, but the distribution of resources is so extremely unequal, it would be unrecognizable in Western Europe, where inequality is bad enough, that's how severe it is. And so essentially everything is a completely different universe. If you're falling on this small sliver of the wealthy side of the ledger vs. the vast majority who fall on the poorer side of it, and there is technically universal healthcare for Brazilians, but they avail themselves of public hospitals that are severely understaffed. It was common all throughout last year before any of us heard of Covid-19, for people to go to emergency rooms and wait seven hours even with acute emergencies like heart attacks or strokes and end up dying in the emergency room because there's just not enough staff, not enough equipment. So the health care system was already on the verge of collapse, especially in the larger states like Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. And obviously now the pressure being brought to bear and the healthcare system is unsustainable. Hospitals are on the verge of being full. I'd say Brazil is seven to 10, maybe days, maybe two weeks behind the U.S. on the epidemiological curve. So Brazil is nowhere near reaching its peak. But the situation is really dire by all accounts.

**ZR:** I want to switch gears here and talk about The Intercept's Secret Brazil Archive series in which you exposed "Operation Car Wash" and were then charged with committing cybercrime. Could you talk about the operation that you exposed and provide us the latest update on your case?

**GG:** Sure. So the most significant political event in Brazil over the last five or six years has been a sweeping anti-corruption probe known as "Operation Car Wash", which began simply enough when a mid-level money launderer was caught by the police and by a judge in the midsize town of Curitiba, which is not a very important city in Brazil but it took center stage, because this money launderer said that he, in exchange for leniency, could provide incriminating information about the country's most powerful political and business figures, which he then proceeded to do. Exposing and documenting a massive corruption scheme that led to the imprisonment of some of the country's most powerful oligarchs and billionaires and political leaders across the political spectrum.

The judge overseeing that anti-corruption probe had long been suspect in terms of his

political allegiances. There were concerns that he was using the task force and the corruption probe not as a neutral or apolitical instrument of enforcing the law, but as a right wing covert operation to destroy the Workers Party, which is the party of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff that had won four national elections consecutively beginning in 2002. And the anti-corruption probe began being obsessed with imprisoning Lula da Silva, and it ultimately ended up indicting him in 2017 right before the 2018 election that was won by Bolsonaro. At a time when all opinion polls show that Lula was overwhelmingly the favorite to regain the presidency to win the 2018 presidential election, they indicted him and then Judge Moro quickly found him guilty on very dubious charges. And then once Lula was removed from the race - because of that conviction he was barred from running - and Bolsonaro essentially waltzed to victory, he [Bolsonar] turned around and rewarded Judge Moro, the person who imprisoned his political opponent, with the second most powerful position in the government, which was the minister of justice. And as a condition for joining the government Judge Moro, who had been wildly popular, a kind of a folk hero, was able to extract all kinds of concessions to be even more powerful. He consolidated these previously dispersed powers under his command and became by far the most potent and powerful government minister in the history of Brazilian democracy.

In May I was contacted by an anonymous source who said that he had obtained the private secret messages between Judge Moro on the one hand, and the prosecutorial task force on the other, showing pervasive improprieties in corruption within the task force itself. He then gave me this massive archive of messages between these parties that did in fact show incredible amounts of improprieties, irregularities and corruption, including collusion between Judge Moro on the one hand and the prosecutors on the other to make sure that they ended up convicting Lula, even though the judge was supposed to be this objective, neutral figure. Then we began publishing on June 9th, a series of reports that really obliterated the reputation of Judge Moro, who by now is the most important figure in the Bolsonaro government called into question the integrity of this anti-corruption probe. And it ultimately led in October to the Supreme Court issuing a ruling that had the effect of freeing Lula from prison. He was in prison for a little over two years and he ended up being freed from prison and immediately credited our reporting for that. And so I became - as kind of the face of this reporting - one of the prime enemies, if not the prime enemy of the Bolsonaro right wing, which is a really extremist right wing movement, clearly authoritarian, if not outright fascist. And there were threats all along from Judge Moro and other Brazilian authorities to prosecute me for doing this reporting. And the federal police closed their investigation of the entire incident last December, concluding that I had done nothing remotely criminal. The federal police under Minister Moro's command concluded that. So we thought that was the end of the matter. But then in January, a high level prosecutor inside the prosecutorial ministry loyal to Judge Moro and to President Bolsonaro filed an indictment not just against our alleged sources, but also including me claiming that I participated in the hack and oriented and directed the hackers in their crimes after the fact by helping them evade justice. Last year, in response to the threats to prosecute me from Judge Moro - and they also leaked that Judge Moro had initiated a criminal investigation into my finances - a member of the Supreme Court issued a ruling last year, barring any retaliation against me or investigation or attempts to criminalize my journalism on the grounds that doing so would violate the free press guarantee of the Brazilian constitution. So when I got indicted in January by this pro-Bolsonaro prosecutor, the judge in the case threw out the indictment, but he did so by saying he was only doing it because of the Supreme Court ruling that barred these kinds of charges against me and not because he thought I had done nothing wrong to the contrary. He said he thought my

reporting could be criminal under the criminal law, but that he was simply barred from accepting this indictment because of the Supreme Court ruling. The prosecutors in this case have now appealed that decision. So they're trying to get the indictment against me reinstated. They're continuing to try to imprison me. So it's now pending before an appellate court, and we don't know when that decision will be issued. But that's the current status.

**ZR:** Your case, Assange's case and Manning and Snowden they have something in similar. Obviously, the practice that you do falls into two different groups - whistleblowers and investigative journalists - and you fall in the line of investigative journalists. But I think what the similarity here is the reaction of the governments. They've created an atmosphere of fear and self-censorship where other journalists or whistleblowers who want to come forward, perhaps think twice about that. Do you think governments have become successful in creating this sort of atmosphere? Because we haven't seen major scoops, especially on U.S.. national security, like your work or the work of WikiLeaks. And for example, WikiLeaks is now putting all of its resources in defending Assange. You probably also got stuck in a lot of legal quagmire. Do you think governments have become successful or do you think your work and the work of Assange and whistleblowers have inspired more people to come forward?

**GG:** Yeah, it's clearly an ongoing battle. And what you describe is without a doubt the goal of governments. I remember during the Snowden reporting in 2013 and 2014 primarily - reporting that won the Pulitzer and the Polk and major journalism awards, including there in Germany - I was prevented for a full year from leaving Brazil because of threats by my own [U.S.] Government that they would arrest me or prosecute me or serve subpoenas if I returned to the U.S. and I didn't go back to the U.S. until the Pulitzer and the Polk awards were announced. I went to Germany first and if I recall correctly, I did an event that you hosted or maybe it was a little bit after an interview that I did with you, but it was right around that same time.

**ZR:** Let me just correct you. You were there for an event for ZEIT and during the Q&A I asked you if I could interview you after that. That was in 2014.

**GG:** Yeah, it was right. But it was right around that time. And, you know, obviously, the U.K. government did a lot of threatening things during that time, like invaded the newsroom of the Guardian and forced them to destroy the computers on which the Snowden archive was kept. One copy of it but still. As well as detaining my husband in Heathrow Airport for twelve hours under a terrorism law. So there were already kind of thuggish and intimidating threats being issued against the journalists. Obviously, Snowden was criminally charged as the source at the time, but I think the Assange case really became the kind of blueprint for these attacks on a free press. And it's one of the reasons why I've been urging U.S. journalists who constantly claim that they're so worried about Trump being an authoritarian and assaulting a free press every time he tweets something insulting about a journalist, which is not an attack on a free press, and yet here we have an instance of a truly menacing assault on the free press.

Remember, the Obama administration wanted to indict WikiLeaks and Julian Assange because of the publication of the Afghanistan and Iraq war logs and the U.S. States Department diplomatic cables. And what they ultimately concluded was there was no way to prosecute Assange and WikiLeaks without also prosecuting The New York Times and The Guardian and newspapers around the world, which published the same material. And they

were worried about creating a precedent that would enable journalists to be prosecuted by prosecuting Assange. There was no way to distinguish Assange and what he did from what journalists around the world did, including myself on the Snowden case and The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Guardian do every day or Der Spiegel. And so they didn't.

The Trump administration reached a different decision. They said no we're dead set on prosecuting and destroying WikiLeaks and in trying to extradite Julian Assange. So they invented a very dangerous theory, which was that Julian Assange didn't just passively receive this information from his source Chelsea Manning and then publish it. He did something more, which is he tried to help her crack a password. Not with the goal of accessing more documents or hacking, which I don't think anybody would think is journalism if you try and help your source hack. He was trying to help her continue to provide information without getting caught. And helping your source not get caught is not just the right of journalists, but the duty of journalists. Every major media outlet in the world now has technology to enable sources to communicate with them anonymously, meaning without the government finding them. I know The New York Times and The Washington Post have tips on their page about how to use signal or how to use secure drop. In order to help sources leak information that's illegal to leak without getting caught. So that theory that they're using to try and extradite Julian Assange that has him in prison in the UK right now is a very dangerous one because it takes a very normal common interaction between a journalist and a source, namely the journalist trying to help the source not get caught, and tries to create a crime around it. Tries to criminalize investigative journalism.

And although the Brazilian government is not alleging that I ever tried to help my sources hack anything or circumvent passwords, what they're doing is they're doing something very similar, which is saying that I had a conversation with one of my sources long after all the hacking was done, long after all the material was provided to me in which my source asked me: "Should I keep the conversations that I'm having with you?" And I said to the source: "Look, there's no reason for you to do that, because I'm keeping copies of everything for my own protection and yours" because I was worried that someone would try and claim that I said something to the source or the source said something to me that was never said. So I was, of course, keeping records by audio or text of every conversation I had with my source. And I said to this source: "I can't tell you what to do. You're free to destroy it if you want or keep it if you want. But I'm just letting you know that I have copies". The theory of that prosecutor is that when I said to my source, when he asked me, "should I destroy copies of our conversations", when I said, "look, there's no reason for you to because I'm keeping a copy". That was an implicit wink, wink hint to the source that he ought to destroy all of the conversations he's having with me. And by doing that, I was trying to help my source evade detection by the government and therefore became a conspirator in this criminal plot, which in turn means that all of the crimes of this conspiracy, including the hacking originally, in which I played no role obviously, can now be attributed to me under the criminal law of conspiracy. That's what makes the Assange prosecution, an attempted extradition, so dangerous, is that it can be used as the blueprint to prosecute journalists. And the Brazilian government, the Bolsonaro government is trying to do exactly that with me right as we speak.

**ZR:** One of the things that I have a difficult time approaching people who are fighting for, let's say, a better world in another industry, for example, when it comes to animal rights, veganism, environmentalism - it's so difficult to talk to them about Julian Assange. And even though I think this would have wide reaching consequences on all sorts of whistleblowing

and investigative journalism, how do you feel about that? I mean, Fridays for future - I have not seen them mention the word Assange. I do know that Extinction Rebellion did post something on Facebook in positive. How do you feel? Can this sort of case be taken and go into other sectors, whether it's the energy sector or environmentalist part of it? How do you feel about that?

**GG:** Look what they did. The strategy of the Trump administration's indictment of Julian Assange is that they knew that unlike in 2011, when Assange was popular among the left internationally because he had published materials about the war on terror, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the corruption on the part of the U.S. government and how it conducts its imperialistic policies, he lost most of that support because in 2016 he published material about Hillary Clinton that was perceived to have helped Donald Trump win. And so he had very few friends left. He never was liked by the right because of the publications exposing the evils of the war on terror under George Bush and Dick Cheney and then after 2016 the left also hated him - Large parts of it did - because of the perception that his publications during the election helped Donald Trump to win. So they knew that he had no allies up, that he was widely disliked, and that was what their opening was. This is always how governments try and erode basic freedoms - they pick somebody that they perceive as wildly unpopular and create a precedent that can then be used against people more popular. And what they gamble on is that people won't be able to set aside their emotional dislike for the original person being targeted. They'll say, Oh, I hate Julian Assange so much. I don't care if he goes to prison and they'll literally stand by silent. If not be supportive of the Trump administration's efforts to create a precedent that allowed journalists and activists to be prosecuted. If you're on the left, if you're an activist of any kind - right, left, center, an animal rights activist and environmental activist, a socialist activist, any kind of an activist against global institutions - and you're not capable of setting aside whatever emotional feelings you have for Julian Assange to defend basic press freedoms and stand opposed to the efforts of the Trump government and Boris Johnson's Tory government to criminalize the activities of Julian Assange and WikiLeaks of publishing information in the public interest, you are going to create a world for yourself in which the precedent you're now acquiescing to or cheering out of some misplaced hatred of Julian Assange are going to be used against you. They're going to be invoked to say ok just like Julian Assange committed a crime by helping Chelsea Manning evade detection these animal rights activists created a criminal conspiracy by communicating on signal to invade a factory farm and filming it against the law. Or the social activists did the same by organizing a protest outside the home of an oligarch. You have to think in terms of principles and not in terms of personalities because they're counting on you to have your dislike for Julian Assange, drown out your rational faculties and stand silently by an unfortunately large swaths of the left and the activist world in the West, in Western Europe and North America are doing exactly that. It's very, very dangerous.

**ZR:** I want to return to COVID19 and I want to talk in terms of ideological framework - socialism versus libertarianism. There are a lot of measures being implemented by the government right now and we're being told it's for our security and health of the people, whereas there's a big argument taking place, especially in the independent media scene in Germany, that the government is infringing on our civil liberties and freedom. In Germany, for example, Article 8 of our Constitution, the right to assemble has been effectively suspended. YouTube videos are being taken down. [This includes] Also videos including doctors, virologists and all sorts of people who are just questioning the narrative about COVID19. In addition the German military and the private sector are developing apps to

track people's movement to obtain data on the spread of the coronavirus. At first the conversation was about people should be able to use this [app] voluntarily and now public figures have come out and said no the voluntary participation of these apps should be abolished and it should be just like an automated update that goes into everybody's cell phone. And the same logic applies with vaccines and stuff.

So how do you weigh these two ideologies colliding together? Libertarian values, something you were talking about doing the Snowden leaks a lot and the values of socialism. Where do we draw a line and how do we weigh these issues?

**GG:** It's a very complicated question. There are definitely no easy answers, no path, easy dogmatic answers.

During the war on terror people who were taking a civil liberties position, which included myself, not just against surveillance, but against the right of the government to detain people without charges in places like Guantanamo, to kidnap them off the streets, as happened to German citizens and Italian citizens throughout Europe in the name of terrorism and render them to Syria or to other countries Egypt, or they would be tortured as part of their interrogation, or to put people in black sites run by the CIA out of reach of international human rights organizations or to drone people and kill them and end their life with no due process. The argument wasn't necessarily that none of those measures can ever be justified. Some of them can never be justified, but some of them probably could be under the right circumstances. The argument was the threat of Islamic terrorism is being radically exaggerated to put the population in a state of irrational and unwarranted fear, in order to justify the implementation of a whole series of authoritarian powers vested in the hands of a state with no accountability that are a threat to our democratic way of life.

I find it hard to say that the current virus pandemic and the fears surrounding it are irrational. It is a terrifying pathogen that is highly contagious and fatal in many cases. And even when it's not fatal, it entails extreme amounts of suffering. And it is true that our choices that we make as individuals have very severe effects on society as a whole. So if I decide that I am going to ignore quarantine and isolation and go out and risk infection, if I get infected and I get sick, I'm going to go to the hospital and take up a hospital bed that maybe someone having a heart attack needs or somebody who is forced to work and then got coronavirus actually needs and help overload the hospital system, the healthcare system for everybody. So my actions have repercussions for the society at large, which means from a libertarian perspective, maybe it's more justified for collective measures to be undertaken.

The problem is, I think people are willing to grant some of these [government] powers on a temporary basis, sort of until the pandemic is under control, the problem with that is that there really no such things as temporary measures. I remember really well in the wake of the 9/11 attack in the United States when the Patriot Act was introduced and passed Congress by a vote of 98 to 1 in the Senate. And people were alarmed because it was such a severe piece of legislation, the argument was "oh, don't worry, there's a three year sunset provision, so it's not going to become permanent." And here we are 19 years later, the Patriot Act is still completely in operation. Any attempts to reform it, let alone rescind it, are instantly rejected by overwhelming margins. The same is true of the "Authorization To Use Military Force" [AUMF] that empowered George Bush and Dick Cheney to take military action against groups that were unilaterally designated as responsible for the 9/11 attacks. It's now used to

bomb groups that weren't even in existence at the time of the 9/11 attacks.

Obviously, surveillance is the same thing. Once you give up these liberties and vest power in the hands of governments or corporations, as you mentioned, you know, there's a lot more social media censoring going on. And we began by talking about the disinformation being spread by Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro which is really dangerous on the one hand. But I have been alarmed by how Facebook and Twitter and Google have been deleting YouTube videos and tweets by the democratically elected president of Brazil, even though it is disinformation, dangerous disinformation. Do we really want Silicon Valley tech executives reaching their hands into our discourse and with a very heavy hand regulating what orthodoxies and pieties can be challenged and what can't? Scientific consensus, like all other forms of orthodoxies, are often wrong, and we want to keep space to be able to question and challenge them without being censored. So I think whatever powers we vest now in the hands of governments or corporations, we need to realize, number one, it's very unlikely that they're going to be temporary. Even if we agree to have them vested [powers] on that basis, because threats have a way of never going away in the eyes of governments or corporations. And number two is we do need to balance things. Yes, this pandemic is scary, but government repression is also scary. Government surveillance is also scary. The police enforced quarantines of arresting people who are out on the street. That's also really terrifying power. And I think we all have the duty as citizens to make certain that we're not being driven by fears. We all have fear embedded in our psyche, that is a survival mechanism. And it's important that we not be manipulated with it.

**ZR:** Personally, I consider myself a social libertarian, and I'm always confronted by a libertarian argument, which is very hard to counter, and it kind of underpins the irrationality of our system, which is good laws, even when they come out with movements and public pressure require an enforcement mechanism and that enforcement mechanism is usually the police and security state. And that's when The left starts fighting against these same enforcement mechanisms that came about laws [that they were advocating for]. You know what I'm trying to say? It's like a catch 22. The more we fight for better laws than you require enforcement mechanisms. So how do you see this as a person who's done work on both the left and libertarian perspective?

**GG:** Well, there is you know, there is a tension on the one hand between being a civil libertarian, which necessarily means arguing for the rights of individuals and restricting the power of the government and being a socialist, which necessarily means vesting power in the hands of the government to do more on behalf of the collective at the expense of the individual to distribute wealth and the like. There's at least a superficial difference. One obvious way to reconcile it is to be opposed to vesting power in the hands of government to do things like curbing free speech rights or curbing the right of dissent or political activism, sort of police state imperialism and military action to be opposed to those kind of powers, but to be in favor of empowering the state to curb the harsh abuses of capitalism and of inequality of income and wealth inequality.

But I think it is important to recognize, even if that's where you fall. And I think for me, that is what kind of social libertarianism is. That's the sweet spot of it, that there is a tension, because if you say that governments and political power centers are corrupt, empowering them to control the economy, to control resource distribution, it can lead to positive outcomes, but it can also lead to very negative ones. You know, in the United States, a



massive stimulus package was passed that I believed was necessary that entailed one time payments of twelve hundred dollars to every citizen so that people could stay in their homes and not expose themselves to the coronavirus without starving to death. But what it [the stimulus package] did mostly was transfer trillions of dollars from the coffers of the government and the Federal Reserve to corporations in the form of credit, in the form of bailouts, in the form of loans, low interest loans.

So on the one hand, that's a socialist solution to the problem, which is to say, well, let's just give people money so that they can sustain themselves. But that's 10 percent of the bill. 90 percent of the bill is crony capitalism. And that's a real problem. Even if you want to stay in that sweet spot, which is you have to be very careful even when empowering the government for economic ends as opposed to military or police state ends, to recognize the real danger that because of the way corporate controlled democracies function, even if you do that with the best of intentions, you're likely to foster outcomes that are the opposite of the ones that you're striving for.

**ZR:** I want to switch gears and move to U.S. political developments. Bernie Sanders recently endorsed Biden. Many on the left, as was the case with Hillary Clinton in 2016, including figures such as Chomsky are saying that Biden should be supported as there are more channels available for the public to influence policy as opposed to Trump. In other words, Trump is the greater evil. Whereas on the other parts of the left I've been looking at, for example, Secular Talk [YouTube show]. They're done with this thing of lesser evil and this two party system and always seeing the political spectrum moving to the right with this sort of, let's say, approach. What is your stance on this issue and where do your principles draw the line?

**GG:** So I think the example of Chomsky is slightly a distraction, I'm as big of a fan of Noam Chomsky as it gets. He's a good friend of mine. I have nothing but the highest admiration for him. But this idea that it's the moral responsibility of every citizen to vote for the lesser of two evils, which means in every case, the Democratic Party, no matter who they nominate, is not a new view of his. It's been one that he's been advocating and articulating for years, going back at least to the 1980s, when I think it was more defensible when you had Ronald Reagan and this right movement that was very much devoted to laissez faire economics, to corporate power, to eliminating government social programs that were designed to help the poorest and most marginalized to attack labor unions. On the one hand, that was the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, even though there was a lot wrong with it. They supported imperialism. They were responsible for the Vietnam War. It was the party of the working class, it was the party of labor unions. The differences were, from an economic perspective and even a foreign policy one, pretty stark.

Now, after you have the 1990s in which Bill Clinton very successfully led the effort to transform the Democratic Party for one of the working class to one of Wall Street, Silicon Valley, banks, credit card companies and the military industrial complex, those differences [between the parties] have diminished greatly. Which isn't to say they don't exist any longer. Let's assume that Trump really is the worst of the two evils, which I think can be debated, at least in some sectors, though not in others.

I think it's a generational divide now where a lot of people on the left are looking and saying, wait a minute, we've been doing this, we've been following this advice for decades. Right.

We've been following this advice, that says "even though we can't stand the Democratic leader, the Democratic Party leadership, even though they believe in things completely anathema to what we believe in, it's still our duty at the end of the day to pledge our unconditional support to them".

And I think that people are starting to realize two things. Number one, when you pledge your unconditional support to politicians. Meaning when you say, like Chomsky does, no matter who you pick, no matter how adverse he is to my political ideology and my set of policy preferences, I'm getting to vote for you. I'm going to support you. They start to realize that you have no leverage. There's no reason for them to do anything but ignore you with contempt because you're basically in this subservient position. You put yourself in where you say, I don't care how much he's trample on my values, I'm still gonna vote for you. Why would anybody listen to a group of people who say that and who say, oh, we want concessions? Why would I give you concessions if you've already told me that at the end of the day, you're gonna vote for me anyway? I'm gonna give you concessions. I'll give concessions to the people who may not vote for me, meaning centrists or Republicans or disaffected suburbanites or whatever. So that's one problem with that strategy, is it guarantees your own impotence.

And the other problem with it is where does that end? What's the exit strategy for that? If you continue to empower and support and fortify this neoliberal corporatist militarist wing of a party over and over and over again, you know, now we're supporting Al Gore and our supporting John Kerry. You know, Barack Obama, who ran on a different platform than his presidency became. Now we're supporting Hillary Clinton. Now we're supporting Joe Biden. What is the point of politics if that's what you're doing? And I think that a lot of people are now reaching the point where, you know, they supported Bernie Sanders because he promised a political revolution against the Democratic and Republican establishments. So to now tell those same people it's time for you to get behind the very establishment who you thought you were launching a revolution against - it is a message that is not landing well for millions of people who probably won't vote for Trump, but may just stay at home or vote for a third party.

**ZR:** Another split that I've been seeing on the left is the criticism of Bernie Sanders. Some people are attributing, not criticism, but his loss in the recent primaries. So some people are attributing this to the media and the shenanigans of the DNC, while others are saying this was clearly Bernie's own making. How do you see this? Should we constructively criticize Bernie Sanders' campaign? Are there internal reasons or how would you rank this if we would take the media, the shenanigans of the DNC or the internal criticisms of Bernie Sanders' strategy?

**GG:** We have to engage in self critique and figure out what the Bernie Sanders campaign did wrong. One of the primary criticisms I have of the 2016 Democrats and the Hillary Clinton campaign was to this very day, they've never engaged in any self-analysis or critique. In their view, they did nothing wrong. They have a long list of villains that they want to blame from Vladimir Putin to WikiLeaks to James Comey, the director of the FBI, to The New York Times, to the media, to the left, to Jill Stein. They want to blame everyone but themselves. That is a very unhealthy way of going through life generally and a very counterproductive way of trying to engage in political activism specifically.

Yes, there are villains that were responsible for Bernie Sanders not being the Democratic

nominee. But that's the whole premise of the Bernie Sanders' campaign and of the populist left movement generally, which is that the Democratic establishment is corrupt. They [Democrats] do anything to cling to power. You can't launch a campaign that's designed to wrench power out of the hands of a corrupt establishment. And then when you fail and whine afterwards, that the corrupt establishment is corrupt, of course they are corrupt. That's the reason why a new movement is needed. And yes, of course, the media owned by corporations and billionaires is going to be hostile to a movement of leftwing populism. None of this is a surprise. These are obstacles that have to be overcome, not complained about or whined away.

So whatever else is true, Bernie Sanders began the 2020 campaign with a lot of advantages. He had virtually universal name recognition of 2016. He had a funding model that was really revolutionary and actually inspired small donors by the millions donating money and making him not have to rely on corporations and super PACs, but being able to run a very formidable campaign financially. And he had four years to figure out how to expand his voting base. He won 23 states out of 50. In 2016, he had four years to figure out how to expand his voting base, and he didn't do it.

So I think it's madness to say we're not going to ask why, where he went wrong, what could have been done better and not try and learn from those mistakes for the future and instead just whine that it's everybody else's fault? Yes, it's everybody else's fault, but it's also the Sanders' campaign's fault. And I think they owe it to their donors and supporters to ask why.

And to me, one of the main problems is that Bernie Sanders, he was a very admirable human being who has devoted his life to left wing populism in the working class, who I believe is very sincere in his views. At the same time that he was the leader of a movement that said that it was waging a political revolution against the Democratic establishment, is somebody who has worked within the halls of power for decades. And he was genuinely colleagues with and friends with and an admirer of the very leaders who he was supposed to be waging a revolution against, including Joe Biden, who he really like personally, unlike with Hillary Clinton. And as a result, the campaign had a wide array of attacks that it could have launched and should have launched against Biden. But Bernie and his wife, Jane Sanders, who ran the campaign with the iron fist, prohibited them from doing so. Actually punished some of the campaign aides when they articulated those attacks and pulled their punches. Unlike what Donald Trump did in 2016 when he ran against the Republican establishment and was unlimited in his willingness to attack all of them. So I don't really see how you can wage a successful insurgent campaign that's led by somebody who's actually friends with the establishment you're trying to oppose. Bernie is a great politician, a great person, but he also was, I think, an imperfect vessel. And that messaging became very clouded. He sounded oftentimes like a conventional Democrat. At the same time, he was trying to wrestle away control of people's minds and hearts from the Democratic Party, which is very difficult to do if you're kind of critiquing them in a very muted and abstract way, but not really willing to name names and be aggressive in your denunciations for minutes.

**ZR:** There's a large interest in Germany, especially among our viewers, on the case of Edward Snowden. In case you know, how is he holding up in Moscow during this time and with the coronavirus? And also, given that Bernie is out of contention do you think the situation will change under Biden or Trump regarding his exile?

**GG:** Snowden is doing great. Actually, I've been joking around with him a lot. He. He made a tweet along these lines at the beginning of all this where I think he tweeted something like socially "social distancing is underrated" because he's always been even before he became the famous Ed Snowden, somebody who was generally on the computer. He's not exactly an extrovert. He never really went out of his house all that often. I don't want to say he's a recluse because he's not he's he's he's very likable. But, you know, his inclination is to keep to himself and stay at home. Obviously, you know, that's how he learned coding and programming and computer science.

So I think he's coping really well. He's married now to his girlfriend. They live together in Moscow. The last time I visited him was at a stark contrast to the first time when everything was cloak and dagger and very tense. The last time I visited him we were able to walk on the streets of Moscow, go to Gorky Park, have dinner at restaurants. He got recognized a few times, but nothing obtrusive. So I think he has a comfortable, stable life there.

When I went to Moscow the last time I actually talked to Russian government officials and members of the Russian media, including ones who are opposed to Vladimir Putin, about the possibility, especially given what had been alleged to be the close relationship between Trump and Putin, that Trump could succeed in extracting an agreement whereby the Russians would hand Snowden over to the U.S.. And what I heard was something that I hadn't been hearing for years, which is that it would almost be politically impossible for Putin to do that because the idea of giving refuge to dissidents from the West is really ingrained in Russian culture and identity. It's something that the Russians have done for decades. So handing him over would be a very unRussian thing to do. So I can't predict the future. You know, who knows how long Putin will last? Who knows how long the U.S. government and Russia will continue to have the animosity and adversity that they have had for decades between them. But it seems to me for the short term, certainly and probably the mid-term Snowden situation in Russia is safe. Obviously, he shouldn't need asylum because he shouldn't be in a position where his own government is trying to imprison him for giving journalists information that was treated responsibly and was clearly in the public interest. But that is his reality. And so I think his asylum is more or less stable for the foreseeable future.

**ZR:** Getting back to our system. Glenn I've always wondered why so many parts of the population are not engaged politically, for example, in the U.S.. I think around 40 % of the population doesn't vote and in Germany I think it's around 20 to 30 %. Political activism or the consumption of information is for many people abstract or highly depressing, let alone informing themselves about issues such as press freedom, whistleblowing, foreign policy, imperialism, etc. I've also read that when people under a lot of stress for a prolonged period of time, their impulsive and emotional centers [of the brain] take over their critical faculties, impairing logical decision making processes [that] are needed for a democracy. I think as long as people will struggle to make ends meet, they will be stressed impairing political engagement generally.

With that context, what do you think of a universal income as a concept? If people don't worry about food, rent, electricity and can voluntarily choose where to work, what to pursue? Have you ever thought about a universal basic income? And if yes, what is your general opinion about that?

**GG:** Well, I think it's interesting, I think that for all the suffering and misery and death and

tumult that this pandemic is bringing to the entire world, there are also opportunities that it is presenting because of the unraveling. A lot of the certainties that people had and the radical changes being ushered in for our society is making people open to possibilities that three months ago or four months ago, they didn't even think was possible, let alone things that they were willing to support. So, you know, I just interviewed [on my new] YouTube program and I interviewed two specialists in depression and mental health about the effects of isolation and quarantine and social distancing on our mental health. And one of them was emphasizing that it's hard to imagine how you can continue to ask people to stay in their homes to maintain social distancing without providing a universal income, because people if they're forced to choose between having their family starve to death or leaving the house and risking infection, they're going to choose the latter.

And to watch a lot of countries, including the U.S., even just as inadequate as it was, this \$1200 check that the government just sent to people for no reason, which is a form of universal income and an aggressively capitalist country, I think highlights this sense of opportunity.

I do think that we all suffer individually and collectively by having people in our society who can't even afford basic sustenance for their family. I know here in Brazil there are hundreds of millions of people or tens of millions at least for whom that's true. And it creates social instability. Aside from the morality of it, it generates lots of crime. It generates a huge amount of lost talent from kids who are very talented and smart but can't go finish school, let alone go to college or graduate school cause they can't afford it because they have to work because they drop out of school, because their culture teaches them that there are other ways to make money. It creates all kinds of social pathologies. And I think the opportunity that we now have where we're being forced to stay at home, where socialist solutions, even capitalist countries are being turned to as a means of addressing the pandemic, where we're likely to be isolated in some form or another, we're socially distance in some form or another, not for more weeks, but for months, if not longer. I think the opportunity is greater than ever, at least in our lifetime, for proposals like universal income to be advocated in an effective way. And I absolutely believe that this pandemic is changing our sense of the collective and the individual. We're seeing that we're all linked together, that we all, no matter how safe we feel in our lives, can have the social order and our own lives unravel really quickly. And to kind of do a high wire act without a net, which is what you're doing and how you're living if you live in a society without a serious social safety net is a lot scarier for a lot of people than it was, say, three months ago when we all thought our privilege will last forever. And we now see that it by no means guaranteed.

**ZR:** I always tell people when they argue with me that it's not possible. I tell them there is a basic income. It's called the universal military basic incomes. So as long as you pick up a gun and go into Iraq or Afghanistan for the U.S. government, you get all sorts of subsidies with college insurance and your family and all of that, you get a paycheck. So there is, I think, an opportunity as long as there's a political will. That's what I argue. For example, in Spain, we just saw the passing of a universal basic income for a temporary period doing the coronavirus right now, I think. Just a week ago, this was passed. So I think you're right on that matter that I think it's important for us to have a good social safety net.

I want to get to the end, though, and switch topics. You just launched a new show called "System Update". Could you tell our German viewership what this show is all about and

where people can find it?

**GG:** Sure. Thanks for asking.

So this is actually something that we were already working to produce prior to the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic and the idea was we were going to produce a show once a week in English and once a week in Portuguese to cover news events in a really in-depth way. So to pick one topic, spend an hour, an hour and a half talking to one or two specialist guests, starting with a 15 or 20 minute monologue by me that tries to analyze and break down the issue and as in-depth the manner as possible. And we were gonna do it in conjunction with the Brazilian TV network and broadcast the Portuguese version on TV in the English version in a studio on YouTube.

Well, now that this pandemic is here and we're all forced to remain in our homes, we obviously can't go into a studio, so we decided to do a stripped down version that is living on YouTube. We launched the English one two weeks ago, the first show was on what you were asking about which is the mistakes made by the Sanders campaign. The second show was about what you also asked me about, which is the balance between civil liberties and government power in a pandemic and I interviewed Snowden, a couple of other activists who are really thoughtful on that question. I have a show coming out today, a new program for the week. It comes out Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. Eastern on the Intercept's YouTube channel about the mental health dimensions of the COVID19 pandemic. So it's a weekly show that is broadcast on The Intercept's YouTube channel. And then occasionally we're going to do special shows like we did one last night when Bernie Sanders endorsed Joe Biden. And that division that you mentioned among people on the left that don't want to get behind Biden even though Sanders did, is one I explored with two guests one of whom was Bernie Sanders' longtime press secretary, the press secretary of his campaign, who very pointedly said she will not endorse Joe Biden.

So if you just subscribe to The Intercept's YouTube channel, you'll be instantly notified of any new content and any new programs.

**ZR:** Glenn Greenwald, constitutional lawyer, investigative journalist and the co-founder of The Intercept. Thank you so much for your time.

**GG:** It was great to be with you again. Thanks for asking.

**ZR:** And thank you guys for tuning in today. Don't forget to subscribe to our YouTube channel and donate so we can continue to produce independent and nonprofit news and analysis. My name is Zain Raza. See you guys next time.

**END**