

Somebody interviewed me, a Prescott about climate, so I was telling him about climate impact, how has it hit Detroit. And I was like – so that last – during the polar vortex, when hundreds of peoples’ pipes burst, frozen bursts. And I was like, well do poor people have money for plumbing? If you’re middle class and you’re wealthy, you can buffer some shocks, right? You’ve got a little bit discretionary, or a little bit of a cushion and you can pay for plumbing. So poor people just shut off their water or... really it took a great amount of flipping of priorities to get your pipes fixed. Some people didn’t pay their rent, some people borrowed money, some people took money from other things that they needed to get their pipes fixed because water is fundamental to life. So the climate impact is not just climate highs in the summer and having heat stroke and high ozone days where there’s a lot of particular matter. One other thing is climate lows and it’s impact and one other thing that happened here in Detroit is water - the water board thinks that people just woke up one didn’t and didn’t want to pay their water bill. Well when you look at DT Energy and you look at what we’re paying for gas and electric during the polar vortex – heat comes first. Like seriously, like people who normally had their thermostat set real low anyways because they really couldn’t afford the natural gas in the furnace and the boilers running, had to bump them up because we had sustained days of 10 degrees below zero, or worse, due to of all of these polar vortexes descending down. Check the climate impact, check the inordinate heating bills, the electrical bills, and so now we come out of an extreme winter and the first thing the water board does is mass shut-offs. Now pipes aren’t going to freeze or burst any more, now we’re just going to shut you off. So that’s shocking.

02:25

[And then there are times when an abandoned home next door has a burst pipe and you’re getting charged for that.]

02:33

Almost – for this winter, across Detroit, all these vacant homes: a significant majority of the pipes froze and burst. So we’ve got water running just all over Detroit. In buildings, commercial, industrial, residential, all over Detroit. And at the same time a massive, massive residential water shut-off campaign. It is inordinate. It’s abusive – in the quality, if you look at it internationally it’s a form of genocide.

03:08

[It’s a way to get people out of their homes]

It’s a way to – it criminalizes you for being alive. It’s a way for you – technically we have to pay for our infrastructure. There are costs associated with it. The People’s Water Board position is, we collectively, collectively, all of us, pay for our water system. The problem is, when you do a massive shut-off and you throw people out, so you take 2-300,000 meters out of service, what you are effectively doing is raising the rates on everyone else left. So you become – it’s a tailspin. We’re going to shut you off and then transfer the

costs onto a smaller base of payers. That is partially why the increasing water rates have been going up, because we're constantly throwing people out. In 2006, Michigan Welfare Rights, crafted with some attorneys and some consultants a Water Affordability Access Plan, because you can't continue to deny people water, you just can't. It's sanitation, it's health, there are all types of things wrapped up in it. If you don't have running water it's a form of neglect on children, minor children, it exacerbates health conditions. It's also a human dignity thing. The city council approved it. But the water board refused to implement it.

04:42

[Can you go back a little bit and tell me where I can find a copy of this.]

I'll give you an electronic copy of it because the Water affordability Plan existed where everyone participates and nobody is denied access. And the leverage inside of it was a percentage to your total income. So everyone is participating but it's almost like the IRS, the graduated income tax: the more you make, the more they take. It's kind of a way that restores human dignity. Affirms the human right of access to water but also allows for broader people – everyone's contributing to their ability to pay.

05:42

[I mean this is – the same exact thing is happening in – it's disguised differently, it's happening in Kenya, the Masai community, they have this 30,000 acre piece of land and it was taken from them under the colonial government and then it was taken again under the post colonial government and it's their drought reserve and so it seems like water is being used as a weapon.]

06:22

It always has been: for the whole history of humanity, because water is so critical to quality of life that we tend to locate ourselves near bodies of water [aqua first?] all over the world. Unless we're just capturing it. We are deeply involved in the water cycle – we are deeply embedded in surface water and subsurface water – we have the biggest interaction with all life on the planet is through water. Everything. All of life. And so water becomes critical towards sustaining life but also maintaining and promoting quality to life. I think worldwide water is critical towards a whole lot of fights. We talk food all the time, we talk calories, but water is actually before even food.

07:34

[So did the People's Water Board draft this plan and put it to city council and city council approved it?]

No, what ended up happening was, there was in the early 2000s massive water shut-offs, so Michigan has been – quite a while, almost 10-15, some would say 20 years – in a single state recession. Capitalist decided there's cheap labor around the world, divested

from this automotive place, the parks the build-out of cars, chasing cheap labor, slave labor around the world to pad their profit margins. And so Detroit was systematically divested from, particularly in the formation of syndicates, unions, that created collective bargaining, collectivizing the interest of workers, their quality of life, and so what ended up happening was: capitalists were done. They were like, Look, we're sick of strikes, we're sick of you guys trying to defend and affirm your human rights and your dignity, and we want to be in a place where there's no EPA, we want to be in a place where there's no standards, we want to be in a place where labor will be labor and human communities will be beholden to us for anything we give them. What ended up happen was, Michigan's massively divested. So, around 2000, massive amounts of people were getting their water shut off. The last we heard from the Water Board was 42,000 households had water shut off. We cringed because we thought about people not brushing their teeth, not washing, not being able to cook, not being able to clean, not being able to take a shower. And we were like: this is an affront to human dignity. Michigan Welfare Rights, Marian Kramer and Maureen Taylor actually co-constructed with a whole team of people at Michigan Welfare Rights this massive, beautifully constructed, public interest Affordability Plan for Detroit. So it's like a citizen-lead policy piece to affirm the human dignity of all of us, allow us access to something foundational, the quality of life, but at the same time meet the cost of the infrastructure. We're going to pay for our infrastructure, we're not just, like, give us stuff for free. We're like, let's meet the cost of the infrastructure, lets keep the rates low and let's all participate. So it is a real potent way to affirm our commons, and water is our commons, whether we can pay for it or not, it's our commons.

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So the backdrop of that was, the UN too was looking at water and they created a rapporteur, a rapporteur for water and sanitation and they started to look at access to sanitation, which was dependent on a lot of their health work. So WHO, World Health Org, and all of these people doing vaccinations and looking at quality of life are starting to say, Water is impacting us. Cholera outbreaks, hepatitis outbreaks and all of these things were exacerbated by limited access to fresh, affordable and quality water. And so they connected the dots and internationally people started to look at water as a rights and access to sanitation and we started to look internally inside of the United States. It's the same thing that happens in Africa or in the Philippines or in Korea or all over the world. It's happening inside of the United States. You're human dignity should not be truncated because you're priced out of the commodification of an essential resource. And that's what as happening in Detroit, so we relegated whole segments of our community and diminished their human dignity because they couldn't afford to pay. So that's what birthed the water access and affordability plan. They claimed that they could get sued [the Water Board] – we asked for 50 cents from all the rate-payers to go into a font to help [shroud?] those who couldn't afford to participate. And we have no idea where that money went. So they've been collecting money on people's bills asking them to kind of like support people's access and what happened is, the money was collected and we have no idea where it's at.

//break

[who is sitting on it, what's it for,] we have no idea. We've been asking the water board to come clean. Be transparent, come clean.

12:48

[So literally, they implemented this plan to start taking – can you clarify that a little bit?]

So, There's two forms of – there's Detroit Residential Water Assistance Program – DWRAP – is what they created. So they took the Water Affordability Plan that the city council approved, the 2006 original Water Affordability Plan, twisted it to where they could use it to create a cushion, ask people, the rate-payers, to subscribe to a little bit extra, quarters, a little, 50 cents, to go to this font and then it just disappeared.

13:30

[They asked people to pay extra to start building the infrastructure to support DWRAP.]

Yes, and it kind of crumbled because we don't know how much money was generated, we don't know where it went, and then they claimed, well, we can't implement the original Water Affordability Plan, we might be sued. With no transparency on, Why. Why. So you flip it, you create the Detroit Residential Water Assistance Program, and we're like: can that be naked? Can that be transparent? And then there's another group called WAVE, Water Access Volunteer Effort, this corporate group, that was established to kind of – as a mercy or benefactor for people who couldn't pay. So it was kind of like a little side, a little pocket of money, that people and corporations voluntarily put in. But that's not the public space.

14:30

[It doesn't matter if corporations are being charitable because it's still not in the control of the people.]

If, right now, 2014, the 2006 original Water Affordability Plan was in place we definitely would have had a more stable increase in rates, we definitely would have had [been more improved in our quality of life,] we wouldn't have in 2014 the Water Board issuing public statements about mass water shut-offs. This water and the way that they crafted it, if you look at the way the press crafted it, it was like, Water is the last bill people pay. But it's the first thing we touch. We flush toilets, we brush our teeth, we cook, it's the most interactive thing every day is dealing with water and they claim that people just blew off their water bills, but I doubt it. The way that they framed it was, When we start massive shut offs, everyone rushes to pay. As if massive shut offs is the way to get people to pay. It's a completely commoditized view of water, rather than: People have nothing and they're thinking about that quality of life, and here you come, shutting them off, so they rob Peter to pay Paul to get you off their back temporarily but you have no idea, the amount of suffering you are generating. So in Detroit, where a significant portion of this

community is impoverished, a significant majority of the people have extremely low wages. Everyone works, but everyone has part-time status. And thousands of Detroiters sting together two part-time jobs to pay rent to try to meet the cost of living, that a view about this community that completely commoditizes water and peoples' ability to pay purely from a market frame is disrespectful and ridiculous. And so, there's no talk about who's in poverty, who's not. There's no talk on the wages, our wage, if you look at the median income of Detroit and then you look at what we're paying for water and utilities and rent, there is no consideration, none. There's only pay us, you owe us, pay us. So the more people we throw out, the more we leave the rest of us with extremely high rates and the more we send other people out, too. So rather than for everybody to jump in and get under the [low?] and stabilize the rates because we've got a lot of payers, they'd rather kick you out. It doesn't make economic sense, it's almost backwards and retarded visioning. I'd rather collect \$20 from 1,000 people than 1000 dollars from 20 people. It's just weird its like the more rate-payers and the more access we have, it's better for the system.

17:55

[What you said about when you kick people out, it puts more stress on the system, I feel like if they spent the amount of money on repairing the infrastructure that they spent on their massive shut-off initiatives and the technology and the staff and the contractors needed to do that then we would have a working water system that didn't need a repair man every 6 months in the same place over and over again.]

And it's sad. The irony of it is we're in the Great Lakes basin. 35 mil people, the boundary borders between Canada and the United States, dozens of indigenous communities, pluri-national frame, [water bless?] holding 1/5 of the world's water supplies on the surface. And we've got a major city, a hub city, with whole segments of the community with zero access to fresh water. The irony of it. I went to one meeting and one of the water engineers from the Water Board told me, if you want water for free go to the creek and fetch it. So I was like, wow. And I actually took that – you know, it was honest – and they were mad because they claimed the human rights people, our language, our rhetoric and our campaigns, it's like a free loading, free loading. We're not asking to free load. We're asking for dignity. We're not asking for either/or, we're asking for both/and. Can we have access, can it be affordable, and at the same time, how do we constructively pay for our infrastructure. We're not ignoring the infrastructure – the People's Water Board tours the infrastructure. I went to a waste water treatment plant, put on a hard hat, roamed around the infrastructure, saw the clarification, the sedimentation tank, just the whole infrastructure, the bacteria, I was impressed. Wow, check the engineers, check our civil service and started clapping for them because they're treating waste for the whole region. And really begin to understand the cost involved in infrastructure. The chemicals we've got to buy, to treat the water and to process it, and I'm like, Ok I understand infrastructure, I see the cost, I see the labor involved and so we're not unreasonable, we're highly reasonable. The problem is, is when you tell

somebody, from a community that is 2/3 in poverty, that if you want something for free, go to the creek and fetch it, is arrogant, disrespectful, and the height of not understanding the human dignity that water affords us.

21:00

[Which Board member was this?]

It wasn't a Water Board Member, it was one of the engineers, one of the directors for the water system that was on the water sub-committee of the green task force. So I, representing the People's Water Board and justice, I'm always talking about, who has access, who can pay, who can't pay. And really bringing the voice of the marginalized, constantly to the center of the debate and discussion and he was upset. He was like, my salary is wrapped up in this. In other words, you're relegating me to poverty, you just want to free load, but he's not hearing us. He's not hearing human dignity and access and affordability, and then, how do we pay for our system. How do we fully pay for the improvement, the enhancement, the upgrade and the constant safety and quality of the operations of our infrastructure. And when he told me to go to the creek and fetch so water he said you think once we pull it in and we condition it and we oxygenate it and we clarify it, you owe us. It's a commodity then. Right, he told me that: once we treat it, it's commoditized. If you want water for free, because water is so into life go to the creek and fetch it like everyone else in the world.

And I said, show me the creek. I was like, tell me the creek right now that I can go and fetch water and cook, wash clothes, brush my teeth, and help in my sanitation, show me that. And to drink from, show me that. There is no creek, that isn't polluted, contaminated, and has questionable bacteria and other things in it rather than for him to think about, how do we build a water infrastructure system that improves and informs all our quality of life. He relegated a whole section of this community to going to the creek and fetching so water.

And some of us are at the creeks fetching water and I wouldn't. So we've got a lot of rain barrel use. And people are cooking, taking showers, brushing their teeth, washing their clothes, and drinking rainwater. So rain that's falling with all the particular matter, with all the environmental hazards. We're drinking that water. And people are boiling water, too, we fetch water from the rain, in rains barrels and we're using it in household applications. Check that. That's what they're relegating us to.

23:46

[That's above and you're taking the step that they won't take which is self-sufficiency because the only reason that they make money is because Marathon petroleum or the steel company in 48217 pollutes the creek.]

It's an arrogance, it's this view that, when we were all hunters and gatherers living on the land, everything was the commons so if we were at a mango tree or whatever then we were all eating but now we're in a new market based economic order where everything

has value and cost associated with it and we've got to transact in a market frame with money to acquire the things we need to live. And that's what he was saying was that, if you want to be modern and be in this current economic world you've got to pay. And if you want to be a hunter and gathering and just a human being in it all, go back to hunter and gatherer ways and fetch it from a creek.

24:54

[the way that humans de-humanize, de-modernize, primitivize other humans is so, I mean this is the same thing: I did a documentary on Maasai Land and so I think about this a lot but the reason that they were able to take all of that land at the turn of the 20th century was because they saw the Maasai as primitive, when in fact their use of the land was profoundly above and beyond anything colonial settlers could have even conceived of at that time. They're semi-nomadic, so they moved back and forth between the drought reserve and the lowlands and I think this method of making some either primitive or not-primitive, building this dichotomy of *my system is better than your system* is always going to marginalize people and to be nostalgic for the hunter-gatherer times is justice fraught with fallacy as being on your high horse saying – there's no reason why we can't take things that we learned 100 years ago and apply them now and vice versa.

That's why the People's Water Board was formed. The People's Water Board was formed because traditional conservationists and people who were fighting pollution and people that were engaged in some levels of relationship with nature and ecology began to see more and more assault on the ecology by pollution and privatization and all that. The human rights part of the People's Water Board was thoroughly concerned with social justice and equity, who can pay who can't, who has access, who doesn't the current social, political and economic order has a profound racialized and class fractured hierarchy. So if you are on the bottom and there's no access, where is the champion, the advocacy and the voice of those people in the margins. And then one of the biggest things is our public spaces, our commons. The government is so constructed that it has to affirm the general safety, health and welfare of all of us. And it is every element of the things we have to share. And that's why we charge ourselves with taxes. Because we like roads, we like schools, we like hospitals, we like airports, we like these things. So we aggregate our money together and we build infrastructure and projects and programs and initiatives where it affirms all of us. And one of the biggest assaults recently has been the privatization of our public governmental operations and initiatives and programs. And the public workers, the public servants that are working and servicing and operating our government belong to us. They affirm us. They are our neighbors, our pastors, our community folks and so it's like part of our tax dollars coming back home to roost in community. And so when things were becoming privatized, it's almost an affront to public employees ability to pay, have quality of life and be civil servants. And it was an assault on our commons – the enclosure of them. The People's Water Board got together, public employees, [ask me 207](#) and Labor, conservationists and people that were deeply

involved in ecology and Human Rights and Social Justice groups, and so it's a nice little gathering of multi-faceted interest around water.

29:14

[Tell me more about the rain barrels, the harvesting initiatives, the conservation initiatives..]

So, the People's Water Board has done a lot of different things. One of the biggest things we did was, we got three swirls and then we got generalistic intersect everything. I'm a generalist, so I'm part conservationist and ecologist, part commoner and affirming of the commons, and partly and deeply engaged with social justice and equity. We have stenciled storm drains in Detroit's most challenged ZIP codes not to dump – it drains to the river. We've taken tours to –

30:00

[Wait, wait stop. You literally dug drains?]

Not dug but we put these templates over the drains and spray painted them to remind residents to not dump cooking oil, motor oil, debris. It's a way for us to – in the visual space of us – around our neighborhoods and our blocks that we look to a drain and it's like, 'Don't dump – Drains to river' with a little image of a fish, to create a water consciousness in neighborhoods and blocks, the Detroit River and the Rouge River. We're all here part of Lake Erie's water shed and Lake Erie's downstream from here and one of the things that happens on wet weather days is sometimes when the waste water treatment plant is overwhelmed, it releases partially raw sewage in these outfalls to the Rouge and the Detroit River. We can't have that any more. We've been violating the Clean Water Act and we've been trying to get the water system highly efficient, effective, reliable, quality. Detroit has one of the best water systems in North America. Our engineers, our workers, our chemists are some of the best. And they serve millions of people, and they serve themselves and the People's Water Board, in an attempt to affirm that level of work and service and public infrastructure knowledge, part of our mission is to keep water held in the commons free from privatization. So we do a lot of work on making sure the water system is publically held and that the workers are affirmed. A lot of what were doing in pollution, conservation beside storm drain stenciling is really examining the permits and looking at the city of Detroit's waste water treatment plant's air permits and their water permits, making sure that we can develop some 32:00 **green and gray** infrastructure to buffer the slow down water and to make sure that this whole region which is not even a water shed, it's a sewer shed, that all the water, the two biggest impervious surfaces that water hits and runs is the roofs and the roads. There's this massive downspout disconnection so that the water that hits the roof goes and percolates to the table through the soil, that roads themselves become permeable, so we're a big advocate of green and gray infrastructure that buffers slow-downs and allows water to settle to the water table.

32:58

[Sorry, I don't – I cut you off because I want clarification on a couple of things. First of all you mentioned really affirming and bringing up the workers at the water and sewage board: can you give me an example of how you're doing that, and second of all, can you give me an example of how you're advocating for green and gray.]

So, our work is multifaceted: the human rights and the social justice work is centered around the water access and affordability plan of 2006 which affirms human dignity and allows poor people to have access, allows all of us to have access. Particularly folding in our margins. The conservation and the pollution work is, we've been thoroughly committed to controlling the contaminants, the running off of water to all the pipes in the sewer system with some infrastructural treatment that allows water to percolate. So bio swells: we champion green and gray infrastructure with rain gardens, we'd like for people to disconnect their downspouts and connect it to a rain barrel, we are very much interested in making sure that, how water and rain or snow or wet weather events, that its all not just rushing to a waste water treatment plant, which the engineers kind of like, because it flushes the system, when all that water clears out the gutters but what we've really been doing is, we can't, at peak flow and peak volume, release partially raw untreated sewage, we can't do it. And we have to be a little bit more environmental and ecological stewards on our places and design neighborhoods and blocks and structures that buffer and slow down water. So green and gray infrastructure means everything from planting trees, building rain gardens, building these treatments around our farms to control from run-off, particularly soil and erosion, but letting water seek its level naturally. Detroit, when Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac got here was six creeks: [Savoyard,] The Baby, The Bloody run, the all ran from the Detroit river back. And if you look at the old creek work, we've paved in 100% of it, but they're still running, they're running sub-surface. So we want to ask the city of Detroit to uncover some of that original hydrology so that water can collect and find its way naturally, before we built this sprawl, before we built all these roofs and roads.

36:00

[Commodify it by doing all of this other stuff]

At least some of the rain that hits this region, if it hits a road or a roofs it's going to run. 9 times out of 10 it's running towards a drain. So if we can take some of our drains between the roofs and the road and buffer that water, slow it down,

36:20

[Because they don't need to treat all of that rainwater. It just needs to go back into the ground, right?]

The wastewater treatment plant captures the first flush, which is filthy. It's oil, cooking oil, debris, everything we flush, they capture that, and then it gets cleaner as the volume increases and that's why they have a tendency to let that go off. It's still running through the sewer system but it's supposedly at saturation filth, debris, garbage, is a little bit more diluted, so it's kind of like, we capture the filthiest part, and we let everything else flow to the surface waters.

37:05

[So the storm water though, that runs into the sewage drain, does that end up getting treated through the same – Yes – and that shouldn't]

Well, we've got a combined system. Our sanitary sewers, and our storm sewers are combined. [And that shouldn't be that way,] Yes, and if we can separate them and the waste water treatment plant just takes the sanitary sewers and let the rain and the other stuff find its way – that's good.

But we've been combined for a while. Our new bills are separated, but the bulk of the build from this whole region is still combined.

37:47

[So how are you actually lobbying for, advocating for, building these – I know that people are building in the gardens – tell me more about]

We take people on tours for green and gray infrastructure to show them bio swells, rain gardens, rain barrels, water features that buffer and slow down water and we really want to provoke their imagination of people in their own individual lives to kind of build out that space but at the same time build out the public. We're advocating – to me, this is my framing – a top-down and an out-side in, a bottom up and an inside out. So the more people we get in a water consciousness and a watershed kind of frame, the more we can demonstrate a tipping point of actors thinking about water, interacting with water, conserving water, honoring water, respecting water, and the more water we hold back from hitting pervious surfaces and running. We're advocating for the EPA - Detroit doesn't have a water shed plan – and we're kind of like a donut-hole in the region. We've got water shed plans all around us. A portion of Detroit is covered under the Rouge Main, west of Livernois, but we really wanted a jurisdictional plan, we've got to manage our ecology a little bit better.

39:33

[When you take people on these tours, and Detroit Future City loves to co-opt, so you take people on these tours and Detroit Future City has these gray and green storm water run-off things in their plan – there's so much media about it being the best plan. You really have to look at it, you really have to talk to community member to see how disenfranchising it really is. How do you get around that and how do you explain it to people that the non-profit is not for the people.]

For the Detroit Future City, the strategic framework, it went through several name changes, it was called Detroit Works, it was also called the Detroit Strategic Framework, which they probably borrowed from community development advocates of Detroit, then it went to Detroit Works, then to Detroit Future City.

So the Detroit Works, Detroit Future City plan, was not, in my opinion, the civic engagement on it sucked. And we didn't really set up a system, as an organizer, thinking about things synergistically, how do you feed a whole flock of birds with one biscuit, because to me, good solutions solve multiple problems. So, as a policy person, I think about a good solution: how many legs does it have, where it's about to march to. So, here's the city of Detroit, we obviously have problems, nobody can turn a blind eye on our problems, we have housing problems, and poverty, crime, and all this stuff, but we're not thinking about it in a way that affirms the standing agency and voice of residents. Civic engagement – and in a democratic order – has to affirm people in their public service. This whole freaking country is hyper-individualized. I'm un individual, I'm cut-off, I'm an island, I'm a tax-payer, but where's the public discourse, dialogue, and knowledge at? It was a missed opportunity to affirm the dignity, the standing, the agency and voice and even the leadership capacity of Detroiters. So they rushed through all these non-profit organizations, and said "You are community, You are the people," and they're not. They're just, a lot of people might call them, problem managers. If you look at their missions and their boiler plate and their initiatives, their thrust, they're like "We solve problems," they might not be doing it effectively because some of them have been problem solving for 40-50 years, on the same problem. And they're holy beholden to the philanthropic community who throws money to problem solvers. When the root cause analysis – and this is the sad thing about Detroit Future City – there was zero root cause analysis work done. Zero, none. Not in the economics, not in the quality of life indicators, not in the built environment, no root cause analysis, let's just go forward, take the philanthropic community's money and create a sexy plan. And ignore hundreds of thousands of capable, brilliant, common sense men, women and young people to problem solve on their own behalf.

43:40

[Can you give me more specific instances of how the brilliant organizers of Detroit who have been dealing with the root causes and trying to find solutions for 50 years were ignored.]

I ended up on the Detroit Works, I ended up on the Future City group, probably as a token, a justice-based token, but I was thoroughly committed to being at the table and trying to improve the debate and dialogue because I felt like since Kresge and all these philanthropic entities, W.K. Kellogg, put together the money, lets make it work. Let's make it work. And I wanted it to be successful because I wanted the people to have a win. I wanted us to collectively improve out quality of life, built environment, the efficiency and skill of our city services, and I was thoroughly committed to that. And I left it feeling

marginalized. And not really being heard. That the baby boomers who are all senior in front of their names, and 'we paid our dues,' will not listen to Gen X or the Millennials. The fresh ideals that come into spaces are the most challenging ideals. They shock you from your complacency. Because of the situation in Detroit and because of the complexity and convergence of crises require radical out of the box thinking. There is no box – let's go forward. We've got a plan that is 'safe and status quo with bells and whistles on it. It did not affirm the standing and agency and voice of the broad base of community actors and members and tax-payers and residents and what it does is created anxiety, it created tokenism, it disrespected our brilliance and our common sense capacities and it also lead to a distrust. Our government has duties: we go and vote. So case in point: our civic mind, right now, if it acts in a body, what's your civic duty or, how do you see this civic place. There are two frames that show up often: I vote and I pay taxes. So that's the state of the civic mind right now. Voting and paying taxes. But we have greater duties to the public and to the civic mind past that. Detroit Works, Detroit Future City did not engage us in a debate that was democratic – it appeared to be democratic but it wasn't. It was a shell game of gatekeepers and tokens, and who agreed with me and I'll fold you in and if you're radical or you're questioning me you go to the margins.

46:50

[Can you give examples of when that happened at the table?]

So, one of the - case in point: when it was originally constructed, a large number of justice based groups asked for engagement and leadership, from the block club chairpersons and neighborhood associations, and that body, that consortium of people on blocks in their neighborhoods never was crafted. What was crafted was non-profit tokens that took the place of community and met for three years, sitting at tables, talking about Detroit but Detroit was never at the table. Half of the executive directors of all these non-profits don't even live in Detroit proper. They live in Southfield, Redford, Farmington Hills. The people who ran civic engagement were from Beverly Hills, from Bloomfield Hills, from Troy. We didn't even get a moment to improve and enhance the leadership capacity of people on blocks and in neighborhoods to speak to the public space and to inform the plans.

46:57

[Yes, and when they do have these meetings, they have, what, the post-it notes that you write a one-line idea on.]

Some of it was good, not all of it was bad, but the way the process was constructed and the visioning behind it, did not inform civic leadership.

48:20

[Was there a time for civic leader who were in the communities to -]

There was not a direct seeing of men and women, neighborhood and block club chairs as leaders. It was all non-profits. So, when you don't have at the table the neighborhood association and the block club chairs, the busy-bodies, the nosy people, the people who pick up trash, the people who drive around our neighborhoods, the people who care for neighborhoods and blocks and communities, it's almost like you marginalize them, they're ineffective, let's advocate for them on their behalf. We're going to set up a system where we're going to think about them and what they're really confronted with and try to plan through ourselves as a little clique in their interest. Rather than inviting them in and saying: you have standing, you have agency, you have voice, we need to hear from you. So what we have is these plans, but no local investment. The only people that invest in the plans are the non-profits. When you look at the back of the Detroit Works, and the Detroit Future City book, all you see is non-profits. You don't see a random listing of 3-400 citizens, you don't see such-and-such block club, this neighborhood association, all you see are the non-profits.

49:47

[And they're the people who have held the city for 50 years while disinvestment process and foreclosure crisis, and pillaging by banks.]

What I would have done differently: I would have taken maybe 100 Detroit sub-municipal level social capital groups – not the non-profits – but the geographically based block club and neighborhood associations and took them through planning 101. The Land Policy Institute up in Michigan State University and other places have planning. We can take people, lay-people, and thinking about planning and roads and transportation and energy grids and [sighting of] schools, and the build-out of the built environment with an eye towards efficiency and scale and aesthetics, beauty, and they could have been like, I'm invested. I informed that plan, I debated it, I was at the table when it was constructed, my voice is in there. Therefore, I'm holding these plans. They're relevant. We fought for this. Some points were consensus, others we were diverging, and then we decided to compromise – we didn't built that out. We did not demonstrate democracy and we didn't enhance and improve past voting and paying taxes. Because the civic space has to be our bus system, our roads, our libraries, our schools, our health centers, the water front, all of our parks, and all we did was we delivered a wonderful set of plans crafted by wonderfully brilliant technical assistance firms, with a few token non-profits mixed in to give it the check mark and a few other tokens to leverage their relationships. But we didn't root it in the lived experience of people looking out from their front porches or their back yards towards the public space around them.

52:02

[How do we keep fighting, knowing how rooted this whole Detroit Future City thing is getting every day, how Mayor Duggan is calling it his bible? How do you keep fighting,

do you go back and talk about why it's fucked up or do you make certain demands? How do you – what do we do?]

You do both. You constantly question the way that people are seeing community. And you're constantly affirming the dignity and the worth of citizens to be problem solvers on their own behalf. That we are not broken beyond repair – the city might be broke but we're not broken. You constantly have to affirm the dignity, the standing, the agency and the voice of people. We have common sense. There's ten thousands of people in Detroit with bachelors degrees. People who are speaking other languages, people who are problem solving, you go into half the neighborhoods you'll see a wealth of skillsets not even in the market. People might not be working but we've got people playing trombone and saxophone, we've got people teaching music lessons, and piano. We have people who are fixing things and managing blocks of children, who are cleaning, we get deacons of churches who go across the street and cut whole fields of grass we have a lot of problem solving embedded in our lives. The ability for the municipal government and the non-profit structure to see all that value, all that beauty, all that brilliance – its almost as if they're tone-deaf, and they've got blinders on. We would like to invite all of them to take the blinders off, see the agency and standing and voice of Detroiters to problem-solve on their own behalf. Look at all the embedded brilliance, all the work, all the grassroots care and concern, all of the resiliency that's in Detroit and not co-opt it and leverage it for you plans, “Oh look what Detroiters are doing,” but to affirm it as leadership, affirm it as improvement, affirm it as the people – because we're the chief benefactors of our own work. I mean, the church that's cutting the grass across the street is actually improving the safety and the quality of life in the neighborhood. But the tax dollars are not paying for the cutting of the grass and the lawn mowers or the time of the deacons or the trustees. But the deacons and the trustees care. The church cares. Grandmothers all over Detroit care. We pick up trash, we cut grass, we recycle, we look out, we sweep up the glass that's broken in the roads, we tell people to don't do things that are wrong and improper. I want us to – I want the city of Detroit, the government and Detroit Works and Future City, not to just believe in us, but to demonstrate that we're worth something by processes and intentionality that effectively affirms what's already happening, connecting the dots on the brilliance that is going forth in community and allowing local leaders to lead.

55:40

[Aside from their complete need to involve community decision-making and a real basis, what other demands would you make on anybody who's planning in Detroit.]

To get some relationships. One of the things that are critical in Detroit is not – the non-profit industrial complex right now in Detroit is hegemonic. We need Detroiters, people in neighborhoods and in block clubs affirmed. We need people to say, “I see what you're doing, great job. Continue, and how do I help you.” And not stealing your story, stealing your narrative, leveraging you for this slick campaign to make themselves look good or

go get other money, but really affirming the dignity of Detroiters. That's not an easy demand, because Detroit 'leadership' sees us all as victims. They view us as statistics. They view us as the marginalized. Well, we're much more than that. We're human beings. We're brilliant, we're smart and we speak several languages, we laugh, we eat good, and we're challenged, too. So, what ways can the city of Detroit and the non-profit industrial complex affirm all of us: to respect local grassroots leadership. Build capacity in local communities for people to problem solve on their own behalf, be supportive rather than hegemonic, be extremely supportive allies towards local initiatives and resilience-based work in Detroit. Everything in Detroit that we're doing, particularly like the urban agricultural movement: a lot of that is resilience. It is some levels of market-based but it's hyper-local market, so people looked at it and were like, "Wow, I'll jump into that, I can make money." We've got all these opportunistic endeavors happening that are muddying the waters with a whole massive group of people in the tens of thousands engaged in food system work. Sharing food, food processing, value adding, local consumption, urban ag, and they're twisting and tilting the frames of resilience. The two – even though they look like they're co-located together are not the same. And so really being respectful for [choising], for people's ability to have their own creativity and they need to give credit where credit is due. That's the city government, Detroit Works and Future City, they need to give credit where credit is due. [Foss], the landscape architecture firm in Chicago, they did the blue-green planning, I sat in the room with them and they were sucking ideals from people and it was kind of hegemonic, if you want to participate and get your ideals sucked and then have them spit it back to you and they get credit, they got the contract, case in point, one of the recommendation I made was, take the technical assistants, keep them, because they're good, they're wonderful, they're fresh eyes, we need fresh eyes, but also embed in there Detroit hyper-local people who can inform and argue and bring life to the plan, so they're not static and they're not in a book and they're not plans just being rolled out down on high but they have investors on the ground. They have thinks on the ground, they have people rooted in communities and neighborhoods, that says, I contributed to that plan. I saw it, I looked at the land form, I looked at land disposition, I looked at neighborhoods, I looked at the built environment, I looked at the energy systems. We have brilliance here: it was never leveraged. Philanthropic communities spent \$50 mil on that book. Millions of dollars in technical assist firms and we didn't even get any bang for the buck. We didn't get any capacity, we didn't get any leadership, and we got half-ass civic engagement. And that sucks. They could have just, at least turned some of the money around and stipend Detroiters for a year or two to help inform the planning.

1:00:35

[There was a recent, a protest the other day that the Detroit Water Board staged in front of the Joe Lewis Arena, can you tell me a little bit about that.]

One of the things that is highly, highly sarcastic, and is the height of hypocrisy is the massive amount of corporate actors in Detroit who haven't paid their water bills.

Mike Ilitch, and the Joe Lewis Arena, the Red Wings, owe \$80,000 in water bills.

1:01:10

[How do you know this?]

Because somebody, that's probably mad as hell inside of the Water Board, leaked all of their bills, their rears. Who owes what: Palmer Park Golf course.

1:01:24

[Where do you find these bills?]

One of the things we've been doing is Freedom of Information Act, the Water Board, tell us Detroit: "Who has this, who has this," – "No, we don't keep that record." But they do keep the record. What they do is they punish people and they reward corporate actors. So if you're corporate, if you're Roger Penske or you're Dan Gilbert or you're like the White Savior in Detroit, then you get all manor of looking the other way, tapping on the hand, all manor of access, and forgiveness, and tax abatement, and big blocks of land for \$1 – but if you're the people, you get taxed, the water shut off, you get marginalized, you get stopped and frisked, you get criminalized, and it's inordinate here. The people, the little guy, the man and woman can't get a brake, but if you're the wealthy, corporate savior you get all manor of deference. So we staged an action to help the corporate community to get underneath the load and to pay their bills. If I've got to pay my bill, if I've got to pay my water bill right here, if I've got to pay this, Mike Ilitch should be able to pay his water bill, he's got millions of dollars, Dan Gilbert has billions of dollars. I, on the other hand, I'm not a billionaire, I'm not a millionaire, but I religiously go to the Water Board and pay my water bill. I'm not a free loader. I actually pay for what I use. They are using and not paying. They are breaking us. That money that they are not paying towards the water bill is breaking our system. They are the biggest welfare subsidized recipient in this region, is the corporate actors. So we went down there to help them remember that they too use water, they too use our roads, they use all of this commons but they are not paying. They always want tax abatement, they want public land for a dollar, they want all the amenities of being sheltered and subsidized and taken care of and they are not paying. We're paying and the people who are paying have substandard wages, can barely afford rent and mortgages but we're paying.

1:03:46

[Paying from your \$7/hr jobs.]

It's disrespectful to the community when we need 911, we need ambulances, we need police and police cars, we need our roads fixed, we need public lighting, we need sanitation, we need rodent control, we need dog control, we need all of this infrastructure to approve and affirm our health and general safety and welfare, and they are not contributing to it. So what they are doing is like they're like parasites, sucking blood

from the public, all these poor people are subsidizing them so that they can live in a billionaire lifestyle. It's inordinate, it's disrespectful, they have [gamed] our public space, they bought and paid for our city council and our mayor, we have to pay for them and they are billionaires. It's disrespectful.

1:04:42

[Where can I get a copy of Mike Ilitch's bill, so I can, in this video...]

So WDIV and all the local media has been talking about who's paying their water bill and who's not. And whoever leaked that, it was an excellent leak. We need to know. We've been asking the Detroit Water Board, who is paying their bill and who's not.

The same week that they are announcing massive shut-offs, the same week that they are announcing that they are hiring extra contractors to come and turn off people's water, why don't they go and turn off water at Joe Lewis arena while they're in play-offs. Why don't they go to Palmer Park Golf Course, who has a \$300,000 water bill, turn off Palmer Park Golf Course's water. Turn off all of these real estate mega companies that hold all of these – turn off the banks' water. They need to turn off the Bank of America's water. Instead of the people who cannot even eke out and meet up the cost of living. This is shocking. That's why we held that protest: it's inordinate, it's overreach. We are subsidizing corporate billionaires. And then we don't have any respect – the Water Board, Latimer, [Durham,] all of them, they have zero respect for the people. Zero. Go cutoff the water on the billionaire. Cut off Matty Moroun's water. Cut off Roger Penske's water. They are not paying their bills. They're not. Who racks up an \$80,000 water bill. Who racks up a \$310,000 water bill, who does that. But you shut me off because I owe \$100. Our action was really meant to bring awareness, critical awareness to the community that some of us are paying at a very high cost and some of us are not paying and are parasitic on poor people and on marginalized people.

But when the News and the Free Press, the local media, print and broadcast, tell the story, they are not really framing it in reality. Framing it like we're criminals, and we're freeloading and framing the corporate people like they're Jesus, like it's the savior that's come and give them all everything. It's embarrassing. It's embarrassing to be in this community where our public officials criminalize the public, and show up as corporate hirelings. It's disrespectful our public space, our mayor, our city council, should affirm the people. The dignity of the people, the standing, agency and voice of the people and call our corporate citizens into a greater degree of responsibility. Because these corporate people get tax abatements through renaissance zones, brownfield tax credits and all of these credits. They are not contributing to 911, to EMS, to ambulance, to police cars, they're not contributing, they're not. So when Detroit's service is challenged it's because we get multi-billionaires who we're subsidizing and they're not contributing.

1:08:17

[You know, that \$300,000 mil last year was spent on the Water Department's swap termination fees because the City's credit went down and only \$170,000 mil was used for infrastructure and service. It's insane.]

We've been paying banks in Detroit, we've been holding – ripping us off for a while. One of the biggest rip-offs was that we paid three times over for the Detroit incinerator the bonds that we constructed for that, and the way that it's constructed now is, we've already paid for it. We're actually paying banks to bankrupt us. Imagine the irony in that.

1:09:05

[It's crazy because you know when activists talk about the city ripping them off, instead of going to the members of the community they go to the corporations who then rip the city off. The cure for the city's bad decisions is not to put power in the hands of people who make even worse decisions and the accountability that we have for public officials which is necessary – we need to have the same accountability for people in the private realm because what their actions are and what they do is so much more detrimental to people in the public than, often, than the actions of public officials.]

Yes, the banks have really taken advantage of bonds and credit offerings towards municipalities. The sad thing is, is Detroit is not alone. There are hundreds of municipalities across the United States in the same predatory relationships with finance capital. International finance capital is ultimately despicable and has been reckless and their ability to build an equitable economic order and they're profoundly exploiting the moment of collapse and people's ability to pay these inordinate deals. One of the things about Detroit is you really get to see banks and their sheer naked greed, and their sheer exploitative interest with a smile on their face. No shame, no guilt, no mercy. No human element of, like, wow, this is overreached, this is too much. So the unrelenting bankruptcy in Detroit, this constant exposure of greed and the extractive intentions of finance capital is a moment of shear, just cruelty. Shear cruelty. It's a city, it's Detroit, vultures are circling picking the carcass clean and one of the things that, when you're in the grassroots community is you typically show up as a human being with all manor of humanity with you but some people wake up and they don't have that. Particularly since we're dealing with fictitious corporate entities like a minor civil division like a creature of the State of Michigan. What exacerbates all of this, particularly in the interest of Detroit's [Royce], so we get a state legislature who punished and cripples Detroit because it's 86% people of color. We have this whole region that's been fractured and you can directly look at the settlement patterns by the block busting of 50 years ago. And it's hyper racialized spatial hierarchy. And so Detroit becomes the poster child, the whipping boy, the place of the savages gets to say "Wall it off," and throw in blankets and corn, the place where Renisha McBride and asks for help and gets shot. The place where white guys who run over children get all manor of support, all matter of fundraising, all matter of international attention, but every day we're shown that black lives, black quality of life, black communities don't matter. We don't matter, every day we're told by 2, 4 and 7,

we're told by the Detroit News and Free Press that we don't matter. And if we go outside of certain lines, we're subject to be shot and murdered. We're subject to be stopped and frisked, we're subject to be monitored and controlled, we're subject to be surveilled, we're subject to be tailed. And so we've been hemmed in by media and by social conditioning and by direct racial privilege, you know even now, this current gentrification wave in Detroit, with all these young hipsters moving in, that are out-pricing people who can't really, we don't have any purchasing power – we have a little bit but it's not to the tune of people who are making six figures a year. Detroit's median income is \$25,000 a year. And so when we go get an apartment, our rent is about \$5-6-700, maybe %800. But check the price at the Albert downtown. Check the price of all these little spots they're flipping. Check.

1:14:30

[Did you see the Albert video?]

Yes, and it broke my heart.

[I made that.]

Ok, thank you. The voice of the elders in that video, we don't hear from people like that. We don't hear from people who are being removed and displaced and marginalized – in fact, a majority of us clap. “More young people, more money, more of this!” George Jackson from the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation was like, “We need more gentrification,” he was actually calling for more: “All you, all leave. Because we need to bring in millionaires and hipsters and suburbanites and everyone else into our area.” To what interest? We don't matter. Everything about gentrification, everything about these water shut-offs, everything about these plans, is constantly telling us black people, poor people, we don't matter. There is no affirmative looking at us and saying: “You're worth something, you're important, we care for you. We're going to help plan and improve and lift your quality of life.” No, you leave. You be quiet. You shut up. Go away. You're too loud, you're too noisy, you're too dirty, you're too poor, you're too problemed. You're too problemed. So part of us, in Detroit, our real ultimate fight is to repair and restore the dignity, the standing and agency and us and say: “We matter.” You can't just come through our communities and shut off our water: we matter. You drink water too, we drink water. You can't just come in here, corporate elite, Detroit Regional Chamber or Commerce, and then you don't pay your bills. And don't help to subsidize the quality of life and the general services of this municipality, by not paying taxes, not paying water bills and not paying for anything and getting who lands and blocks of lands for a dollar. How dare you. We have to begin to a man a campaign for human dignity and human worth. I don't know where we're going to be. Right now, Detroit's first ring suburbs, Redford, Livonia, all these first ring suburbs, are opening up all these apartment blocks for Section A housing, it's subsidized. What they want us to do is: “All you guys go out to Redford and Livonia, Southfield, wherever and Oak Park, go away! We want Detroit, we

want the arts, we want the gritty urban experience. We want the sexy, we want the amenities of an urban space.” So we’re being priced out, we’re being removed. Detroit Works refused to talk about densifying neighborhoods and removing people because they know it was contentious. Telling poor black people you got to go, it was a fight. But what they constructed theoretically buy just – outside of directly telling – is now we’re going to price you out. We’re going to marketize you out. We’re going to develop you out. We’re going to give land to Hantz Farm, John Hantz, we’ll give land to Mike Ilitch, we’ll built all of this sexiness and you’re not invited. And if you are invited, do you have \$500, because that’s what it costs to get through the door. You want to live here, you got \$2000 an month to pay for housing? Well, that’s what it costs to live here.

1:17:54

[And talk about land shrinkage of the outer-lying neighborhoods where there’s one/two houses on a block, people have been staying there for 50 years and then all of the sudden the city can’t afford to provide police services so they’ve got to go? I mean, what’s up with that. I haven’t read the exact logistics of it but it seems like that’s the direction they’re headed.]

Detroit Works is going to get its initial planning for 2010 when [Rip Robson] gave it to Mayor Dave Bing whether we like it or not. Whether it’s directly transparent and spoken and up-front, whether it’s behind, underneath the table and quietly constructed. They’re going to ram rod the plans through whether we like it or not, whether we’re paying attention or not. Detroit will be gentrified, it’s going to have a class of young white hipsters, particularly pulled from all across the country and particularly pulled from the suburban second and third tier 80 miles sprawled out suburban communities and nobody – so where’s the planning for poor people. That’s my question to Detroit Works. Where’s the planner, call their name, that plans for poor and marginalized communities. Where are the plans to affirm the human dignity of all of us, particularly those who can’t pay because their wages are stagnant? We don’t have that. It’ despicable.

1:19:18

[My camera’s out of battery. And I want to keep talking to you really bad but I have to go meet my Grandma.]

Go meet your Grandma. Can I show you the original Water Affordability Plan?

[Oh my God, I would love it, that would make me so happy to have and look at and use.]

This is a tapped out threat to human rights to water in urban United States to Georgetown Human Rights Institute. I’m going to send you this as a PDF. They did this a year ago. They sent 20 attorneys here on a fact-finding practical. You need to read this, this is the frame – the saddest thing about this is it came from an international declaration to human

rights that Detroit doesn't recognize. They gave all of these policy recommendations and they've helped practi-

[The UN – not UN DRIP but just UN declaration ...]

Yeah, Georgetown Law and Washington D.C. presented this to the legislature on infrastructure. The federal framework they wrote. This is real good because this whole section on water affordability in the United States, they actually did kick-ass research. The only place they didn't come back and present it was to Detroit. This is Julian Watson... I'm going to PDF this to you so you can see the original Water Affordability Plan and I'll send you the raster of those who owe water bills.

[Wonderful. That would be so cool. I want to talk to you about – I want to show you the thing I did in Kenya because I think maybe it could be useful like if there could be some transnational sort of organizing. I still somewhat keep in touch with the activists I was working with in Kenya and they are really interesting, progressive people – they are all about bridging conservation with equality and human rights.]

I am real close to one guy from Kenya who is in Nairobi who one of my closest girlfriends [Maria Woodener] for Kansas City went and did 6 months in Kenya and she hung out in Nairobi and she went to all these filthy places and these people were cleaning up and she was hanging out with all these slum dwelling folk who were fighting the government and one of them, he was like everyday talking to me, like "Nairobi this, and sending me pictures and battles and he just shocked me, he sent me these pictures in Africa that the associated press distributed, the pan African news-wire in the massacre in South Sudan. I was done. CNN is not covering it – they are but they don't have any photographers – they've got press-pool photographers but they are not going to show those images. The Middle East, like [?], Syria, get [?] because of the Syrian civil war, Kiev, Ukraine gets, Karakas, Venezuela gets – but that South Sudan stuff hurt me. These rebels went into a school and massacred the entire school. And the photographer, when he came, he's just shooting people covered in blood, and these are unedited images, I am wounded, I am traumatized by these images. Who does that to people? He also sent me some pictures from Boko Haram in Nigeria – what goes on in Africa kind of stays in Africa, it doesn't brake out unless its intimately entangled in US interest.

1:23:00

[I know but it needs – this particular initiative, the Maasai Environmental Resource Coalition, it is so anti philanthropy.]

I like the Maasai and I've seen a whole lot of women from Europe hanging out with Maasai men – I'm like, oh my God, What's up!

[It's an extremely matriarchal culture. It has its misogyny but it also has its profound feminine roots. I was only there for 6 weeks and I was there with a friend who works for their organization -]

Were you out with a pastoralist or where were you at?

[Yeah, we were hanging out at this camp and Maasai Moran – the Moran are totally criminalized, in a really intense way and there in Kenya, because it's been post-colonial for 60 years now-]

But I thought they set up a lot of tourist camps?

[Well, they do but it's really complicated – who is actually benefitting – there's a really good article, I'll sent it to you, called Maasaian [Moran] – it's about using the exotified version of the Maasai to profit the Kenyan economy, marginalizing them.]

I've seen some traditional Maasai in their traditional dress, with all their red ochre, they had all their beads, they were dressed up and they were on a cell phone – [they have their cow and their cell phone, it's cool] – somebody told me National Geographic, they like that last little bit of hunters and gatherers all over the world including [Yanamayo] in the Brazilian Rain Forest and they like the nudity, the colors the beads, the feathers, the paintings, the hair cuts, all of that, because it harkens back to this imagery of the savage, the noble savage.

[Yeah, it's profoundly racist. It's profoundly fucked up and nostalgic and wrong.]

Somebody told me too that the Kikuyu at the foot of the Mount Kilimanjaro is in extreme poverty, they have nothing and they've been practicing a lot of infanticide and somebody else, one conservationist just emailed me as said the fucking Kilimanjaro's ice cap is 50% gone.

[That's why they had such a cold winter, because the arctic ice caps were melting and it pushed all the cold air down.]

But to see Mount Kilimanjaro without the ice cap on it – the Kikuyu were like, What the fuck! They must have been like, the world is now ending. It all went crazy because the Mountain Of the Moon, that's a sacred space for them – to look up and see that ice cap vanish? It's shocking to them.

[So I hope you watch the doc sometime, I think you'd find it interesting, that I made about the Maasai.]

I love the Maasai, any hunter, gatherer and pastoralist. I'm connected – so I just did two weeks in Brazil, I just did two weeks in Dakar, two weeks in Tunisia, a week in Quebec, Montreal, a week in Toronto, and I hang out with agriculturalists, pastoralists, fisher folk, farmers, who are in a sustainable bio-dynamic or eco-ecology frame, and I'd get whip-lash, because I slept on the floor in Brazil in these informal settlements with the MST – the landless peasants movement, and I don't even know where I'm at right now, I'm in Detroit. I'm by myself and I'm asking other Detroiters to join me, I need a group of people with me because I'm looking at stuff and I cannot be the only one who's had this experience. To hang out with rural Brazilian women in these informal settlements, particularly the ones who rush to Sao Paulo or rush to Rio, and they were living in those favelas, these rural shanty-towns, well, not rural, but these urban slums and they get super violent because of the drug trade and they went back to the countryside. Brazil has this massive, 1-2 mil person go back to bucolic countryside life. So we hung out in the country, they steal liquor and food and beef and they're living good, but they have no infrastructure, they don't own the land and the haciendas, all these wealth-ass white Brazilians own fucking 2/3 of all the land there, are shooting them up every day, just massacring them. They were protecting us because we have a U.S. delegation with us, we can't shoot because, we were part protection for them.

1:28:30

[How long were you there for?]

I was only there for the [six congresses] – I came in early to roam the countryside in advance, the whole U.S. delegation with this big-ass van, and we roamed 3-4-5 settlements, sleeping...

[How did you get to do that?]

The friends of the MST.

[What's that?]

The Movement Sin Terra, which is the Movement Of The Landless. Brazil has this massive, massive agrarian reform. And they are trying to break the back of these agricultural families, who are not really farming but they are holding land and they hold 1,000 hectares. So they go on the land and squat. And they are forcing the government to expropriate the land.

[I think you should get these Maasai people to come to Detroit and do a -]

How can I do that, can you help me?

[Yeah, I can help you do that.]