

## Q and A with Naomi

**Naomi Klein** [00:00:00] I have amazing friends who bring me so much joy. And I have learned to prioritize that time and protect it. Time with friends and time in nature, preferably in combination. That's my favorite time. And my son Toma brings me a ton of joy, and so does our dog Smoke.

**Avi Lewis** [00:00:42] Why did you name our dog Smoke?

**Naomi Klein** [00:00:47] Her full name is Smoke: Fluff in the Face of Apocalypse. Yeah, I always forget the rest. Yeah, that's, you know, not everyone gets to know her full name, but we got her at the end of what I call in *On Fire* the "summer of smoke", which now turns out to be pretty much every summer. But in 2017 we spent the summer really engulfed in the wildfire smoke that had blanketed the whole West Coast. And I guess smoke was just on my mind. Then when we got this fluffy little baby Smoke, she just looked like a little puff of smoke.

**Avi Lewis** [00:01:35] You were reclaiming smoke.

**Naomi Klein** [00:01:39] I'm very much in favor of reclaiming the good parts of fire. This fire is a life giving force. I have noticed that it's the misuse of fire that got us in this; burning things we shouldn't have burned that we should have left in the ground, that got us where we are. But we need fire for life. All kinds of good fire. Oh, we're getting some good pet names [in the chat].

**Avi Lewis** [00:02:09] This is actually a perfect segue to the first substantial question. I think there's a couple hundred people more or less, and we should do this thing. So the world was on fire in a number of different ways while you were on tour with the book *On Fire*. And I think this would be a really great opportunity for you, having done zillions of interviews and speeches and onstage conversations to end the tour, being over this phase of it, to look back a little bit on the experience of being on the road with this book. Many of the people in the book club have read this extraordinary political moment. I mean, you launched the book on September 17th. Days before the first global climate strike. Greta was in New York when you were launching the book in New York. You went across the United States and Canada at the time. There were rebellions flaming in Chile and Lebanon and Haiti and Hong Kong. By the time you got to California, I remember talking to you on the phone and the fires were ravaging and raking the state of California while you were on tour for the book there. That sense of peril is palpable in the air. So I just wonder if you could reflect for all of us what it was like to be on tour with this book in this political moment; to reflect maybe some of the powerful and poignant moments you had on tour. And what was the feeling when so much of the subject of the book was actually playing out in the news and around the world?

[00:03:43] Hi, everyone. I'm delighted to be with you and thanks for for sharing whatever part of the day it is for you with us. And I want to thank all of my colleagues at The Leap, especially Jody, for making this conversation happen. Thank you all. If you're already part of the Leap community and have been on this journey with us, thank you. And if you are new to The Leap and are just interested in in this conversation, I'd really encourage you to check out [theleap.org](https://theleap.org) and learn more about this organization that we co-founded. So, yeah, the thing about writing about climate change is, kind of, it's pretty much a guarantee that whenever you release the writing, it will be happening because we are in this crisis and we are in all the fires here in the book. I talk about three kinds of fires. I won't do the whole schtick because I want this to be more of a conversation.

**Naomi Klein** [00:04:54] But, you know, I talk about the climate fires, the fires of hate, the fires of rising fascism, which are intersecting with the climate fires, you know, particularly as demigods, politicians use displacement and the fact that people are being forced from their homes for various reasons as the fuel for their own political projects and feelings of scarcity and fear, and use that as cover for their extractive agendas, which then fuel the fires of climate disruption. But the third fire is the fire of a movement that is rising up around the world to put out both of those types of fires -- to

be a true alternative political project that acknowledges the reality that we do need a different political project. But instead of directing people's fear and anger at the most vulnerable, it's really about upholding the most responsible, accountable and building an economic system that is able to protect both people and the planet and create a situation where we are a little less flammable, because I think we are in a time where, you know, in the book I talk about how our forests are like this perfectly laid camp fire in a way. And in that we have the drought that has created so much kindling and the heat, that is the spark. But the truth is that our political and economic context is also really ripe for flames.

**Naomi Klein** [00:06:51] Because there is so much insecurity and this is why I think we are seeing around the world the rise of these strong men figures, not just Trump, but Matteo Salvini. You know, Duterte, Modi, Bolsonaro. And now we're seeing this fascist right in Bolivia seize power. So we know we need to solve, we need to put out both the flames: both the flames of climate disruption and the flames of fascism at the same time. And so the book is arguing for a holistic vision that one hopes could do both.

**Avi Lewis** [00:07:38] You were going to tell us about the tour, being out there. And the long season of smoke.

**Naomi Klein** [00:07:51] As you said, starting the tour just days before the global climate strike was pretty amazing in terms of really feeling the energy of our fire, of the fires of climate justice and determination. You know, like I think we know this was the largest global climate action ever on the planet, 7 million people. And so it was really great to sort of ride those tailwinds as I was touring. It was wonderful to do my first book event with Varshini Prakash, the executive director of the Sun Rights Movement, and really have an intergenerational conversation about what's different about this moment. And I thought it was, you know, I really drew on that conversation throughout the tour because, you know, one of the things that Varshini I think put so well that night in New York was that her generation, it is the generation that came into adulthood in the aftermath of the global financial meltdown. So they really deeply understand that there is a debt, that they are being betrayed by our existing system on multiple fronts. And climate change is the overlay. And it's what puts us on a deadline. But there really is much less of a resistance to transformational change than there was for generations that, you know, had a sense that maybe this is a system that could just be tweaked. And we're sort of afraid of the depth of change that really scientists have been telling us we need.

**Naomi Klein** [00:09:41] So, you know, the tour was, you know, was really an education for me in lots of ways. I went to Paradise, California, the community that was burned to the ground, I spoke in Chico, California, which is the community that opened its arms to 20,000 internally displaced people from Paradise and from other communities that have been ravaged by fire and learned so much from people in Chico about what that actually meant in terms of the stresses on their infrastructure, the lack of mental health support, and learned a lot about what would it actually take for us to get real about the fact that we are all going to have to be living with greater density. There's going to be more and more of us and less and less and less land. So how do we do that with grace? How do we do that without turning on each other? One cool thing was that when I spoke in Seattle, I was in conversation with a great city councilor named Teresa Mosqueda, who was talking about how Seattle had passed a resolution to have their own Green New Deal. But at the time, they were in the middle of a city council election, which Amazon was pouring money into to try to unseat some of the strongest advocates for agreeing the Green New Deal, including Kshama Sawant, who was elected as a democratic socialist, as I said that night, before it was cool, you know, and that effort was defeated and Sawant won her seat. And some of that was because Amazon workers themselves had organized, you know, against Jeff Bezos. And so, yeah, everywhere I went, I met incredible organizers, including at the big tech companies, which is a really new thing for me to be meeting with tech workers in different contexts and learning about what they're doing to change the companies that they work for. But, you know, when I was in Vancouver, one of the things that really moved me was that there was a huge contingent of young

Chileans who came with about five Chilean and Mapuche flags. And by this point, the uprising in Chile had begun. There was already a great deal of repression against it. And, you know, I was really glad that they brought that fight into the space. And, of course, you know, in so many ways, that uprising is an argument for why we don't just think climate action, but we need climate justice. I mean, in the middle of all this, Chile has canceled their plans to host the U.N. climate summit, a COP in Chile because of this huge uprising that was sparked by the Chilean government. Sebastian Pinera's government hiking public transit fares, which was leaked in part to the fact that they were going to be hosting the COP because they had wanted to look very green. But of course, this is an incredibly neoliberal government that has imposed all kinds, continued the project of privatization and deregulation and austerity, for which Chile has been a laboratory since the Pinochet years. And there's a straight line between Sebastian Pinera's era and his brother, who's a Pinera who was Pinochet's labor minister, I believe, and was minister of mining as well. He was in charge of this first experiment in privatizing Social Security. So that's what these are, the Pinera boys. They're well known in Chile. But Sebastian Pinera decided that he wanted to present as a climate leader, so they were part of this tender, which purchased, I think more than one hundred electric buses to make their public transit system green or greener.

**Avi Lewis** [00:13:49] But of course they couldn't just do it with public money, even though public buses.

**Naomi Klein** [00:13:54] They passed the bill onto the public. And this is what we're seeing again and again is these neoliberal governments like Emmanuel Macron's government, deciding that the way he's going to deal with climate change is by asking regular people to pay more for fuel, for petroleum. At the same time as he's handing out tax breaks and attacking labor standards. And so what we're seeing around the world is people aren't going to accept that, you know, it's really climate justice or nothing. And this idea that, oh, well, maybe we could, you know what, we can put the justice stuff on hold until we get the climate action through. Why are you making it more complicated? It's so delusional.

**Naomi Klein** [00:14:35] Because actually what we're seeing around the world, whether it's Ecuador or Haiti or Chile or France or even our own home province of Ontario. Right. Is that people are not going to accept climate action that stiffs workers with the bill. You know, there's gonna be an uprising against it.

**Avi Lewis** [00:14:57] Let's hope there's an uprising in Ontario. Let's get it started immediately. So at this pace, we'll get to three or four questions. So I'm going to challenge you to treat this whole thing as a speed round.

**Avi Lewis** [00:15:08] All right. All right. You with me?

**Naomi Klein** [00:15:09] Yes. Well you asked me a big question.

**Avi Lewis** [00:15:12] Well, yeah. The opening question should be big. OK. There's a good question I think that probably came up a bunch on your tour as well, that Kavita asked.

**Naomi Klein** [00:15:25] Turn your volume up.

**Avi Lewis** [00:15:26] I know, I'm doing my best. I'm just going to have to shout. I've got what I've got. I'll crank the volume. I will. I will do this. All right. So Kavita asked, what do you say to people who say it's too late to avoid collapse or even, you know, near term human extinction, that we've already passed too many tipping points like that. The notion that the new denial is doomerism and you've got great riffs about clearing away the doomers and other kinds of distraction on the way to finding our fire. But also the science is getting really dire. And so the doomerism seems to have a lot of footnotes in this moment as well. So, as you've been out there doing millions of interviews and talking to loads of rooms full of people, how do you reconcile just how grim everything is? We

need to not lapse into doom and gloom and all of the doomer pundits who are trotting things out, too many of them novelists for some reason.

**Naomi Klein** [00:16:23] Look, I mean, which doesn't speak well of their imagination because we haven't actually tried. You know, we've never actually tried to implement policies on the scale of the crisis itself. We don't know what that would look like. Right. We have only ever tried these market based tweaks or you'll-barely-notice-it type of policies. We have never had a policy, anything like what a Green New Deal would be in terms of a civilizational mission, a sense of shared purpose that, you know, deciding to introduce change from the infrastructure up as opposed to, you know, let's put in the incentives in the market and just let the market fix this for us. And I think we are seeing a sort of tangible example of what this would mean with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders, is green housing, a Green New Deal for public housing. Right. Which, you know, it really, truly embodies the principle of climate justice that the people who have gotten the worst deal need to benefit the most. So starting with people in public housing, the people who get left to drown, you know, during super storms or whose housing gets demolished after a hurricane as happened in New Orleans. I'm saying, no, these are the people who are going to benefit by having an improvement in their daily lives right away as we transition to the next economy. That's going to build a constituency for this thing. Right. And that could get us moving very quickly. But the truth is no, it's not too late. We've never tried. How could we conclude that it's too late without trying? That's absurd, right? Does that mean we're necessarily going to do what we need to do to keep temperatures below one point five? No, it doesn't. I mean, but any warming that we're able to prevent, any tenths of a degree of warming will be measured in many millions of lives. Right. So we have to do what we know, that we're doing whatever we can. And we also have to know that we will be living with grief, right, we will be living with loss and we already are. And so it's interesting this question around like, should we just give up? I mean, the truth is, I've never heard it -- and I know this, I hate to sort of like profile people -- but I've never heard it from anybody who is from a community that's really on the frontlines of crisis. And I think it's because people who are on the frontlines of the climate crisis are on the frontlines of many other kinds of crises as well. Right. They are already living with loss of various kinds, whether it's at the hands of police and mass incarceration, whether it's at the hands of colonialism and the legacy of genocide. So, I mean, I think in a sense, it's one more argument and many climate justice organizers have made the case, this is one more argument for why we should be led by the people who are most impacted, which is overwhelmingly Indigenous people, Black communities, immigrant communities, is that these are actually communities that have developed skills over centuries with how to fight, for how to move forward with loss, like live with loss. And the idea that you're gonna just -- if we don't win everything, it isn't even worth trying is an incredibly privileged position and the skill of keeping trying even as we grieve is a skill that unfortunately a lot of people on this planet have had to hone through terrible violence and so on.

**Naomi Klein** [00:20:21] And so that's who should be really teaching the rest of us instead of giving into this sort of Franzenesque idea that, you know, apocalypse is inevitable, so let's just sort of take care of our own. And if we're not going to win everything, why even try.

**Avi Lewis** [00:20:44] We have a rule on Leap webinars. When someone says Franzenesque then it's time for a poll. OK, so we could do a poll, right, Jody? This is a silly thing on Zoom that we like to do. Jody, do you want to run the poll?

**Naomi Klein** [00:21:09] I feel like this is not a good question to ask in front of me because people are going to feel like, well, OK.

**Avi Lewis** [00:21:18] We encourage people.

**Jody Chan** [00:21:19] There's no none of the above option.

**Avi Lewis** [00:21:20] Yeah. Yes. You have to at least lie about one. But we encourage people to lie.

**Naomi Klein** [00:21:27] Don't be worried about hurting my feelings.

**Avi Lewis** [00:21:30] Naomi, I have been thinking so much for the last year as you have, and we talk about it endlessly, about that sort of key quote from the IPCC report that keeping a basically, a decent chance at controlling or managing the climate crisis means rapid, far reaching changes, unprecedented changes in all aspects of society. And for the first six months, we were thinking about the Green New Deal and we were thinking about transit and we were thinking about housing. We think about taxing the rich. We're thinking about the financial system. We were thinking about food. And I started, over the course --

**Naomi Klein** [00:22:10] Can I just say one thing about that quote?

**Avi Lewis** [00:22:12] Yeah.

**Naomi Klein** [00:22:12] I quoted it at a Bernie rally in Iowa.

**Avi Lewis** [00:22:16] Yep. I was there.

**Naomi Klein** [00:22:20] A week ago. And a not insignificant portion of the audience cheered for far reaching transformations of every aspect of society, which I think is a measure of sort of where people's heads are.

**Avi Lewis** [00:22:32] Totally. Let's just get right. Exactly. We're in a change everything moment. So and that's what this speaks to, a number of questions in the chat. I've been getting the feeling as I think more deeply about it over the months and the year that it's not just the infrastructure systems or the health system or the human systems, but it's the culture. How are we going to have the changes that we need on the level of a Green New Deal without changing journalism? I mean, like we have an entire journalistic class that's like, how much does it cost? How much does it cost, which they never asked for a tax cut. They only ask for policies that are actually good for people. Yeah. And you know, I wasn't one of those people asking that question over and over again. But you and I've been in journalism for more than a couple of decades. And there's a big problem with the media and journalism. And there are other baked in problems in the political class and the constraints of the political imagination and other cultural systems in consumerism. And the fact that people express, so many people are in a system where they express their identities through their consumer consumption and shopping habits. And, you know, living in America, as we have for the last year, shopping really is the number one pastime here. It's no, it's not really that different in other industrialized economies, but. What do you make of the need for change in some of these other sectors? Unprecedented, rapid, far reaching change in journalism, in oil consumption, in some of the things that we haven't gone through yet in the Green New Deal conversation. Any ideas about how to attack them, about where we're at with them?

**Naomi Klein** [00:24:06] Yeah, I think that. Well, you mentioned journalism, I mean, it's definitely true that. I think the truth is, I think we're dealing with a couple of things when it comes to journalism. One is that there are a lot of people in this profession who have built their, have built identities around being this sort of serious centrist, like the sort of split the difference. You know, look at two sides and then find the middle and that's the safe place. And that's what proves your seriousness and that's what proves your objectivity or whatever it is. And the problem with that identity is that the investment in that identity when it comes to the climate crisis is that we have delayed so long and we have so little time left. And we have to do so much in that little time that it really does take a leap. It takes, you know, it doesn't mean that we that throw caution to the wind, but it does mean that we need to embrace transformative change of a kind that is really antithetical to that sort of centrist persona. And so I think that's worth naming. I think there's something else that goes on with journalism, which is just frankly, journalists don't like to look stupid or feel stupid. And so there's just a sort of reflexive desire to pull the debate onto terrain where journalists, most

journalists feel more comfortable. And the truth is that a lot of media institutions haven't done a very good job of educating their entire workforce to be able to be climate literate.

**Naomi Klein** [00:25:59] Right. So you've got your climate desk and the people on the climate desk know about climate change and very, you know, they're experts and they're comfortable and they're not daunted by it. But everybody else. Well, you know, if they're political journalists, if their job is to cover elections, they don't read IPCC reports, don't, you know, don't actually necessarily even feel comfortable with the science. And so they're constantly trying to drag the debate onto terrain where they're more comfortable, which is like, you know, do you have enough votes in the Senate? You know, how are you going to pay for it? I mean. And so I just think that this is just you know, part of it is that I think media institutions as a whole have to do kind of climate literacy with their whole workforce.

**Naomi Klein** [00:26:42] And there's a great initiative called Covering Climate Now that was started by the Columbia Journalism Review and The Nation and has encouraged an increase in climate coverage, which has actually yielded amazing results in a very short time. So I think things are moving, but I think more broadly we are talking about a shift in values. We are you know, this is why when I think about the Green New Deal and I know when you talk about it, I believe, you know, this is a common purpose beyond ourselves. Right. It is. It is tapping into a desire that is inside humans to be part of something larger than ourselves that unfortunately is too often only tapped during wartime and not tapped during, you know, periods where we're fighting for our futures, but not against just sort of an enemy in that sense. So I've always felt that the consumption issue is less. I think the reason why shopping is a primary pastime is because the ways in which we derive identity in late capitalist culture, like so many of those other ways in which people draw group identity have been attacked. And the only way that people get a sense of belonging is through consumption and these sort of identity markers through consumption. So I've never thought that the way you dealt with that is by just making people feel bad about shopping. I feel like that never works. I think what works is actually investing in the infrastructure that's going to give people opportunities to build that sense of belonging and community outside of consumption and not to bring it back to Bernie again, but like I really think it is so interesting the way that what he did in the Queens rally at the end where he said, you know, turn to somebody you don't know, preferably somebody who doesn't look like you. You know, who comes from a different background. And are you willing to fight for someone you don't know? And the way that idea has some revolutionary thought. I mean, I think it's so heartening that there is such a latent desire for people to exercise that muscle of solidarity and coming from a desire to express values that are not just about one's own personal self-interest. And the narrative of capitalism is that's all you are, right, you are homo economicus, you are just about the pursuit of your narrow self-interest. To me, it's just so interesting, you know, that this 70-something guy, you know, in Queens just says this thing, like are you willing to fight for somebody you don't know and it's like a dam breaking. People are just like, yes, I've been waiting for someone to ask me. So that gives me hope.

**Avi Lewis** [00:29:41] If we're gonna talk about consumption, I think I really want to surface something that I know you've been preoccupied about and don't get many chances to talk about. And then I want to move into hard politics, because there's lots of people talking about politics. So, yeah. Here's a quick one. But it's deep. We're not just talking about shopping when we're talking about a Green New Deal and we're talking about, you know, saving things on time on a deadline. There's attention around the Green New Deal proposals and the need, as you spoke about earlier, to build a constituency by introducing massive policies that both radically lower emissions and make life better, better for working class people right away. So we have a constituency for this massive change. But every electric, every solar panel, every car, every electric bus for mass transit, every shovel that digs a new whatever house, public housing, public luxury all requires extraction, further extraction of finite natural resources. All of the supply lines, supply chains for extraction are based on extremely exploitative extractive economics, following colonial lines and creating massive toxicity displacement and suffering in countries in the Global South and reorganizing of the global economy around those supply chains. So there was a very important

conference in Ottawa just before the weekend put on by Mining Watch and others about can we mine our way out of the climate crisis? And there are real questions about how much reducing consumption as we make massive infrastructural investments is even possible in the Green New Deal frame. And I know that you've read about this a little bit. We've talked about like having a carbon audit into Green New Deal policies so that we actually make sure we are reducing emissions, but also a reflection on bringing the rest of the world into our imagination. We're looking at these raw materials and under what circumstances they're extracted. We don't use too much of them. So I'm challenging you to give a concise answer.

**Naomi Klein** [00:31:47] It wasn't a very concise question.

**Avi Lewis** [00:31:50] Well, I know, I'm saving you time in the answer. By laying out the landscape.

**Naomi Klein** [00:31:56] Yes, absolutely. And you know, I use this framing in the book and some of you may have heard me talk about it before, which is the moving from a gig, a dig and gig economy to a society that is based on care and repair. Right. And the idea is that we do have to move from extractivism, extracting from the earth endlessly and extracting from the workers endlessly, from people endlessly as if there are no limits. And so, you know, these the principles of care and repair, I think they're really fertile because these are the areas where we can invest. These are low carbon sectors. They're not based on endless profit making. And we had a great event here at Rutgers on care work as climate work, bringing together teachers and nurses and home care workers and disability rights advocates. And at the end, we were talking about, well, why are these sectors so left out of the Green New Deal discussion? And Emily Comer, who's a teacher and labor organizer in West Virginia, one of the leaders of the teachers strike there, said because it's women's work and it's not work that is about profit. It's about work that is about taking care of each other. And so it isn't valued in our economy. So we need to have abundance in those areas there. And so we need to identify where we can afford abundance and how we can make those sectors greener. And we need to be honest about where we need to contract. And if we invest in the parts of our society that actually increase wellbeing and all the research shows that it increases wellbeing, access to nature. You know, investing in the public luxury, those facilities, the public recreation, whatever it is, then the fact that we do need to shop less is going to be a little bit of an easier pill to swallow. And when I say we I mean, I'm talking about the 20 percent of the top consumers on the planet. So that's not everybody. There are some people who actually can afford to consume more. There's not a universal we in this discussion. But yeah, I think in terms of, you know, the nuts and bolts of it. I don't think we need to win a big ideological battle about degrowth before we can start introducing a Green New Deal. I think that what we do need to do is have mechanisms to track the carbon and hold ourselves accountable to the targets that we set. So I think there has to be like an independent carbon audit body attached to any kind of a Green New Deal program that is going to flag if we are unintentionally creating a carbon bubble because of a Green New Deal, which is fully possible.

**Avi Lewis** [00:35:11] Stephanie Kelton talked about this in a conference we were at but Roosevelt had a whole new department of auditors and forensic accountants who were making sure there was no fraud in the original Deal because that much public spending opened up a lot of possibility for corruption. And I think that's a really important piece of implementation, but also carbon auditors to make sure that all of this new activity, economic activity, doesn't actually send emissions through the roof.

[00:35:38] And repair is a really key idea. Like care and repair as these guiding principles. I think people get the care part. Repair is really exciting because this is about you know, it's about repairing. It's about creating jobs, repairing the huge damage we have done to the planet. And it's something, you know, in some cases we're never going to be able to fully repair it. But The Leap and, you know, Jody in particular has been doing this fantastic work with us in Alberta around the huge jobs that could be created, just cleaning up the mess left behind by the oil and gas industry, just capping the thousands, tens of thousands of abandoned oil and gas wells. So it isn't all jobs

just in building out new infrastructure. There's also a lot of jobs in a cleanup. And, you know, from some of my early research, you know, I remember talking to loggers who got jobs, doing stream remediation, like getting the debris that they as loggers had dumped into salmon streams. Right. And clogged with the streams and just the amount of pride that people took. And it was healing for the workers themselves to be able to clean this up because they didn't want to be. You know, actually, some of the loggers worked seasonally as salmon fishing people, and they knew they were screwing themselves, but they weren't given the resources they needed to know to do that repair work. There's also repairing our relationships. And, you know, and that's the core principle of, the people who got the worst deal need to be first in line to benefit and energy reparations, climate reparations, but also repairing our stuff. And this is something that I know you're totally obsessed with.

**Avi Lewis** [00:37:24] I'm so excited about the right to repair.

**Naomi Klein** [00:37:27] It means we don't have to just mine for new shit all the time. We actually can recycle a lot of the metals that are already in store.

**Avi Lewis** [00:37:36] And it's skilled work in neighborhoods. So a national repair network, great passion of ours.

**Naomi Klein** [00:37:40] I mean, I mean, it can also be done in ways that are really extractive and exploitative, and that's currently in error in our global capital economy. The people who are recycling metals, you know, are some of the least protected workers, if not the least protected workers in the global economy.

**Avi Lewis** [00:37:57] I'm hearing a lot of noise off of your mic. I'm not sure if it's rubbing on anything.

**Naomi Klein** [00:38:01] Oh, really? Sorry. All right.

**Avi Lewis** [00:38:04] Audio stress. OK. So there's a fantastic question in the chat, that's just come from political activism today.

**Avi Lewis** [00:38:13] I want to read it to you and use it as a jumping off point for a question about pressure points in the electoral world. Right now, we've been focusing a lot on the entire interface between movement pressure and electoral politics. We have an election going on in the U.K. with a party running on extremely ambitious programs and a big Green New Deal. We've got the U.K. You're fully in the tank for Bernie now, having endorsed formally and spoken out at rallies, the Sanders Warren dynamic is drawing some attention in our chat and obviously in our consideration. And we have a minority government in Canada where a lot of people worked their hearts out for radical candidates. Some of them got elected, some of them didn't. But there's a lot of energy and thinking going into, how do we pressure this minority government to actually take maybe one step towards a Green New Deal in Canada. But here to take it right down to the local level is a comment from the chat from Chris Gusen. He said, "Me and some fellow organizers from Climate Justice Edmonton, were at city council today arguing for free public transit. The mayor and most councillors were unreceptive, borderline hostile to the idea. It's basically viewed as a choice: make transit free or make transit service better. Obviously, we need both. What's your advice to activist working on a municipal level when confronted with, how are you going to pay for it, given that cities genuinely do have almost no tools to generate revenue and often within provinces with governments hostile to climate action? And we talk a lot about the need for a currency-issuing nation state to run a Green New Deal. Ultimately, the answer is, a federal government pours money into free transit that municipalities get to implement, but they don't have to pay for it. And it's actually operating expenses as well as the capital expenses. The federal governments who can float bonds, who can raise money, and you can print money to pay for. But we have people who are at city council in Edmonton today running up against the same thing. We haven't changed. We

need far reaching and rapid, unprecedented changes in the mindset of Don Iveson and other councilors on Edmonton City Council. But so use that as a way to get into this question of where are the pressure points in our current electoral landscape as people are thinking a lot about their governments, both locally and nationally, and where we could take a step further, where we could push further for a Green New Deal.

**Naomi Klein** [00:40:38] Yeah. No, I mean, I think it's a little tricky to be having our conversation that is this international in some ways, because every country has its own idiosyncrasies about the extent to which, you know, cities or even every province in truth about the amount of freedom and leeway that municipalities have to raise funds to generate tax. You know, it's really different. And so people have to do their own research about what the revenue raising potential is. There is usually some you know, obviously Alberta is a very tricky place right now under under Jason Kenney. But I think that.

**Avi Lewis** [00:41:24] It was really easy to organize around climate justice when Rachel Notley was in charge. So that's a big change.

**Naomi Klein** [00:41:29] Well, yeah. So, I mean, I think there actually are ways, as you know, that it is easier and not maybe not necessarily to win a huge victory like free public transit, but to make the case, because under Notley, the oil industry was just so incredibly adept at playing the victim. Right. And obviously, they're adept at playing the victim under every possible circumstance.

**Naomi Klein** [00:42:01] But the truth is that this remains, you know, one of the top three richest industries on earth. And the idea that in a province soaked in oil money, it's not possible to invest in public transit is completely absurd. And I think that there was a feeling among a lot of people that when the NDP was in power, that one had to tread lightly and not take on their central false premise from day one of their Notley administration, which was that the poor oil and gas industries are so under stress that we can't possibly ask them for anything more. Certainly not increase oil royalties, which was the worst fateful decision that that government made was, you know, doing a royalty review and then locking in these incredibly low royalty rates. And so that fight can now be fought again. I mean, honestly, you know, in Alberta, unless you're talking about oil or oil royalties and the fact you're getting so royally ripped off, you're getting lower royalty revenues than Texas, some of the lowest royalty revenues in the world of any, you know, any oil and gas territory.

**Naomi Klein** [00:43:27] So. So I think people's hands are now free to have that big battle about how it could be possible to continue to be crying poor, you know, in the context of all of that oil.

**Avi Lewis** [00:43:41] And yet many municipalities are people working at the city level. Many municipalities are required to balance their budgets, can't run deficits. Even big cities like Toronto, some restraint.

**Naomi Klein** [00:43:51] Lock in policies are going to have to be taken on. I mean, this has been a strategic victory of the neoliberal project, has been not just locking in these policies, but trying to throw away the keys afterwards. Right. And there's all, you know, whether it's balanced budget requirements, whether it's, you know, the independent central bank, whether it's free trade agreements, you know, all of it is, you know, in Chile.

**Naomi Klein** [00:44:23] They called it, you know, speaking of Jose Pinera, who I was talking about earlier, you know, one of Pinochet's star ministers whose brother is Sebastian Pinera, who's currently in charge in Chile. He talked about how the goal was to build what was called a technofied democracy. So a technofied democracy is a democracy that is protected from politics, so that the idea is that no matter who people elect after you, they can never have access to the real levers of economic power. Right. And so we are going to need to take on that logic.

**Naomi Klein** [00:44:56] We're gonna need to out this system, which was incredibly anti-democratic, which was all about presenting these policies as scientific. You know, it's kind of interesting because when you go back and look at it, it's all about economists claiming that their field is as fixed as physics and chemistry. When Milton Friedman, shame of shame, won the Nobel Prize in Economics, which is not a real Nobel Prize, it's given by bankers. But when Milton Friedman won that Nobel Prize he spent his address arguing that economics should be treated as hard as sciences, physics and chemistry. So now here we are. You know, some decades later and physics and chemistry are telling us we have to change everything about our system. So we somehow need to out this incredible contradiction. First of all, economics has never been a hard science. It's, you know, Keynes knew it was a political science. And the whole point of casting it as a hard science was to make it impossible to challenge these incredibly ideological policies. Sorry.

**Avi Lewis** [00:46:11] No. That was amazing. I didn't know that about Friedman's Nobel speech.

**Naomi Klein** [00:46:17] Well, I just had my memory refreshed about this, because I just yesterday was speaking, or Sunday. It was yesterday. I was just speaking to a group of Chileans by Zoom about this. And, you know, they can't get anything done there either until they take on this lock-in. And the whole reason why they had their fares increased is because of one of these issues. Like if you spend, you have to raise the revenue somehow that's locked in to prevent them from having, you know, not only can't they have free public transit, but they can't even keep the rates as they are.

**Avi Lewis** [00:46:58] There's lots of talk in the chat about Canadian politics, and I think so someone's on about them--.

**Naomi Klein** [00:47:08] Is anybody upset that I'm attacking the Notley--.

**Avi Lewis** [00:47:11] No, nobody is upset about that. I don't think there's going to be upset in this crowd, especially since Climate Justice Edmonton was organizing hard, born in the Notley years. But there's folks talking about the money supply and definitely modern monetary theory as part of a Green New Deal. That's at the level of what a national government who was elected with a mandate to carry out a Green New Deal would have to do in order to enact it. Right now, we're not in that situation. And so I think people would be really interested in your thoughts about what folks in Canada can be doing to pressure this minority government. When there's a majority government in Canada they can pretty much do whatever the hell they want. They bought a pipeline last time around. And there's people who are in this moment really casting around with like, what can we do? We should have more influence in movement work when there's a minority government, of what should we be doing. So there's lots of appetite for any of your thoughts on that.

**Naomi Klein** [00:48:10] Well, I'd be interested in you know, I don't know if you have a thought about this. This is a point of maximum leverage for the NDP. And the Greens, too. To a lesser extent. And so I think this is a moment when those parties need to be hearing from the people who voted for them about what your non-negotiables are. I mean, what you want the big ask to be. This is not going to be a moment where we get everything because, you know, the Liberals did win. They won a minority. They didn't win a majority. So they don't have a blank slate, but they do have more power and they are. It is a moment to exert maximum pressure. Right. Both in the streets, you know, and, you know, it's not a moment when they are as able to brush off public concern. Right. You know what? It's not a moment where people are going to be satisfied with a gesture, a sort of Trudeau style gesture. I think that they. And so this is it. You know, people work their butts off during the election. But the tough truth is that we still need to be working our butts off because they can't ignore the public in the same way. That's always the benefit of a minority government. For however long it lasts and it may just last a couple of years is that minority governments are more porous to the public because their hold on power is more tenuous. So that pressure needs to be exerted by you. That means like doorstep office occupations, but also of the friendly political parties that ran on campaigns promising all kinds of things, and need to be as ambitious as

possible. I don't know what the demands should be. Maybe it's, maybe I don't, I don't know if it's possible at this point to have our non-negotiable be, you know, no Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion. You know, you bought yourself a god damn pipeline. You're not allowed to sink another penny into this thing and you're certainly not allowed to triple its capacity. And what would it look like to go all in on "No Kinder Morgan expansion"? You know, the downside of that is that it's a no demand without a positive demand of the big investment like what Bernie and AOC just announced. Like a big investment in public housing. Maybe there can be one of each. Maybe there's enough leverage to demand one good, one no. Like I'd love to see that. I don't know exactly what that would be. There's a lot of, the Kinder Morgan expansion cannot happen, and it will only happen with incredible violence like if they are going to push this through they're gonna be pushing it through over the bodies of Indigenous land defenders who have made it absolutely clear. Like the Tiny House Warriors, but not only, there is such determination. And so to say, OK, well, just like let them do it. You know, it's not just a pipeline. It is also all the human rights abuses that are embedded in that.

**Avi Lewis** [00:51:35] When you were talking about having the Chilean students at your Vancouver event. I was thinking to that Kanahus Manuel, you invited her on stage and the RCMP had just broken her wrist with another attack on people defending the land through that project. So I don't think we have come up with anything super helpful on the electoral front. But the one no, one yes, two pronged strategy is interesting because of a lot of free transit organizing going on. Suddenly there are groups popping up all over Canada.

**Naomi Klein** [00:52:12] I'm looking and really encouraging people to read the comments because there's lots of great stuff here.

**Avi Lewis** [00:52:16] I do have to say I've been on a few of these webinars and the comments and questions are phenomenal. So thanks to everybody because it's a fascinating conversation. We do archive these and we read them over at length later. As we draw towards the end of our time I would love to ask you a question about writing, because I know as a political writer you do end up spending most of your time talking about politics and policy. And Jody and I were talking before we did the webinar, there were a few questions that came through about writerly issues.

**Avi Lewis** [00:52:54] And I know from the very beginning your voice as a writer is quite distinct. Your voice on the page is quite distinct from your voice as a movement activist. You do a lot of media, you do a lot of public speaking, which is sort of a different vernacular that you have for all of them. But your authorial voice, the voice that you choose to write in, the voice that you've honed over eight books.

**Naomi Klein** [00:53:18] Seven books.

**Avi Lewis** [00:53:19] It felt like eight to me. But how would you describe your writerly voice as distinct from the one you use when you're talking to us here or when you're speaking to a roomful of people or speaking to journalists. Did you make any conscious choices about how your writing would manifest, what your voice would be? What do you do? Do you spend any time reflecting on that? Or maybe this is just something where we develop our ruts and grooves and they just have their own.

**Naomi Klein** [00:53:51] You know, I mean, one thing I like about this book of essays is that it contains, it has different styles and different kinds of writing and that I'm drawn to. It isn't, you know, when you write a book like *This Changes Everything* or *The Shock Doctrine*. Those books are an absolutely cohesive, not just narrative, but also voice. Right. It's the same voice through 600 odd pages. Yeah. You know what? I was remembering when I was writing *No Logo*. You know, 20 years ago, I had never written a book before. And I had written newspaper columns. And when I was writing newspaper columns, it was always really important for me to be funny and to just have, you know, a little bit.

**Avi Lewis** [00:54:52] You were sassy. You were a pop culture columnist.

**Naomi Klein** [00:54:56] I did. It's true.

**Avi Lewis** [00:54:59] You were mean and funny sometimes.

**Naomi Klein** [00:55:01] But I remember my editor, Louise Dennis was saying, you know, like what works for a newspaper column is not necessarily the tone that someone wants to spend with you for a fearsome five hundred pages. And so, you know, like different lengths of pieces you can pull off a different tone in them like a shorter piece, you can have more of that playful voice, you know, and an essay you can go into a shorter, you know, a couple thousand word essay, you can go into more of a contemplative space. Then, you know, if you're laying out a thesis driven argument and you want someone to stay with you for every step of the argument, you really have to have that consistency of voice. And in that consistency, you have to be careful not to be annoying because there's different things that people will stay with for different lengths of time. Right. What I like about this book is that it allows for a variety of tone because I'm not asking people to stay with me, you know, you can dip in and out of this book of essays, and it has tones that are more rallying, and tones that are sadder. And it has space for grief and it has just kind of space to just indulge my love of the natural world and my rage and also feel whatever. So I like having that kind of texture and not -- there's something confining when you're asking someone to stay with you for that length of time, you know, in nonfiction. Right. If you're writing fiction, obviously, stylistically they're going on a journey with you. But, you know, when you're building a very, very research based argument over a period of time, it's much more confining than the writing in this book. Like, for instance, like the style of an essay like *Summer of Smoke*, which is really a diary of just like, you know, feeling the world closing in more and more and more and going from like, maybe this is OK, maybe it'll pass to like, oh, my God, we are completely trapped in this smoke. And there's just trying to capture that relentlessness and the claustrophobia of being inside that for so long, which I think, you know, like so many people who've experienced the wildfires for a protracted time have told me they've really related to that. So, you know, different subjects require, I think, call on different tones, different skills. But for me with *On Fire*, I've really tried to think about like, what is the difference between a speech, and a speech that you write, as opposed to something like when you write for a group of people in a room, you try to be galvanizing in a moment where people are carrying a kind of fear and grief is really different, actually, than writing for the page. And I've been really trying in some ways to unlearn some of the skills that I've learned over 20 years of being a woman attacking capitalism in incredibly male dominated fields, which are very much like, I have to be sure, I have to have all my ducks in a row. And it's all about sort of proving how legitimate I am, you know, to be making these arguments.

**Avi Lewis** [00:58:39] 60 pages of footnotes.

**Naomi Klein** [00:58:41] 70 pages of footnotes in some cases. Right. And also like a tone of just like sort of relentless calm. You know, this is one of the things that people say about my tone is like, she says radical things but she says them so calmly and pleasantly, you know. And I've sort of realized that in some ways that calmness, which I think served me well when I was out there with the Shock Doctrine and trying to fight battles with, you know, very angry, you know, free market economists, you know, it helped. And I think just all of this sexism in our society really needed me to be a very calm voice in that but in the moment in the climate crisis where we are, I don't feel like it's actually that helpful for me to be really calm. I think it's confusing, actually, for the people who are up on stage, is talking to people about how little time we have left and how dire the consequences of our inaction are to just seem really chill about it. I actually think that's very confusing for people because if what we are saying is true, then we should all actually be accessing some pretty powerful emotions. Right. So I think I've been trying to be more embodied as a speaker and like find my own fire. Right. I'm thinking a lot about like, what is fire? What is it? What are the parts of fire that we want to claim? Right. And what it is. And one of the amazing

things about fire in nature when it is not these unnatural fires that we've unleashed, but the natural fires that clear away the dead wood, that clear away the debris and fertilize the soil with ash and make room for new growth. I've been trying to like hold on to that sort of healing power, life giving power, the power of fire and think about what is the debris that I need to clear away. I've been challenging my my audiences to think, to look inside and think, about what debris they need to clear away to really be present and all in a moment like this so that we can clear away all the debris that's out there. Like, you know, you've heard about the debris of the doomers, the debris of the deniers, the debris of the distractions and the debris of the dividers. We've got our work cut out for us out there, but we're not actually going to do that work until we clear away our own debris. So I realize that some of the debris that I'm carrying is like this debris of what it means to be a serious intellectual in this incredibly woman hating culture and just trying to be like, I don't fucking care. I'm just going to be as fully present.

**Naomi Klein** [01:01:24] I don't need to prove my seriousness to these arsonists one more second that I'm alive on this planet. So with that, I'll just say thank you. It's been a pleasure. Look inside. Clear away the debris. We need all of us as free and focused and fiery as we possibly can be.

**Avi Lewis** [01:01:50] Thank you so much, Naomi. We're a little over an hour. Thanks to everyone for magnificent participation in the chat. You've been watching. "I don't give a fuck" with Naomi Klein. Any more.

**Avi Lewis** [01:02:04] No, seriously, this has been a lovely time to share. It does feel like an intense moment. And the participation in this book club, not just this one, but the previous ones as well, has really shown us that we need more spaces, even virtually to gather and consider these things together. So thanks for the book and the chat tonight.

**Naomi Klein** [01:02:28] Love to my whole Leap crew. Love you so much. Thanks, everybody.

**Avi Lewis** [01:02:33] If you're coming home, I'm going to make dinner. All right? I'm hungry.