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Trump, Racism and Immigration: an Interview With Margaret Kimberley

In mid-August, I enjoyed the great pleasure of meeting Margaret Kimberley for lunch in midtown Manhattan. Ms. Kimberley is an editor and senior columnist for [Black Agenda Report](#), a member of Administration Committee for [United National Antiwar Coalition](#), and a member of the coordinating committee of the [Black Alliance for Peace](#). Her work is also published in other venues, including [CounterPunch](#). I have been an admirer of Ms. Kimberley and her writing for a number of years so it was a thrill to sit across a table from her. Our discussion ranged among many topics, including politics and media, technology and social change, and history and the future. What follows is a transcription, edited for length and clarity.

Kollibri terre Sonnenblume: How do you react when people are like – [as some political scientists recently said](#)– that Trump is the, quote, “worst president ever.”

Margaret Kimberley: It means they don’t like him. That’s all it means. “Worst” based on what? Did he invade another country? I mean, look at what they’ve done. How they’ve rehabilitated George Bush. Depending on which number you believe, he killed a minimum of half a million people in Iraq. Maybe one million. But Trump is worse? Now maybe before he leaves office he’ll do something equally as horrible, but he’s certainly not worst right now.

KtS: Not yet. It seems to me that it shows very little –

MK: It shows you they’re biased. They don’t even dislike him for the reasons they *should* dislike him. Trump was dangerous to them and they *were* spying on him during the

campaign because he talked about ending the neoliberal consensus. Now, he's not a *peace* candidate, but for him to even *say* we should have a better relationship with Russia, or, "I wouldn't have gone into Syria," or "These trade deals are bad" – he's upending everything that they depend on. It doesn't make him good, but it makes him dangerous to them, and that's why they don't like him. They don't even dislike him because he's a racist.

He *is* a problem for black people. It is bad when overt racism is given any cover or given any credibility. That is always bad for us. I know people who say they would rather have than an overt racist than a covert racist because you know where they're coming from, but I don't agree with that. I think it's always dangerous when they feel safe. Because then they're emboldened. That's why you had Charlottesville last year.

So that's very dangerous to us. But having said that, all the Democrats offer is "we're not like that." It's like, we're just not *overtly* racist crackers, and I'm like, that's it? That's all you have to stand on?

KtS: What do you think about the idea – trying to find a hopeful scenario or whatever – that demographically the United States is changing, will not be a majority white country within the foreseeable future – within a couple decades – and that what we're seeing here is the last hurrah of a group of people who know they're losing?

MK: I think that's one of the reasons Trump got elected. That's why there's so much antipathy against immigrants. I guess you saw the news about his wife's parents getting their citizenship.

KtS: [laughs] I did.

MK: Isn't that "chain migration"? She sponsored her parents. It's not about "immigration;" it's immigration of everybody with brown skin. That's what that's about. So yeah, they're terrified. It's gonna be harder for us. Things will get worse.

Poverty and Propaganda

MK: Very few people will talk about how *poor* Americans are. But everybody insists on talking about the "middle class" – this mythical term that's meaningless. Americans are poor. I mean, it's that simple. There's job growth but it's low wage work. When I was a kid, and I guess for most of my life, the number one employer was General Motors. Living wage work. Union work. Pensions, benefits. Now the number one employer is Walmart. What does that tell you?

KtS: Who tell their employees how to employees how to apply for government benefits because they're not paying them enough to afford food.

MK: I think as things worsen, I'm afraid that we will see more acting out; the mass shootings, etc. I'm not really surprised. There are a lot of people who are becoming unhinged because they can't count on the things they could count on. And it takes very little to push them over...

Glen [Ford] wrote so profoundly after the mass shooting in Las Vegas that in this country, people don't have solidarity. Everybody's an enemy... It's difficult to have solidarity in a settler-colonial state because everybody is your enemy.

So I think we will see retrogressing. That's why you have "stand your ground" laws and people wanting to have every kind of weapon, as there's a lot of fear. And they have no other way to cope. They haven't been told that there's any other way to cope. And the big problem for Americans is we're told we have the best of all possible worlds. There's no alternative. There's nothing else to consider. No other country – I mean, just go to Canada. Just go north. *They* give everybody health care. But people are told we have the best health care system in the world when we don't. Life expectancy is like 30th or something in the world. [[The WHO lists the USA at 31 and the UN at 44.](#)]

So here you have this "best," "wonderful," "only" system but it's failing. So then what do you do?

KtS: Because it's based on competition, not cooperation.

MK: Competition and white supremacy. So there you are, a white person with expectations about what you are going to get in life, and then you don't get them. But you don't band together with other people to change things. Everyone else is just your enemy. So I think we're going to see, unfortunately, more very bad, very dangerous behavior. I'm sad to say.

KtS: ...One disappointment for me is that I was hoping that when Trump got elected, perhaps, there'd be a resurgence in antiwar thought because people could be like, "Oh, look what he's doing, so let's oppose that." Great! I was even thinking, "Well okay, maybe I'm even willing to keep my mouth shut about you opposing war now that you said nothing about while Obama was just waging it for eight years, but okay, great, at least you're opposed to it now." But I feel like I see none of that at all. There's been no resurgence in antiwar. What's going on? Why doesn't anyone care?

MK: I think there was a large groundswell of antiwar activism around Iraq because Bush was the president. First of all, because he was a Republican, not a Democrat. And because he was sending US troops. There aren't many people who are against US intervention. So if you can destroy a country like Libya without sending any Americans in combat roles,

and you pay some jihadists to do it – which is exactly what they did – Americans don't care that much. So if you're not sending Americans somewhere to potentially get killed, nobody cares. So use jihadists as proxies. Or drone warfare. Or sanctions, which are war by other means. It's easier to cover up and people don't care as much...

Americans are among the most propagandized people on the planet, and they would be terribly offended if you said that to them.

KtS: [laughs] They are when I do, yeah!

MK: ...If everything you know about Russia is from the New York Times and the Washington Post, you don't know anything about Russia. Just for example: Ukraine. The president of Ukraine, Yanokovitch, was elected. The United States had a coup against an elected president to put in place a bunch of neo-Nazis. But Putin's the villain? Trump is right: Crimea is more Russian than Ukrainian. So when he said, "Well, they mostly speak Russian," he actually, for once, said something that's true. And it's just dismissed. "Oh, he's just listening to Putin." No. Look it up. Crimea is mostly Russian so it's plausible they would vote to be part of Russia instead of Ukraine.

KtS: It was 80% or more.

MK: I'm sure it was a majority. Why, as a Russian-speaking person, would you want to remain a part of a Ukraine which banned the teaching of Russian, among other things? You wouldn't. But nobody knows that.

KtS: The facts of the matter here are irrelevant. I can't remember who said it, but someone said politics is not about facts, politics is about emotions. So that's what we're seeing here. This demonization of this individual – who, obviously, I can't say enough bad things about him: Trump – but this demonization is completely at the expense of looking at the system. Not looking at anything systemic whatsoever.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but my impression – last year, as we went up to the election, I mean two years ago now – was that I'd never seen the media actually line up behind a candidate the way that they lined up behind Hillary. It really seems as though a large percentage of the media – I mean, certainly the important ones: the Times, the Post, CNN, etc. – were just overtly on her side when usually they at least pretend not to be on one side or the other. I feel like I hadn't seen that before in my lifetime.

MK: Actually, I've seen it a couple of times. The media supported Clinton over Bush, Sr. They were kind of divided with Gore and Bush. Actually there was a lot of Gore antipathy, I felt. They favored Obama over McCain. It's funny, people always like to say – Obama fans – he didn't have any scandals; there were no scandals. If a president has no

scandals, that means the press is covering up for him. So if they were really doing their jobs, there would've been some scandals to report.

The Decline of the Democrats

KtS: So thirty years ago, in 1988, was the first election I was old enough to vote in. I was in college at the time in Minnesota and they have caucuses there instead of primaries for the Democratic Party, so I went and caucused for Jesse Jackson. Obviously he didn't get the nomination. But recently I went and looked up his platform and I was astounded at the things that he was running on. He was mentioning reparations [for slavery]! I mean, incredible! I was just wondering if you wanted to say anything about how far they've fallen in thirty years. Sanders was nothing like Jesse Jackson. Nowhere close.

MK: No! It's so funny, the Democrats have moved so far to the right. This idea that Sanders was a Socialist – no, he was an old school Democrat. All Democrats sounded like him forty years ago. That's not Socialism. He's just a Democrat with a little bit of reformism. But that still makes him anathema. So they scapegoated him: Oh, if he hadn't run against Hillary! So you're absolutely right: Democrats now, supposedly left-wing Democrats, the few who even claim to be on the left of the Democratic Party. Now they're like the moderate Republicans of old. Seriously. They're like the Republicans who were in favor of abortion rights. That's it.

KtS: Jackson was calling for a cut in military spending and I believe that Mondale was still calling for such a cut. Maybe Dukakis, but it disappeared after that.

MK: Remember Dukakis riding around in the tank. [laughs] You're right. And Bernie, he's not antiwar. He'll say something mild like, "Palestinians deserve respect" and because no one mentions them at all or [only] speaks of them in a racist, horrible way, they say, "Oh, he said he supports the Palestinians." No, he didn't. He's not really antiwar. He only said about drones, "Oh, we did it too often," or something like that. He's fully on board with the whole Russiagate thing. He's pretty much the imperialist. So the only reason to be for him, it seems to me, is because of *some* improvement on *some* domestic issues. But he's a far cry from what used to be the left wing of the Democratic Party.

KtS: It's not as if anything that Bernie was talking about – free education or expanded Medicare – could happen without cutting the military budget. I mean, that's what has to happen.

MK: Absolutely. You can't have both.

KtS: You can't have anything until you cut the military budget.

MK: These Democrats – like the members of the Black Caucus – they will talk out of both sides of their mouths. On the one hand, they’ll say don’t cut social program spending, but then they vote for the increase in the military budget, when you can’t have both.

And this is the other thing that pisses me off. They always talk about: Trump is horrible, Trump is vile, Trump is the apocalypse, he’s the Antichrist. He says let’s increase the military budget 10% and most Democrats go along with him. So you don’t really hate him. If he had better manners, they would just go along with him. When they did this little minimal strike on Syria, that’s when Democrats praised him.

KtS: I remember that. I was in southern California when that strike happened and I picked up a copy of the LA Times and they had a banner headline about it and I can’t remember the wording of it, but it was like a headline that would appear on the Sports page. That’s the tone they were using describing these strikes against Syria. Since Shock-and-Awe, it’s sort of been a video game for people to watch on TV.

MK: Yes. There aren’t any Americans over there, so they demonize Assad and tell you he’s a murderer and a killer and don’t tell you that it’s American-backed jihadists who are chopping off people’s heads, who destroyed this country. There wouldn’t be any Syrian refugees if the United States hadn’t decided to pick off Assad. And that goes back to the neo-con Project for a New American Century. Get rid of the secular Arab states. So they get rid of Saddam Hussein, then Gaddafi, and Assad was supposed to be next.

And Russia, they weren’t always backing Assad. Putin was ready to shove Assad under a bus, but Obama wouldn’t take yes for an answer. They were willing to let Syria to be carved up. They were saying, “Assad has to be the president, but we can talk, we can negotiate something.” And then Ukraine happened and they realized, “Well, we can’t trust the Americans at all” and that’s when they went in.

Russia and China can be blamed for Libya. As permanent members of the Security Council, they could have vetoed the No Fly Zone resolution. But they let it happen. So they cut some sort of a deal: you don’t vote against me, I won’t vote against you. God knows what the hell they did. And then they realized that they had messed up. So they haven’t gone along in the Security Council when it comes to Syria because they realized they messed up in Libya. They see what a disaster that was for their countries.

Remember Gaddafi saying, “If I fall, Europe will turn black.” I remember I said, “What a weird thing to say!” I didn’t realize it, but the Libyan government kept migrants from crossing through Libya.

KtS: I had no idea about that either.

MK: And that makes me very sad that these African countries are in such a sad state that people risk being kept as a slave to get out of their homes and get to Europe so they can maybe sweep the streets.

The myth of “greatness;” Nixon and the environment

KtS: I feel like we live in this time when everything’s getting worse. And I think that when it comes to the climate, well, scientifically it is. But socially, is it worse, or has it always been bad? I mean, from the Native American perspective, it certainly has been bad for 500 years. There was never a time when this country was great, obviously –

MK: 1491 maybe. *[laughs]*

KtS: [laughs] Right. So it seems like this is a myth that the liberals believe as well: that the United States was a better place once.

MK: Well if they mean there was a time when there was more prosperity for the average worker, yes. Before they deliberately deindustrialized the country and got rid of all the living wage jobs, yes, life was better. And there was an understanding that most people – white people – could have a certain expectation for life. So yes, it was better for them. Ironically, it was better for us... [But] as soon as the liberation movement came, they said, “Oh yeah? You’re not going to stay in your place? We can get rid of segregation. We can just put you all in jail.” And they’ve ramped it up at certain points because of the “War on Drugs” or whatever excuse was being used. Black people are worse off. Now we know what a better life means to most white people and what that means to us. We know that’s two different things. But more of us were employed. We had better jobs. My family was originally from the Midwest and the generation before me, they did much better. They had good jobs, but now every time I go back to Ohio, it’s like, “Well, there was a GM plant but it closed. There was a Frigidaire plant but it closed. There was an A/C Delco plant but that closed.” And there’s no living wage work. So the other out for black people was always government jobs. And they’re getting rid of those too.

So things were better for *us* because the end of the liberation movement coincided with the neoliberal experiment. So, when people talk about life being better, I think that’s what they mean.

KtS: They’re just talking about that prosperity bubble that happened post-World War II until the end of the 60’s, beginning of the 70’s.

MK: Right. And it’s funny how people describe it. They say, “We had a good job and our wives didn’t have to work” and it was very patriarchal. The man brings home the bacon and the woman doesn’t have to work. I ask, “What’s so terrible about women working?”

But anyway, that part of the fantasy I find interesting. So I think that's what people mean about the country being greater, their lives being good. Their individual lot in life was better. Expectations could be higher.

KtS: But that same period in time, of course, the 50's and the 60's, the federal government was trying to successfully get rid of a lot of Indian tribes, their legal status as tribes. So a lot of Native Americans lost out at that point or were continuing to lose out at that point. There were controversial policies where they were trying to get people to give up their land. And it was actually Nixon, of all people, who turned that one around. [see [Indian Termination Policy](#) and [Native American policy of the Richard Nixon administration](#).] He was a fascinating person.

MK: He was complicated. There were things he proposed, and [Democrat Daniel Patrick] Moynihan worked with him, and they briefly discussed having a – not a minimum wage –

KtS: A minimum income.

MK: Yes.

KtS: Chomsky has called Nixon the last liberal president. Because he passed the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act. All of these things that are of course now being rolled back. This is one of the things that's really disappointing for me personally. I've spent the last 18 years living on the West Coast and a lot of that time I've been able to go out and spend some time in the forests, and spend some time in the deserts, and this and that. I was involved in the early 2000's with some of the tree-sitting campaigns as an Indymedia activist.

MK: Really?

KtS: Yeah, so I got to see that. Being introduced to old growth forests, trees that are hundreds and hundreds of years old and hundreds of feet high, and going up into trees like that. There's nothing like that back here [on the East Coast]. You have to go out there to see it. And it's just amazing. [But] the protections on these places – which have always been tenuous – are being rolled back really fast right now and no one's paying attention. Everyone's just like "Russia! Russia! Russia!" But wait! There's stuff happening to the Endangered Species Act and we're going to have animals and plants go extinct, and that's it for them. That's it.

MK: It's true... What do they say? "There's no Planet B."

KtS: Right?

MK: But we forget that all those things [environmental protections like the Endangered Species Act] happened because of activism. I remember the first Earth Day. It was like

1970, I was ten or eleven. A *million people* protested in Manhattan. They went after what they called the “dirty dozen” members of Congress. That’s why Nixon did it. That’s why there’s an EPA. People made that demand and they [Nixon and his cadre] were afraid for their political survival.

Smart Phones vs. Solidarity

MK: Now, I feel like several things have happened. People have been numbed out, they’ve been lied to a lot, so people just don’t know. I think technology is to blame, as much as I use it – and sometimes I’ve said I’m addicted to my cellphone and whatever – but having these things can numb you out and distract you at any moment.

Because of technology and the internet you can do things without human help. I was talking to somebody the other day about travel agents. And they said, “I can’t remember the last time I went to a travel agent. Maybe in the 90’s.” Now I can book a trip anywhere on the planet and I don’t have to talk to anybody. I can be in my pajamas and slippers with my computer from home. Buy a plane ticket, hotel, etc. Banking: I remember I had a check that I had to deposit and I didn’t want to go to the bank. I realized I had an app on my phone and I could deposit the check that way. I’ve not been to the bank to deposit a check since. So I don’t need to talk to another human being to do a variety of things. That’s another thing that leads us to being cut off from each other.

KtS: I think that the smart phone – which was invented eleven years ago now – it seems like there’s been this immense cultural shift that’s occurred, with no warning. People have just dived into it without any consciousness of it, with very few people paying attention to what it’s doing to us, as it’s doing it.

MK: Yeah. It’s meant to be addictive. For example, this morning, I woke up very early and had errands to take care of. But instead I picked up my phone and went on social media. “Oh, so-and-so did this, so-and-so said that, let me respond to this.” But it’s like the dopamine in your brain: click, click, click. And then I had to rush to get here.

KtS: They have psychologists working for them, to make this stuff addictive.

MK: I find that if I really want to not use it, I have to physically put it in another space. I’ll be in the living room and I’ll say, “Okay, enough with the phone.” I have to get up and put it in my bedroom.

KtS: But you’re thinking about it.

MK: Yes, but if I’m *not* thinking about it, or if I’m bored – . But if I’m interacting with you, I’m not going to pull my phone out. But I know people who cannot stop even when they’re talking to other people.

KtS: Yeah, that's strange, isn't it?

MK: Yeah, it is. So anyway, we have this country which always, in its history, mitigates against [solidarity]. Although we *have* had it. We have in the past. We should remember that. People being in solidarity, and acting and working together. But first of all, the movement was crushed. Lest we forget, COINTELPRO crushed the civil rights movement. They murdered the leaders. They put the Panthers in jail. They *crushed* the Black Panthers.

So we forget that these things were *deliberately* destroyed and even if you're conscious and want to, you have to be afraid: "What happens to me if I step out? Am I going to prison? Am I unemployable?" You know. So the system works to keep us apart. And so it does take an extra effort to think about how we can work together. And I think with increasing desperation – and the lowering of the standard of living – people [are] less generous of their time with other people. Less likely to think about something else that's not in their immediate sphere.

But it's worldwide, too, and not many people have an international perspective. I mean, look at England. Look at what they're doing to Jeremy Corbyn. He's no Socialist. He's just a not right winger. Tony Blair was just a Bill Clinton of the Labour Party, or maybe an Obama. And he [Corbyn] appears to be serious about truly being a Labour leader and they're destroying him. Everyday there's a different claim that he's an anti-Semite. That seems to be the thing that they've latched onto to demonize him. But that's what's happening all over the world.

The 2016 election, the Green Party and media ownership

KtS: If you want to know why the Democrats lost in 2016, you could just go and look at what [Greg Palast]'s uncovered –

MK: He's been saying it for years –

KtS: Crosscheck and all that. There it is.

MK: Provisional ballots thrown out. And who usually has provisional ballots? Black people. Then they start with the voter suppression and the Crosscheck and all that stuff, but it's not even voter suppression. For example they say Trump won Michigan by 10,000 votes. There were malfunctioning voting machines in Flint and Detroit – of course that means black people – 70,000 votes were not counted. Just weren't counted. So Hillary probably *did* win. She probably won the electoral vote *and* the popular vote. Democrats say nothing about it. [Writer] Glen [Ford] calls it a "gentleman's agreement." Because Democrats don't really want to be connected with Black people either. The way our

system is set up, one of the parties is the white people's party, and that's been the Republicans for the last fifty years. So they [the Democrats] know they have us, because we have a well-founded fear of the white people's party being in power. So they don't have to defend us. And the more they are connected with us, the more unpopular they fear they will be with white people. So they don't say anything.

KtS: I guess the process of trying to get those 70,000 provisional ballots counted would've been complicated or hard if they wanted to.

MK: And who was it who asked for a count? Jill Stein. And a judge in [one of the "swing" states that flipped] said, you have no standing because you weren't going to win. So if Hillary Clinton could have said something, she would have had standing.

KtS: I remember that. I was surprised when Jill asked for the recount.

MK: That was controversial. There were people who weren't in favor. I think [Green Party vice presidential candidate] Ajamu Baraka was public about the fact that he wasn't in favor. He said it wasn't our issue. We're not supposed to care if the Democrats say that we cost them the election. We're supposed to be building a different party. And I tell people all the time, all this talk of a third party – our system is very hostile to third parties. We need to talk about *replacing* the Democrats and having a truly progressive party. So I'm not interested in trying to coexist with them. We need to get rid of them. They *are* the problem.

KtS: Right.

MK: They're a bigger problem, in a way, than the Republicans are, because they're phony. They have this veneer of being the progressive party, they're the inclusive party, they're the justice party, or they're the peace party and they're nothing but.

KtS: And being so smooth-talking about it.

MK: Or just saying, "Look at them! You don't want Trump to be president, do you? Look how racist they are!"

KtS: As if toppling Libya wasn't racist.

MK: How about that? And that's why they wanted the black guy. That's why they needed Obama. He could get away with it. When I think of the things that he got away with that nobody says *anything* about, just because Trump is this overt, racist vulgarian, stupid man. But if you know how to use the right knife and fork and talk nice, nobody cares what you do. Or very few people do. They don't say anything.

KtS: The same thing happened during the Clinton administration and that's when the prison population exploded and that's when welfare got gutted and that's when the

telecommunications act got gutted and led to this crisis in media that we have now where there's –

MK: What is it, six corporations?

KtS: About to be five, because Disney's buying Fox. So it's gonna be five [that own over 90% of the media in the USA].

MK: Pretty soon it will be one.

KtS: [laughs] I mean, five is one. You know what I mean?

MK: [laughs] It's all the same. It might as well be one.

[Correction: The various news-centered divisions of Fox will be spun off into their own new company and not be owned by Disney. I will quickly add that the "entertainment" divisions of media corporations engage in cultural propaganda that is arguably deeper and ultimately more effective in maintaining the profound sickness of our society. Still, in this conversation we were specifically discussing news media.]

Dissolution and Revolution

KtS: So, does it just go downhill from here?

MK: [pauses] Good question. [pauses again] I think it's hard to predict the future. It's hard to predict what's going to happen. But there's some definite trends we can see. I think the standard of living will continue to diminish for people. Nothing's being done.

Everybody talks about the Paris climate accords that Trump decided he wasn't going to follow but the Paris climate accord didn't do much anyway. So I think our lives will get worse, the state of the planet will get worse, and our lives around the world will get worse. Unless people rise up. That's always possible. Or, if there's a world-wide war. I mean, I was thinking recently, and I posted on Facebook, would there have been a Russian Revolution without the First World War? Would there have been a Chinese Revolution without World War II?

KtS: Interesting.

MK: And I don't know. I know people have pondered these questions. I don't know if you *haveto* have a disaster in order for that sort of mass action to be so successful. And I think maybe you do. I'm not wishing [for] war, because a lot of people are going to get hurt in a lot of ways.

Socialism and Venezuela

MK: We are told constantly: socialism doesn't work. So it crashes, and you can say, socialism doesn't work. So you can keep people from asking about social security, or Medicare systems, or anything that helps people. We're immediately told that it's socialist

and that socialism doesn't work. And they use Venezuela. The US destruction of Venezuela: it's all because of sanctions. That's it.

KtS: No one wants to say anything good about Venezuela. Everyone wants to be against Venezuela. Everyone.

MK: Because of the lies. People are starving in Venezuela and "it's all Maduro's fault."

KtS: Because of our sanctions.

MK: Venezuela has oil it can't sell. I don't know if people know what sanctions mean. So when the United States declares sanctions against a country, that doesn't just mean that the United States isn't going to do business with Venezuela. Anybody who wants to do business with the United States, also cannot do business with Venezuela. So they can't renegotiate their debts. You can't send money to Venezuela. If you decided, I'm going to send some money, because I know somebody there and I'm going to help them buy food, you can't.

KtS: Wow.

MK: So other countries can't do business with them regardless of how they feel. So of course their economy has cratered. Of course it has. Because it's the US's intent.

KtS: It's so sad to see.

MK: It is. But you see the way they talk: "Maduro is Chavez's hand-picked successor." But he was vice president. That's the way *our* country works. If a president dies, the vice president gets the job.

KtS: And he got very high numbers in the election there.

MK: They keep electing him. That's why the US government hates them because people insist on keeping that government. But then they [the US] did something else sneaky: The opposition were all going to coalesce around one candidate to run against Maduro, and the US talked them out of it. Which might have won. They just want to grind them into the dirt.

US wealth

MK: People [in the US] live relatively well because other people are living so badly.

KtS: The prosperity that so many people like to glorify comes with a huge price, to people and obviously to the environment... Whenever we pull any of these resources out of the ground, it's a horror show at the site where it's happening. And of course most people never see that kind of thing and they have no idea.

MK: I think there are enough people who are still living somewhat well enough that they are not ready to make change. There's still enough people who are employed. Okay, so

you have to get a roommate. Okay, you have to have a job *and* drive Uber. You know. The wife has to work. Okay, you have to live with your parents longer. Something. But you still have mobility, you still have an income, there's still enough people who have some kind of health coverage. But when enough people start to lose that, I don't know – it scares me. It just scares me.

KtS: Well in 2008, it was bad enough for a lot of people, but they put enough money into the system to keep it from crashing, but they can only do that for so long. There is some point, and I feel like that point could come unpredictably, too.

War and Ignorance

MK: The only thing the US has is its military power.

KtS: Which is still horrifying at this point.

MK: It is.

KtS: All those nuclear weapons ... There's so many countries in the US who are like, of course we're not going to mess with the US because they've got the bomb. And we know from history that they're willing to use it. They're completely willing to use it.

MK: And most Americans wouldn't say anything if they did.

KtS: No.

MK: It's pretty horrifying.

KtS: And again, is that just the national character?

MK: Part of it is. How was the country founded? It was founded on exploitation. It was founded on conquest. During eras of prosperity, segregation was completely legal. Racial segregation was legal. So people got things, the little bit they had, because someone else was being disadvantaged. And when somebody else was like, well, I don't want to be disadvantaged anymore, I mean, somebody else loses something. We have a whole system that has disadvantaged millions of people. Who then want to come here, and we hate them because they want to come here. And it's like, well you destroyed their country. There wouldn't be any Syrian refugees if the US hadn't decided to destroy Syria. Or Honduras. It's sad.

The thing that scares me the most is ignorance. The lack of knowledge. And people can be ignorant who read the New York Times. Partly they're ignorant *because* they read [it]. They're ignorant *because* they watch MSNBC. I think it's funny that people think they're being "active" because they listen to somebody who they agree with. So, Obama's in office so conservatives lose it, so they all watch Fox News. So then Trump wins, and they decide they don't need to watch Fox News anymore, so their ratings drop. And Democrats

say, I'm going to watch Rachel Maddow and I'm *doing something* because I'm watching someone who agrees with me. It's really a substitute for activism, to watch cable news.

Can there be a happy ending?

KtS: Considering the fact the US is a settler-colonialist project, is imperialist and white-supremacist, etc., from day one, can there be a happy end to that? Or is it in the DNA of this project that it's just brutal and is going to end brutally?

MK: I'm afraid so. It's not going to end easily or painlessly. It does need to end, though. They *do* need to get rid of the dominion of the dollar. But that could mean me being unemployed. It means millions of people being unemployed who don't think there's any other way to live, who don't think there's any other system to have, and they'll just turn on each other. [*pause*] God, I'm sounding so pessimistic. I want to be optimistic about our chances of change.

KtS: Well I'm just asking for a realistic appraisal, not for optimism or pessimism.

MK: But optimism can be realistic, too! [*laughs*] But I do think, to make a long story short: I think so many things are going to get worse. But you've gotta be there to tell people the truth.