

BOOK OF STUFF 5



SCOTT DOUGLAS JACOBSEN

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DEAR RICK

Dear Rick 1 – Being Rick Rosner

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 24, 2016

Scott: What's it like being Rick Rosner?

Rick: Right now, the Olympics are happening. It's the very best people in the world at sports. In a way, I'm the world's silver medalist in IQ. I want to ask NBC where my human interest feature is with Bob Costas. He shows me tending to my sheep, when I'm not working on IQ tests.

Or working at Home Depot, neither of which I do, but which are generally involved in human interest pieces. Anyway, in my everyday dumbness and life, I am like everybody else, except with an obsession to go to the gym. Where I have a circuit, I go to five different gyms because this is LA. There are gyms every half-mile or so.

Every three years or so, I have been poking at this IQ test, which is hard enough that it offers the possible score that could move me up in the rankings. However, it's so hard. It has taken years to come close to completing it. I used to have an awesome and semi-crushing job writing jokes and bits for *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, where I was for about 12 years.

As far as things defining you, that job probably defined me. It was all-consuming while I had it. I haven't had that job in 2 years. There's a lot of me sitting at home in a towel because it's hot, tweeting, and trying to get famous enough to sell my memoir of going back to high school several times.

Right now, you and I are trying to sell a book to a mainstream publisher that may be called *How to be a Fucked Up Genius*. I feel little bit of desperation because I am 56 now. My time to be recognized as an authority on anything is getting shorter and shorter.

I don't feel 56, but there are a lot of people that feel that way. I take 70-80 supplements a day. I exercise for 2 hours per day. So, maybe, that's a more legitimate claim in my case. Sometimes, I think about stuff that's not non-sense. Usually, I am thinking about non-sense.

We have been working for over two years. You encourage me to think about subjects that aren't garbage: physics particularly cosmology, consciousness, the ethical implications of what we think about physics and consciousness, what the future will be like given what we think about physics, ethics, and consciousness.

My wife and I are empty nesters for the most part. Our kid is going to be a senior in college. She has an internship. So, she'll only be here for a week this summer. Although, the nest doesn't feel entirely empty because we have a dog that pisses and poops when and where she pleases, often.

It is a problem in behavioural engineering, which we haven't figured out yet. That's about it.

Dear Rick 2 – A Day in the Life

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 26, 2016

Scott: What does your average day look like?

Rick: Sometimes, I'll wake up when my wife wakes up. She gets around a quarter to five. The dog is used to getting up when she is up by waking her up. Even when my wife does not want to wake up at that time, she gets up at that time. When she does it on purpose, it is to get on the freeway by 6:20/6:30 because driving to Santa Monica on the 405 is impossible.

It's impossible if you leave after 7:00am. The 405 is a ten- or eleven-lane freeway from the San Fernando Valley to the West Side of LA, close to the beach. They keep adding lanes. It doesn't help. It is gridlocked. You go along 18 miles an hour. There are probably 8 hours a day when it is that bad.

So if I get up with her, I read the paper, eat my morning pills, maybe do some work, see what's happening in social media. Lately, I've been ignoring Facebook and LinkedIn because it is too much, especially with Twitter. Even though, Twitter has a reputation for not being a cutting edge social media anymore because the number of followers don't grow with Twitter.

Twitter had 310 million monthly active users a year ago. Now, they're only up to 313 million this year. Other things like Snapchat, Instagram, are on to being more less your Grandma's social media. Although, my family doesn't want me to use them to not embarrass them as much.

I'll tweet for a while, read the paper, watch the TV news, get up and sit around, and we'll have this work format where we'll have this format where you transcribe sessions and then I edit them eventually. We put them on Amazon with the eventual goal of having legitimate books put out by a legitimate publisher.

We may meet at 7:30 in the morning. I'll back to bed. I'll get up again around 10:00am. Maybe, I'll beat off. It feels good and is good for prostate health. My prostate isn't that large yet, but regular orgasms are good for prostate hygiene, especially for men. Men have less prostate cancer statistically that have orgasms.

I'll get on the stock market and see as it gets closer to closing time. The markets close at 1:00PM West Coast time. Lately, I've been selling stuff because the market has been going on since the crash of 2008. It has been an 8-year gold market, which means it's pretty old.

It might be in the season at records highs. It might be good to get out of securities to some extent because there's going to be a correction eventually. Maybe, when the fed starts raising interest rates because the economy or when it is good, there's writing later in the day.

My wife gets home generally around 1:00. Often, we have lunch together. After that point, I continue tweeting and doing the things that I should be doing: editing and writing (generally unpaid). Although, I do have an article running for Reader's Digest, paid, from a year ago.

I hope this is stuff lead to enough recognition that we get legitimate book deals. At dinner, around 6/6:30, it's pretty early. However, my wife waking up at 4:45 in the morning wants to eat to get into bed by 9:30. After dinner, I'll go to the library sometimes, but usually to a series of five gyms more often than not in a big ten-mile loop.

I'll go LA Fitness, Coldwater, LA Fitness North Hollywood, Gold's Gym on Laurel Canyon, the Y, the Tahunga, LA Fitness on Ventura, and then back home to a total of 80-110 sets. TV is watched, usually Netflix. I'll get some writing work done. Usually, I'm too tired. I have been able to watch an hour of TV and then am rested enough to do some editing from midnight to 1 or 2 in the morning.

I'll go to bed and then up at 5 in the morning and start again.

Dear Rick 3 – High School Advice

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 28, 2016

Scott: What is some good advice for high school students?

Rick: Pick who you'd want to be to see if you can get what you want out of high school. That was one way for me. I wanted a girlfriend, but was nerdy. I kept trying to change to be less nerdy and more jock-ish, but because everyone knew me in the little town I grew up and started late to have success in sports, it didn't work at all.

Everybody knew that I was a nerd that was getting restless as a nerd and it didn't make me anymore popular back in a time when popularity was more of a thing. The general principle is still applicable. It took me a while to realize that because girls fall in love with nerds in movies does not mean that they do it in real life.

I was going to have to decide if I wanted to change myself and learn better social skills to get what I want. That's something best done in the first year of high school or before to decide what you want to get out of high school and see if what you're doing will help you with that.

I didn't have much of a problem getting good grades much of the time until I kept getting sad not being popular and then fucking up. Maybe, social success isn't what you want out of high school and academic success is – see if you're well positioned for academic success.

Do you have good study habits? Do you have good reading skills? At some point, instead of drifting through high school and letting stuff happen to you, early on, you should decide what you want out of high school and see if you can make it more likely that you can get what you want out of high school.

Everybody is frustrated and miserable to some extent in high school. But that's preferable to real life or adult misery because everybody is clear on why they are miserable. It makes it a little less horrible understanding your situation.

Dear Rick 4 – High School Girlfriend

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 30, 2016

Scott: For high school students, how do they get a girlfriend?

Rick: When I was in high school, nerds had a hard time getting girlfriends. You can find people to get you through the awful high school years. That's one way of getting a girlfriend, be patient. Most people who want a relationship will have one before they die.

My friends and I were desperate. My buddy Joe and I would walk our dogs together for hours and be all freaked out about no girlfriends and talk about who might like us and what we could do to get girls to like us. A part of it is waiting for things to happen in the course of time.

A lot of people in high school aren't ready for intimate relationships. When I went to high school, getting laid was a mark of social success, but for girls, sometimes, especially at that age being sexually active is a bad move. Plus, I wasn't anybody that girls would want to have sex with at the time.

I wasn't anybody's idea of a good potential boyfriend. If they put up with me in my nerdy years, they might have gotten a shot living with a guy who has been successful for a while, or who was successful for a while, in Hollywood.

Dear Rick 5 – High School Girlfriend 2

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 2, 2016

Scott: What else – on getting a girlfriend?

Rick: There's a semi-creepy or fully creepy pickup artist movement. Guys work with each other to try to develop techniques for picking up girls. There's a lot that's creepy about that. It is manipulative. It objectifies girls. It has girls as targets that often don't acknowledge women as complete people, but as people as targets to have sex with.

The less creepy and more responsible aspects of that whole thing have a couple reasonable principles. One is be somebody worthy of having a girlfriend, 'become your own best self' to put it in Oprah terms. If you're gross, if you're angry, you're probably turning off people and instead you might want to put some effort into improving yourself.

You might want to put effort into being a person that people might like being with. Another aspect is to think or try to understand women as complete people. Understand that every person has his or her own objectives and feelings and see if there's a way that you can come across as a person who has consideration for those feelings and wants.

Those are feelings and wants on the part of other people. Part of having a long-term partner or even a medium term partner is fitting your needs together with their needs. It takes a while. Most people in high school are more sophisticated and less isolated now thanks to everything than they used to be.

But it still takes a while for people, for teenagers, to get a good handle on what it might entail to be in a relationship, or even adults. My wife and I have been in couples counselling for well over fifteen years. It's not like we go in there every week to yell at each other.

We go in every 3 or 4 weeks to discuss stuff that might be better discussed in a refereed environment. A big part of couple's work is adjusting expectations. People can change to some extent, but what also has to change are if people have unreasonable expectations for their partners.

Couples counselling is a good way to diplomatically get gripes like that out without everything necessarily turning into a fight.

Dear Rick 6 – Vitamins, Minerals, Supplements

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 4, 2016

Scott: What vitamins, minerals, supplements should people be taking? I have skepticism here.

Rick: Some stuff gets debunked, like Vitamin E is currently not popular because some studies have debunked its efficacy. Besides vitamins or supplements at all, I'd say floss your teeth to lower the probability of getting heart disease. But still, dude, don't have a bunch of crap caught in your teeth to create a bunch of bacteria that very time you swallow it goes into your thorax area and maybe add to inflammation, which can add to coronary artery disease.

My favourite one is Metformin, which is the most popular diabetes drug in America. It lowers blood sugar. Take a baby aspirin, it has heart protective action. Turmeric or curcumin, it is an orange powder used in India. When you use it in your food, but you're not going to get it in your food, it may get some cancer and inflammation preventative effects.

It seems pretty effective. I like SODzyme. There's anecdotal evidence. You can't go too wrong with a bunch of anti-oxidants or a lot of the other specialized drugs. They tend to function as antioxidants. With anecdotal evidence that it slows down the graying of hair, I think it does.

I take a lot of it. It may create euphoria. I am a lot happier than I should be because I have been unemployed for a couple years. You can take fish oil, which may or may not help. It's just fish oil. If you eat bad food, you want to counteract the effects of bad food by taking carb or fat blockers.

You're going to pay the price in uncomfortable intestinal distress. You're going to fart and have exploding poo. It may teach you to not eat so many carbs and fatty food. You'll strain less in the bathroom, not absorb as many calories and will serve to replace the dieting discipline you might have otherwise.

Dear Rick 7 – Joke Writing

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 6, 2016

Scott: How do you write a joke?

Rick: In my opinion, and the opinion of George Saunders, laughter is an expression of joy at information received at a discount. As humans, our model for dealing with reality is to accumulate information. We're generalists or omnivores of information compared to other animals that are looking for specific information in the environment.

We don't have to spend as much getting the information and also cheaply acquire it if the information fits compactly into our brains if it doesn't use all of our mental resources in dealing with the information. To capture the delight of a joke, you set up a complicated situation and resolve it quickly.

People laugh, "Hahaha, that whole complicated situation that took up a big chunk of my simulation space has been exposed as bullshit. I don't have to worry about it at all. Hahaha!" Practical jokes work like that even more directly. It's April Fools. Somebody forgets it's April Fools.

Somebody that's bad at practical jokes says that Chicago has been hit by a dirty bomb. They are evacuating. Suddenly, this occupies your entire awareness except positional awareness. Now, you're worried. An American city has been hit by a terrorist attack of the type never been perpetrated before.

You don't know what it means for you or your loved ones or Chicago. You're completely focused on this and the asshole says, "Hahaha, April Fools!" "Fucker!" You don't laugh. You're pissed at the guy. (Laughs) They may laugh about the situation being resolved. A complicated situation requiring lots of thought has been solved cheaply.

It turns out to be BS. You don't worry about it. I've chosen a horrible subject because it's not a laughing matter. That's how I think jokes work. You set up a complicated situation and resolve it with a simple punchline and people laugh at cheaply gained information.

Dear Rick 8 – Laughter, Election, Mechanization

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 8, 2016

Scott: Long before the election, we were talking about joke writing.

Rick: I and another person think laughter is a reaction to getting information at a discount. The setup of a joke takes a certain amount of mental real estate. It can be complicated, but the punchline solves it simply and people can get a simple chunk of information rather than a complicated one.

Our general orientation is to be avid consumers of information that has personal relevance to us. That is the human model for survival, where more than any other species, I assume – unless dolphins or octopuses have some thing going on; we seek out information relevant to us and try to exploit it.

And there are lots of reasons why Trump got elected, but among them, I believe, are a couple things that reflect the fact that we're in the era of big information. One thing, I don't think this election could have happened without social media.

Social media, one of its most important functions is to be a personal information feed. People who are really into it, which is tens of millions of Americans, spend a great deal of time glued to various devices hit you moment-by-moment with personal information.

Information that is relevant you. It is empowering. It exalts you. It raises your self-esteem. In some way, it makes your personal information feed viewable by thousands of people a day if you're part of the big social networks. You feel important.

I believe this goes along with some social trends that reinforce individuality versus collective action. Hillary's slogan is "stronger together," but based on the elections results. Tens of millions of people were like "F- that!" I am interested in blatant self-interest like Trump who is a reality star.

I call it "lottery culture" or "lottery thinking." People have wondered for years why so many people have voted Republican against their economic interests. In that, Democrats are known for being wealth redistributors. The states that vote Republican are states that are net receivers of tax money. Certain states send more in taxes to the federal government than they receive like California.

Other states receive more in tax revenue from government programs than they send to the federal government in taxes. Those are generally the less rich, generally Southern states, but those states generally are politically conservative and Republican. So, it seems weird that people who vote for the party that it is against government handouts actually receive more from the government than the states whose citizens generally vote for the party who is in favour of government programs that give people money.

Among the explanations, what I might think be the reason, is that people who feel empowered and feel like they're on the verge of success don't want to vote against being penalized for that success, whether or not they have that success or not. So over the last 20 years, you've seen the coming of reality shows, where any kind of yahoo can get on TV and become rich and famous.

You have the empowering nature of a personal information feed that is reinforced every few minutes throughout the day. One of the reasons people would vote for a self-interested individualist like Trump is their individualism has been pumped up via the celebration and the constant treats of social media.

Besides that, there are a zillion other reasons including weird electoral college stuff. FBI Director James Comey saying Hillary was suspicious 11 days before the election. The bad strategic moves on the Clinton campaign and not hitting states like Pennsylvania and states they thought that they had.

Beyond that, I think it was the first AI election. People were voting on the consequences of increased mechanization taking away work functions. I just read an article that says that based on current technology 40% of things people do at work can be mechanized. It doesn't mean 40% of jobs will go to robots immediately, but it does mean work can be hollowed out and thinned out by mechanization, and that this will increasingly cost jobs, which candidates only talk about tangentially. Nobody really makes it a huge issue.

There are basic things that don't get talked about politically because nobody can offer a solution to it. For instance, we've been arguing over Obamacare for 8 years. He got into office and made it a priority. Before that, we have been arguing over the cost of medical treatments since Bill Clinton was in office before that. Everybody talks about eliminating waste and coming up with better ways to not cost people money for insurance.

But nobody ever makes a point that medicine is much better now than it was 50 years ago. To some extent, good medicine costs a bunch of money. So, nobody ever talks about how to pay for something that is inherently expensive and people haven't even really looked much at medicine to see what parts of it – it is so tangled – need to be looked at to see what expenses are legitimate expenses and how much costs are due to our shitty system, which means that the debate is like the debate with jobs.

People talk about job training on the Left. They talk about educational subsidies to prepare people better to take the new jobs of tomorrow, but the Right talks about getting rid of regulations and taxes that make it hard for employers to bring jobs to America. Both of these arguments don't do much to address the deal that many, many types of jobs are being shrunk or going away entirely.

100 years ago, or over 150 years ago, well over 90% of Americans worked in Agriculture. We were a farming nation. It took a bunch of people to farm. Now, the percent of Americans in agriculture is under 5%. I want to say 2%, but that sounds crazily low. But it's not. Farming jobs have evaporated, but that's because farming became mechanized, and also corporatized. Regardless of the exact flavour of the structure of farming, farming jobs went away because machines do most of the things people used to do 100 years ago. Nobody is talking about bringing back farming job. That is walking behind a mule with a plough. Nobody wants to do that because that's ridiculous.

Only a few fringy people, and only politicians very occasionally, talk about what to do when more, and more, work gets turned over to machines. It is a source of job loss. It is also a source of income inequality. Karl Marx was an interesting theoretician because he thought he could lay out the course of the future exactly via the way people are and the way work is. He said that

workers would eventually get sufficiently pissed off that they would take over the means of production. That is communism.

But what he didn't imagine was a world in which you didn't need are freakin' workers. The movie that has been the theme of the election is *Idiocracy*. It is a Mike Judge movie from ten years ago. It is set 500 years in the future. Everyone is dumb. They watch crap TV. They eat crap food. The country is about to collapse because nobody knows how to grow plants anymore because everyone is an idiot.

But certain aspects of the world make sense and align with the world we live in, which is, we're living in a world in which workers are more superfluous and how do you build a world that addresses that. You could come up with hundreds of millions of new high-tech jobs that would make use of everybody, but that's not how high-tech works. High-tech isn't about job creation.

It is about people making money trying to figure out apps that make life easier for people. That leads to systems that make Americans crazy like Guaranteed Minimum Income like some Nordic countries are experimenting with.

Scott: Some experimentation with Universal Basic Income ongoing in Toronto, Ontario, Canada now. It is similar to the Mincome experiments in Manitoba.

Rick: That doesn't sound horrible, but it sounds socialist. Many Americans would go crazy about that. Another thing, as mechanization takes over, things cost less. Things are cheaper. Relative to average income, food and clothing cost a quarter of what they did a 100 years ago because it is easier to make food and clothing thanks to food and clothing. An 'Idiocratic' future wouldn't cost that much for a decent living, but it is socialist.

And American doesn't like socialism.

Dear Rick 9 – The Future of Business Cycles 1

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 10, 2016

Scott: Business runs in cycles, plural. What about the future of business cycles?

Rick: There are a bunch of different cycles in economics. There are the major stock market cycles, bull markets and corrections. Generally, more bull markets eventually, which played out over a course of years.

Right now, we're headed towards what people suspect is the tail end of an 8-year bull market because after the crash of 2007 and 2008 the market had no place to go but back up.

There are the cycles of individual businesses, where if you want to pick a stupid clichéd example then you'd go with buggy whips. They were a successful business for many, many generations until cars replaced horses.

You didn't need to hit your horse on the ass. There are lots of companies that follow some kind of cycle. A cycle of creation, growth, and then obsolescence. Gonzo, typewriters, some companies have managed to hang around for a long time.

GE is the oldest company or the original company on the DOW industrial. It's 100 years old. It was started by Thomas Edison, who was a prick. JP Morgan had to take the company away from him because he was bankrupting it or messing it up.

We saw George Westinghouse that made the light bulb. I just read a book about this. The boom-and-bust cycle of some companies are super fast – so fast that probably normal approaches to securitization, to selling it or an IPO.

That stuff, especially software and internet companies – apps, all that stuff, a company can get hot and then cold faster than people can make it into a publicly traded company and get their investment traded back. You can imagine stuff will continue to accelerate.

Dear Rick 10 – The Future of Business Cycles 2

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 12, 2016

Scott: With regard to business cycles, this will imply a spreading out of human behaviour. What do you mean? What does that imply?

Rick: There are companies and commodities that will continue to have slow, or no, business cycles. They'll continue to have regular or normal business cycles like real estate.

As stuff gets pricey, and then less pricey depending on what's going on in the rest of the world and some weird intangibles, oil has cycles. It's not like oil gets super hot and everybody's totally into oil and need to go crazy and everybody needs to get into oil.

Oil is steady like real estate and old school things like gold. All of those things are subject to business cycles. Things that are based on the new intangibles like electronic stuff have crazy fast business cycles.

We are going to enter a world in which some stuff cycles really fast. Some stuff cycles old school. Although, it will erode over a long period of time. If you live in a world like 100 years from now, more and more people will decide to live virtually, 200 years from now, people aren't going to give as much of a crap about real estate.

If you're living online, you don't have to give a crap about real estate, and ditto for oil. There's going to be a spread in the behaviour of businesses, which will be somewhat new. I'm sure there have been spreads before.

Dear Rick 11 -The Future of Business Cycles 3

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 14, 2016

Scott: Any relationships with other areas?

Rick: It makes me think of height. You won't see someone below 5 feet often or over 6'6", tight range. All of the sudden we're going to enter a world of business and other forms of human behaviour where the range is going to grow drastically.

You're going to see people be 35 feet tall. In terms of human ability, once we start augmenting our ability, we're going to see people with the brain equivalent of 5' tall or those with 150 or 1,050 feet tall.

You'll also see communities of people that take on technical augmentation or don't, but you'll have entire communities that work at traditional human speeds. The future technical Amish who are trying to 'keep it real' and keep it together.

They are going to die, have normal lifespans, and not have a bunch of bio-circuitry in their heads. You'll have communities wired together and think thoughts 5,000 times faster than the technical Amish.

Their change in their communities will be wildly faster than those who segregate themselves from being overly teched up.

Dear Rick 12 -The Future of Business Cycles 4

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 16, 2016

Scott: What about a middle ground?

Rick: You'll have the sitcom future people. They will do normal stuff by giving their loved ones and those close to them the best life possible by making middle of the road possibilities.

To us, it will look like crazy ass choices, but they will be based on the crazy ass conditions of the future. Those people at some point will be augmented. Right now, about 1% of the US population is augmented.

They have a pacemaker, cochlear implant, insulin pump, but mostly pacemakers. That's the standard set of well-accepted technology right now.

Eventually, the accepted technology adopted by mainstream people by the tens of millions will be brain boosters. It turns out that if you put on a cap that runs a low-grade electric current through your head then you think better for a half an hour.

You can imagine somebody getting ambitious and saying, "Hey, if you want your kid to do better in school, then implant this little brain booster dealy thing."

Whether it's a thinking cap or a hunk of bio-circuitry that revs your brain clock a little bit when you need it or all the time because you want to be slightly smarter all of the time, then people will start doing that.

Dear Rick 13 – The Future of Brain or Body Augmentation

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 18, 2016

Scott: What about the future of brain or body augmentation?

Rick: We're right on the cusp of it being cool to not want to die. There's only one celebrity who says he's going to be frozen to be resurrected later. And that's Simon Cowell, and he's well-known for being an asshole.

That's no endorsement at all. It's a creepy thing endorsed by an asshole. It is going to be clear in the next 5-10 years that on the medical horizon there are whole bunch of things that will help people live decades and decades longer.

It will become okay and not creepy for people to start embracing that. There are already groups that are small, and really fringe people, who do whatever they can including caloric restriction, where you eat as much as 40% of the normal American because it slows down aging so that you can live for an extra who knows how long.

But that's starving yourself. It's a horrible way to live. A lot of these people can't sit on a wooden chair because their asses hurt because there's no padding.

In the near-near future, people are going to start figuring out or are going to believe, at least, that they can take some control over their aging. It may be in combination with things like fitness bracelets that right now tell you what your heart rate and your BP are and how many calories you supposedly expended during a day.

In the future, it will take on more monitoring functions and allow people who are super conscientious about their health to track more things and to take more care.

Dear Rick 14 – The Next 4 Years, Staying Informed

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 20, 2016

Scott: With fake news, with the Comey thing, with Trump, with Trumpism, and ethnic nationalism on the rise in America and elsewhere, how can we get through the next 4 years?

Rick: I live in California, which voted for Clinton 2 to 1. But many people that I talk to are thinking he may not make it through the full 4 years. Just looking at comments, people think he will get the full 8 years.

So far, even though I hate what is going on, he is good for our savings because the stock market is going crazy. I have one friend who listens to conservative news 24 hours a day.

Where said friend doesn't believe in global warming, doesn't want to let any Muslims into the country, he has the full hyper-conservative agenda.

Trump has given a lot of signs of being really, really bad, but it is hard to sort out what really, really bad will mean – or even hard to discern how conservative he is. He has shown a lot of signs of being inconsistent about his beliefs and policies, but he has put out a lot of conservative and anti-government elements with his appointments like Rick Perry.

It is still too early to tell what the effects will be, like telling whether the Democrats will be able to fight. Republicans have a monopoly on leadership. They own the Senate, the House, the Presidency, and pretty soon the Supreme Court.

So, the Democrats will have to fight from a position of weakness, but it is hard. How to get through the next 4 years? The word that keeps coming up both in private conversations and in news is vigilance, staying informed and understanding what's going on.

You mentioned fake news. This election was at least in part due to the people believing the outcome was bullshit. A large segment of the population, more conservatives than liberals, will continue to embrace bullshit.

The truest believe on the conservative side, even investigative and fact-based reporting, is itself fake news. They will support anything that supports their side. Recently, 52% of Republicans believe that Trump won the popular because he said that he won the popular vote, even though Clinton won the popular vote by 2.84 million.

Step one is staying informed via actual news and trying to understand what that means and if we're lucky and things don't turn out to be that bad, and Trump is starting to backtrack on building the immigrant wall and putting Hillary Clinton on trial for the emails, so even if he did put her on trial I do not know how that would affect us personally or politically, except that the most qualified candidate is getting reamed over pretty trivial bullshit.

Dear Rick 15 – The Next 4 Years, Conservatives and Bernie Bros

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 22, 2016

Scott: What else?

Rick: Be prepared to be mobilized, at first in wimpy ways, such as social media, signing surveys, writing your congressperson or senator, and if things become direr then in less wimpy ways such as going on marches – eventually boycotts.

Scott: How effective would these minor acts of citizen revolt be, necessarily? (Laugh)

Rick: You aren't going to change many minds with the country as polarized as it is now. There has been some progression with the election being so garbagy, except the biggest assholes on the conservative side.

Maybe, I don't know if they empathize. Maybe, people can understand. Most conservatives can understand liberals being pissed off even if they make fun of liberals being pissed off and not liking the results of the election.

Respect for Russia and Putin has gone way up among conservatives since he's a friend of Trump and so America, which is crazy but survey results bear that out. The proportions of people who are deplorable level conservative a-holes, and those who are Bernie Bros. You have about 250 million voting age people in America.

You've got 136 million that voted. That's pretty decent turnout. It's in the mid-50s. 250 million American adults: figure 80 million stay apathetic and uninformed and may be too old or too dumb (or too whatever), 63 million who voted for Trump. Of those that voted Trump, 20% voted reluctantly for Trump.

So, out of 63 million, it is reasonable to think 20-30 million are pretty happy that he's president. Optimistic and loving that people who don't like him feel bad. 20-30 million Americans with a fairly extreme conservative agenda.

Another 20-30 million Americans are leaning conservatively, not including those who don't give a crap. 66 million voted for Clinton. Clinton's agenda is less extreme. It is reasonable to think a higher proportion of Clinton voters actually support the standard middle-to-liberal agenda, which could be 40 million people.

Another 30-40 million weakly support him. Then you've got another 8 million who voted for the flaky, fringe candidates. Out of all that, you've got decent plurality of people who don't support the current political leadership.

Say 80 million to 90 million people are sad with the results of the election, 70 million people who are pretty happy about the results of the election and 80 to 90 million people who don't care sufficiently. The last time we had this wide of a landscape was during the Vietnam war – a divided landscape.

It is hard to draw analogies between the people who weren't so connected. You couldn't as easily find connections among millions of like-minded people. Also, people had a more personal

stake in the outcome because the US had a draft. People's friends and relatives were fighting and dying and at risk of going to Vietnam.

Risk of military casualties was higher because of the draft and it was a bigger war. We still have people in the Mid-East because the Afghan War is ongoing. Those people are more people who chose to become a part of this.

They volunteered for the national guard. They volunteered for the military. In the 60s and the early 70s, protests over the Vietnam War did effect some political change. LBJ decided not to run for president in '68 mostly because he was miserable about the Vietnam thing. Nixon ran on having a secret plan to end the Vietnam War.

Liberals and hippies and largescale protests, even though they weirded out the silent majority of conservative American, did effect some change. Even though, and probably were the minority, now we have, just considering the people interested in what's going on, a not too small majority of people who don't agree with current political leadership, but current leadership has shown themselves to not care so much about public opinion as long as manipulate stuff in their favor.

You've got this thing in North Carolina, where the Republican governor narrowly loses his reelection race and screws over the Democratic governor by passing a bunch of legislation in the waning weeks of his administration limiting the power of the governor.

Even though, this is wildly unpopular with most of the people in North Carolina, and just think he's an asshole. The Republican legislators who are pulling this crap think the same, but don't give a crap as long as they have the majority in their state house and senate.

It remains to be seen whether whatever political action and agitation the disgruntled majority take against the minority government because minority government has been taught that it can get away with a bunch of crap.

I'm sure there's still plenty of good Republican politicians, but there's a higher proportion of craven assholes in the Republican party than, during our lifetimes, probably a long time before that.

PEOPLE, PERSONAS, AND POLITICS

People, Personas, and Politics 1 – Unprecedented Disapproval

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

March 20, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I wanted to start another one people, personas, and politics. The American big – people, the American small – personas, and American politics – big and small, so we talked – off tape - about the unprecedented disapproval of Trump.

Rick Rosner: On day 58 of Trump's presidency, Gallup takes daily polls. His disapproval reached 58% and his approval dropped to 37%. His all-time highs and lows for those numbers. Gallup has been polling since FDR. So include Trump, that's 14 presidents. Of those 14, 8 never reached that level of disapproval including Clinton and Obama. And the quickest besides Trump, who took less than 2 months, to reach 58% disapproval was Carter, who took 2.4 years.

Truman took 5.5 years. Nixon and George W. Bush took 4.5 years to reach those levels of disapproval. Of people who reached those levels of disapproval, Nixon was gone in 13 months. Carter was out of office in about 19 months and George W. Bush managed to hold on for 3.5 years after reaching that level of disapproval. Most presidents either never hit that disapproval or were gone within 13 months after hitting that level of disapproval.

But that, at least partially, depends where in the election cycle presidents hit that cycle. Trump still has 46 months to go in his term, and he could hang on. As George W. Bush did for years, but it is hard to say because, right now, we don't know if Trump has really done anything impeachable enough for the Republicans to act on it, Bill Clinton got impeached for lying about saying he never had sex when he had a blow job or two. I don't know how many in the Oval Office. He was not impeached for the blow job, but for lying and saying that he didn't have sex. He survived the impeachment and went on to have a couple more years as president with high popularity.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 2 – Trump, Summers, and Palin

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

March 21, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: If Trump and the House, the House or the Senate—I don't know—if Trump and Congress were of opposite political parties, it would be much more likely that somebody would try to—that Congress would try to impeach Trump. We're still waiting to see how some of the stuff Trump has done shakes out to see if it rises to an impeachable offense. Things that might be that nature include is that he colluded with Russia for the release of damaging information against the Democrats.

But that's not news. We can talk about approval or disapproval. There are levels of approval and disapproval. That once you hit them, it seems extremely unlikely based on other presidents that you can recover.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: This is not only disapproval that's unprecedented. It's a significantly unprecedented level of disapproval.

RR: Yea! He came in with approval numbers—something like, at least, 10 points lower on average. More than 30 points lower than the average incoming president.

SDJ: You know the economist Larry Summers? He was in the Obama White House as well. He was the President of Harvard University. He made a statement about Trump and the economy as being akin to a “sugar high.” I remember watching an interview a little while ago with him. I think that the approval rating for people that were really gung-ho about Trump being in the White House might be akin to another kind of a sugar high.

Super popular, but then a massive drop, a ‘sugar crash’ – so to speak.

RR: Trump fits that characterization with regard to the stock market, but not with regard to the—American's statistically are not giving him the benefit of the doubt that they are giving every other president. There's been no honeymoon period for Trump. In fact, that honeymoon period and benefit of the doubt has been declining from president to president for at least a half-dozen presidents.

There was some euphoria over Obama, but, for the most part, you see increasing levels of political division with lower overall approval ratings for presidents.

SDJ: That's a good point. I want to revise what I said then. The “sugar high,” politically, that around what Sarah Palin called the “Hokey-Changey Stuff” of Obama. The “crash” could probably be considered a little bit delayed, but the Trump phenomena could be

considered that. People disappointed and disenchanted and go for a demagogue because of that – because a lot of people, apparently, that voted for Obama voted for Trump.

RR: When you look at the circumstances of his election, losing popular vote by 2.8 million, saying horrible things about everybody, obviously benefitting from Comey's interference and from Russia releasing all of the emails, many people feel it is an unfair outcome. Also, the boisterous glee of rabid Trump supporters that, in some ways, tends to not be sporting or not feel entirely American because it is ungenerous and kind of racist, and just not—just kind of saying, “F- you,” to everybody.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 3 – Disagreements

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

March 22, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: So that means that Trump has something like 9% support among Democrats. 35% among Independent. 88% support among Republicans. There's high levels of disagreement. I think Trump came in at tied at 46% approval and 46% disapproval. The average president loses roughly 24 percentage points of approval during his first year, which, if that happened to Trump, that would bring him down to 22% approval.

Although, that seems less likely because he is starting 30 or 40 points below most presidents. So he has less far to fall. He has already fallen 9 percentage points. It's not unreasonable to think he could fall another 8 or 10 points into the 20s. Once you drop below 30 in approval, no president has recovered from that. Every president who has dropped—4 presidents have dropped to the 20s in approval. All of those presidents were gone within a year-and-a-half.

Once Nixon dropped into the 20s, he was gone within a year. Truman gone within a year-and-a-half. George W. Bush gone within a year or two. Again, Trump has the protection of having 46 months to go in his term. He could hang on, or the disapproval could make him crazier. The lack of approval. He could do more tweet storms to the point where the Republicans think it might be safer for themselves and the country to have a reliable and steady Republican as president with Pence.

Or Trump could just quit or could cite health reasons. Not that Trump had a lot of credibility with the people who don't like him anyway, we had the hearings with the intelligence agencies – Comey and other intelligence agency heads – before the house. They were saying Trump basically made up that he had been wiretapped and had no credibility on that. People want credibility. We're in new territory because we've never had a president who is considered this untrustworthy this soon in office.

A president who is so willing to use social media in an uncareful way. The math looks super unfavorable to him. But we've never had a president like this. So the math doesn't rule everything. That's pretty much what I've got.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 4 – Norms

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

March 23, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You were saying that some of the reaction to disappoint and disenchantment about Obama, if I understand you correctly...

Rick Rosner: ...the election, I mean the election – about how the election played out.

SDJ: Yea, maybe how the eventualities of the Obama administration played out, so that then it was a reaction to vote for Trump, even though, as you noted, Trump was saying things about everybody. It was vote for Trump, and damn all of the consequences, campaign trail.

RR: When you look at Obama's approval rating, they reflect the current highly divided nature of the country. Where Obama was a pretty clean president, no scandals, except for made up ones, 3 out of 4 – I don't know how far you'd have to go to get a president with as few scandals as Obama—Bush had the war. Clinton had sex. I guess, Bush I was a pretty clean guy with not—well, you had Iran-Contra, but that was mostly hung on Reagan.

I don't know how much Bush I had to do with that. One of the things that got him kicked out of office after only one term was raising taxes after saying he wouldn't. But that's not scandalous. That's just breaking a political promise. Reagan had Iran-Contra. So 3 out of 4 or 4 out of 5 previous presidents had huge scandals. Obama did not. Yet Obama spent about half of his presidency with under 50% approval.

He had a W-shaped approval curve. Where it started reasonably high, fairly quickly dropped into the 40s and 50s, popped up above 50, just long enough for re-election, dropped into the 40s and in the last year of his presidency people saw a slate of unpalatable candidates. Hi approval started climbing again due to pretty much nostalgia for his presidency, even though he was president.

The approval he had in the 40s for so many years of his presidency, even though he was largely governing as a centrist and was largely scandal free shows that Republicans and Democrats hate each other right now, and will not give each other the benefit of the doubt. The defiance of norms and good behavior shows up in Trump's election.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 5 – Stone, Parker, and Chappelle

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

March 24, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I feel as though there's some Freudian reason for all of this. I don't what. How about Trump changing the nature of comedy at the moment?

Rick Rosner: That's a simple idea, and I think somebody else has pointed it out. I think it is hard to get mad at the Kardashians for joke purposes, when what is happening in politics is so brutal.

SDJ: Three of the top comedy people – two cartoonists and another standup – have talked about that. Matt Stone and Trey Parker, they said he is self-parody. So there's no real point in doing it more. Chappelle said he's kind of bad for comedy.

RR: There's that. Trying to exaggerate his characteristics for comedic effect is not a winning game because he's already so exaggerated that there's not much farther that you can go. Plus, at some point, people who are in the public eye for screwing up go from being funny to being sad. Any time somebody dies. That automatically puts a lid on them being funny for a few years, if not in perpetuity. It was great to joke about Michael Jackson.

Until Michael Jackson was dead. Now it seems sad and a waste. Though you can probably still sneak in a Michael Jackson child molesting joke in if you were trying to be edgy. But it is part of the overall landscape of sadness around Jackson. Lindsay Lohan was great for a long time for making jokes about. Then she went from being funny to being sad because her screwing up got more consistent and pathetic. Same with Britney Spears. She shaved her head and attacked somebody. Probably a paparazzo, that crossed the line from funny to sad. Mischa Barton. Trump is—there are jokes to be made, but there is a bunch of anxiety behind the jokes.

SDJ: Where does that line cross in the political sphere?

RR: Hold on—well, there's anxiety of two types with regard to jokes about Trump. One is, anxiety about how much he will screw up the country and how dangerous he is. Two is, anxiety about whether we're overreacting and he is just one guy. We still have normal political processes, and everyone running around saying, "1930s Germany," is a snowflake who is freaking out too much. There are two types of anxiety and uncertainty. It makes it tough to joke about Trump or make it hard to joke about Trump. Also, there's just too much. We've been joking about Trump for two years now. Ever since he announced he would be running and riding down the escalator in Trump Tower; plus, he was a kind of jokey figure before that. So there's Trump fatigue. But you had a question. You go ahead. You were asking a question.

SDJ: I have another. So with regard to the political comedy fault lines, on the one hand,

there are the funny parts of it, whether the people or the situation. On the other hand, there's that anxiety you were talking about. Where some things can possibly go very much against the better interests of people that would be more politically Left oriented, so there's a certain sadness there.

RR: Yea.

SDJ: But when does funny become sad? So, for instance, when Trump talks about or talks big about some reproductive health rights issue, not in those terms – usually in an epithet form, in a phrase or a single word while taking down an individual, it becomes defunding or a bill is proposed. One defunding maneuver that comes to mind the “Global Gag Rule” that happened. Does that make it not funny but sad? Is that when that transition happens?

RR: Alright, so, all of the examples I gave of going from funny to sad. There's something about going beyond the pale – being not subject to normal human limitations perhaps. Where Trump goes from funny to sad when—well, he is different from Michael Jackson or Britney or Lindsay Lohan. In that, he's dangerous to millions of people. The idea, not the idea—that he wants to cancel Meals on Wheels, which is a program that provides home visits and meals for homebound seniors.

Seniors who can't get out of their homes to get groceries to get something to eat, and disabled people. They serve. Meals on Wheels serves over 210 meals per year to over 2.4 million people. They provide human contact and food, and also checking in on people to make sure they're okay. The federal government only supplies like 3.3% of their budget. But it is important money because it is guaranteed funding that allows to solicit donations.

Somehow with government money in place, it makes gathering donations easier because it makes it a solid, reputable program. It only costs a few million per year. Basically, the cost of one of Trump's trips to Mar-a-Lago. It goes from funny to sad. In that, it is so mean, so greedy, and also so dumb. Where Mick Mulvaney, the president's budget guy comes out and says Meals on Wheels just isn't a successful program and should probably go away.

What is not successful about providing millions of meals to seniors for so little money? It has such bad optics. It shows such contempt and ineptitude that it is very worrisome, and it makes the jokes more loaded with pathos and ominousness. The Lindsay Lohan jokes became too loaded with ominousness because you were afraid she'd die. She was getting in car wrecks and getting caught puking in the gutter outside clubs. Ditto with Britney.

You thought she might go completely insane. She might have to be sent away. She's back, but she's kind of not the Britney of before. She's in her 30s now. She can't be the Britney in the short schoolgirl skirt. And Michael Jackson did go ahead and die. I assume people were telling jokes about Elvis in the early to middle 70s about how fat he was getting and then he went ahead and did, which is terrible for comedy and for the subject of the jokes. It is similar in our case, but certain liberties or political traditions of decency might die, and so we're sad.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 6 – Decency and Honest Politics

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

March 25, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So do you think it's a removal of two principles. One, decency; two, pursuit of honest politics, an orientation towards those.

Rick Rosner: There's just too much at risk. He and his people seem so dangerous and dumb that we don't know what they're going to do and how much damage it's going to do. Where North Korea is being super noisy about the nukes they're developing, the rockets they're developing, and the rocket engines they're developing, that would be scary under a normal president, and it is super scary under Trump.

Trump, I mean, with regard to the North Korean situation, that's uncertainty. If North Korea were doing it under any president, it would be scary. That's not related to Trump for the most part. It's just that Trump might do anything in terms of—he might provoke some kind of war to boost his approval, which is kind of what Bush did at various points. He manipulated military action from foreign enemies to good his approval ratings enough to get re-elected.

With regard to trump and North Korea, you have to wonder whether crazy person versus crazy person is the best thing. I had a conversation with a conservative buddy recently.

SDJ: Lance Richlin?

RR: Yea, Lance Richlin, Lance and I had North Korea come up in conversation. He likes the idea of a military buildup president, which is what Trump is trying to be. He will cut all sorts of social program funding for military. So that, according to Lance, we can ring North Korea with ships on the water and along the border of South Korea a bunch of missile stations.

So that if North Korea does anything super aggressive, we can just rain fire down on them, which also requires threatening China because China has a weird alliance with North Korea. They share a border. China doesn't want a bunch of refugees flowing into its borders if North Korea completely falls apart. So China feels obligated to keep North Korea stable, which it isn't because it is run by a crazy person.

Of all the arguments you can make for Trump, the crazy person versus crazy person is one of the least non-persuasive argument. It is one where I could almost say, "Alright, maybe."

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 7 – Decency's Vacay

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

March 26, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So perhaps one of the funny things that turns sad is the slow, whimpering death of decency in American political culture.

Rick Rosner: Well, I mean, yea, because it means we're losing—decency is among the American values. Humane behaviour to each other and the world is an American value. That we stand up for what is right. We defend the downtrodden. And part of the death of decency—not the death, the temporary absence of decency is the 'F- You!' to the downtrodden.

SDJ: Such as the Meals on Wheels.

RR: And to kids with the Head Start program and sesame Street and public television, and the National Arts Foundation or the National Endowment for the Arts. If you're looking for grant to put metal shapes in a park, these are programs that have been squeezed down already to tiny, tiny fractions of a percent of the federal budget. We're talking .002% of the federal budget. That they're squeezed to nothing so the Republicans can make a political point.

A dumb counterproductive one too.

SDJ: So I see two trends—well, I see a lot of trends. I see one partial analysis with the reduction in decency, where it takes a vacay. Another one is increase in militaristic culture – it's on overtime, which implies a reduction in civil culture.

RR: There's another sad making thing. It seems that people who aren't dumb are bummed out by dumb people being in power. I had or was—I had a tweet go super viral a few days ago.

SDJ: Yes.

RR: After 24,000 tweets, I finally had one hit, which is awesome.

SDJ: [Laughing]

RR: In day one, I got a lot of positive messages. It was an anti-Trump tweet. I got a lot of positive support. Day two, the pro-Trump people found out about it, but I got a lot of dissing messages.

SDJ: [Laughing]

RR: But dumb ones. But it was disheartening because a lot of the positive ones were pretty clever. Obviously from people who weren't mentally handicapped, but a lot of the pro-Trump ones were just from dumb people.

SDJ: [Laughing]

RR: It was attempts at jokes that were terrible or senseless.

SDJ: [Laughing]

RR: Like in my tweet, I mentioned that Angela Merkel had a PhD in quantum chemistry. Then some Trump person tweets back to me, ‘Even Snoop Dogg would get a PhD in quantum chemistry because everyone gets a trophy now.’

SDJ: [Laughing]

RR: Which is such a non—which is such a terrible attempt at a joke [Laughing]. The idea is that under Liberalism everyone gets a trophy. So to use a quantum chemistry PhD to make a point - I looked it up, 120 PhDs are given every year in physical chemistry in the US, which is 1 PhD in that subject for every 2.75 million Americans. So no, not everybody gets a PhD in quantum chemistry. So no!

SDJ: [Laughing]

RR: You picked a terrible subject! [Laughing] I had one say, “You make no sense.” I know that’s probably a combination of a guy whose vision is not so good, and who’s relying on autocorrect. Day one was people agreeing with me. Day two was dumb people disagreeing with me. Not that I’m the king of things to agree or disagree with, but the pro-Trump tweets obviously came from way dumber people.

Along with those came the pornbots.

SDJ: [Laughing]

RR: Who took a couple three days to find out about the tweet.

SDJ: [Laughing]

RR: Then I got tweets from them saying, “Come push your penis into me. Click here!”

SDJ: [Laughing]

RR: It is depressing that there are so many, proudly dumb, belligerently dumb people, and we have a belligerently dumb president who is empowered by tens of millions of belligerently dumb Americans. Just statistically, you know they’re out there because half of all Americans are dumber than average, and half of those people are dumber than the average dumber than average American.

SDJ: [Laughing]

RR: And that's 80 million people, but they've been so empowered. And means they've never been so encouraged to think that they're okay and they're right. It's come up again and again throughout the whole election and post, which is the Dunning-Kruger Effect. If you want to have a dumb person in a movie and not a villain, and want them to be charming, you give them some insight into themselves so they know they're not the smartest person in the world and that way they have some natural wisdom.

They're like magic dumb people in the way Forrest Gump has some, if not deep insights then, some humanity to Forrest Gump. Even though, he is someone who is borderline retarded. He's a sweet caring guy. A good husband, a good father; he's a magical dumb person. Dunning-Kruger Effect says that's not the way dumb people are. Dumb people often lack insight into their dumbness, and they think they're super awesome and are too dumb to realize that they're dumb.

So we've got a president elected by the Dunning-Kruger effect, which has been amplified by a media that caters to dumb, angry lunatics. So yea, it is another source of sadness there. That seems like an intractable problem. That may continue to affect politics for many, many election cycles.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 9 – Worst President Renewal

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

March 27, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: Starting with George Washington, he was both the worst and the best president ever. And then Adams was either going to be better or worse than Washington, but he was probably worse. Then there you go again, you're living under the worst president ever. And then you can string together a whole bunch of presidents until you get out to Lincoln who is, I think, the 16th president, and then you get to, was it, Buchanan who was thought to be the worst president until Trump.

Buchanan as the 15th president, worst president. 20 years later, you have Ulysses S. Grant who was thought to be the worst president by many people. I don't know the presidents in between. Rutherford B. Hayes was probably pretty terrible. You get to Warren G. Harding, who was thought by many to be the worst president ever. Though he had the courtesy to die after about 2.5 years in office. So the damage he could do was limited. Then you can move on, then you've got, some people – who I don't agree with – who thought Carter was the worst president ever. Then you've got George W. Bush, who struck a lot of people during his presidency as being the worst president ever. Then you have Trump—oh! You have Trump who seems to be on the way, if he keeps presidenting the way he has been, may become indisputably the worst president ever. But he's one of a line of, say—he's one of maybe 6 really bad presidents.

SDJ: Who would be the second-up for you?

RR: Well, I know the presidents of the past 100 years than the previous 100 years. So Harding seems really terrible. He ran a really corrupt administration. He admitted to being unqualified to be president. He was banging his mistress in a White House closet, though that doesn't make you a bad president. He messed things up. Though when looking at presidents, you have to correct for how much they had to mess up.

Harding was presiding over a much smaller America without nuclear weapons. He was in the 1920s. There wasn't as much risk in him being a screw up. On the other hand, if you look at Buchanan, who I think was the guy that led up to Lincoln, but did a bunch of bad politics that made the Civil War more probably, so he did a lot of damage. Then you look at George W. Bush, who was manipulated into lying us into a war.

An unnecessary war built on false pretenses that has led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, has led to the worldwide impression of the United States as not the shining beacon of liberty that we'd like it to be. So I don't know.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 10 – Not So Shining Beacon

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

March 29, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Do America's enemies take advantage of this?

Rick Rosner: Yea! I mean, ISIS and Al-Qaeda both became—particularly ISIS, it arose due to the chaos we caused in the Middle East. When we conquered Iraq, we fired the Iraqi army. Those guys went off and formed the so-called fundamentalist insurgent movements including ISIS. And then I've heard—who knows—that Trumps' travel ban has been called the “Blessed Travel Ban” because it riles people up and makes them want to join.

SDJ: What about Vladimir Putin and his crew, and China's recent claims about human rights being too tilted to Western norms, do you think the weakening of American prestige on the international stage provides – at least those two countries or those two cases – further strength in the repression of their own populations?

RR: Yea! Because when we are seen as clowny and impotent, then any ideals we try to promote are compromise, we've had, in the last 3 – of the last 3 – presidents, two of them had popular vote minorities and all sorts of chicanery associated with their being elected. And the first, George W. Bush, did a lot of damage, that we're still struggling with.

SDJ: Obama did too. Previous president Obama damage as well with the continuance of many programs including the drone program, which was considered a terrorist campaign by many.

RR: Well, the drone program has both horribles and goods. If you're killing from afar, you're going to be making mistakes. You're also going to make mistakes with boots on the ground.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 11 – Drones and ISIS

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

March 30, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: You could argue the drone deaths while terrible are less terrible than other means of war.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: If we take the Golden Rule, and if we apply it in that same case, we consider the perspective of the people that are receiving the drone attacks. In this instance, innocent civilians in certain countries, say, also getting killed. If it is applied to the planners in Washington, if some were to consider them terrorists for doing so, would that justify them having a drone campaign and then bombing people in DC, and having innocent American civilians killed too?

RR: Okay, there's no equivalence there in my mind.

SDJ: Okay.

RR: ISIS is clearly one of the most despicable enemies that we've had since WWII.

SDJ: ISIS isn't the only recipient of it, though.

RR: It is good to have a clear enemy because you can feel that it justifies action against that enemy.

SDJ: Other than justification of a feeling. What about the norm of a trial, the norm of a proper and fair trial, for criminals rather than bombing them?

RR: Well—ISIS is our enemy in a war. It's a small war that feels bigger because of the horribleness of their actions, and because a lot of their actions involve terror, which brings it home to us. But they're bad! They—we—I feel we're justified in fighting them. Given their tactics, it is tough to—like what just happened. 200 civilians were apparently killed in Mosul, and the ISIS strategy was that ISIS set up snipers on the roofs of 3 buildings.

Probably knowing that these would be tempting enough targets. In the basements of these buildings, there were a bunch of civilians probably put there on purpose by ISIS, held there. And Trump had those targets taken out, which meant that we killed 200 civilians – which is a horrible thing. And contributing factors were, ISIS probably hoped the civilians would get killed because it would make the US look really bad.

Another thing is the rules of engagement haven't changed. Trump has apparently okayed more targets, is a little more liberal in okaying targets, than Obama. ISIS knowing this set up 20-civilians and 200 innocent people got killed. That's a combination of ISIS being really, really

evil and Trump being inexperienced and possibly having bad judgment. ISIS is—wherever ISIS goes they commit atrocities.

ISIS is a fairly small force. It depends on whose estimates you believe, but the number is around 30,000 people. Obama flew about 15,000 bombing sorties against ISIS and knocked the extent of their territory down by about 50%, which is a contributing factor to ISIS committing terror because as they lose what they want to be their Caliphate. There Islamic dominion over a chunk of the Mid-East. As they lose territory, they consider themselves free to commit acts of terror outside of their territory.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 12 – Worst Presidents Ever

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

March 31, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: If I'm right about Buchanan, and I have to look it up, Buchanan is the worst president, not including Trump because he has only been president for a few weeks. But among presidents that we know, Buchanan probably has the worst, Harding is second worst, and George W. Bush is third worst.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What about projecting forward to the next election? What might be the popular reaction and, therefore, vote results in the 2020 election? Also, the possible candidates that might come up.

RR: Trump has been under wat for all but 3 or so days of his presidency. That is, his disapproval rating is currently at 54%. His approval rating is at 40%. So he's 14% under water. 14% more people disapprove than approve of his presidency. He's had more disapproval than approval for 63 out of 66 days. All but the first few days of his presidency. With such a low approval, it's hard to get re-elected.

But presidents have had low approval ratings before and have managed to eke out victories, or even somewhat strong victories, as their approval ratings momentarily pop up during an election. George W. Bush, managed to get re-elected even after being in a—after he ramped up the war or ramped up the threat of terror around the election, and people were scared and voted to keep him on. Obama had ratings in the 40s for much of his first administration, and managed to pop up his approval above 50% long enough to get re-elected.

Then he dropped back down into the 40s for much of presidency, then his approval rose up into the 50s and ended at 61 as people saw what was coming and had premature nostalgia. So right now, Trump is doing terrible. But he may hang on, We're waiting to see how tainted he is by Russian meddling in the election. How much he knew, how much his people colluded with Russia, that may take him down.

But that may not because it is a Republican Congress, and they are trying to cover his butt. Even though Trump seems obviously terrible to most of the US population, he may still or may survive 4 years and manage to get re-elected. And that could lead to even more terribleness. He doesn't seem to exercise much restraint now. But he does worry about being re-elected because he is already running 2020 election rallies, which is unprecedented. But as a lame duck, as someone who is not worried about being re-elected in a second Trump term, he might be even crazier than he is now.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 13 – Presidenting

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 1, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I am reminded of the idea that someone's character crystallizes at age 30, approximately, especially for men. This is an opinion by the late Lee Kuan Yew, who I agree with on some things – disagree with on other things. Trump is 70?

Rick Rosner: Yup.

SDJ: So I do not see him changing fundamental personality characters. Or if so, not much, not much.

RR: Well, hold on, he could get worse. He has always been kind of a dick. As a younger man, his dickishness was leavened or somewhat compensated for by some degree of self-knowledge and a certain amount of wanting to be seen as a fun guy. He went on Howard Stern all of the time. He was okay talking about his sexual history.

SDJ: Gross.

RR: Yea, but people have commented on how the pre-presidential Trump smiled a lot. He wanted to look like a happy, affable guy.

SDJ: Yes.

RR: Presidential Trump scowls all of the time.

SDJ: Yes.

RR: And some people have analyzed that as him wanting to project an aura of seriousness and heft, and threat. There being some play acting in that. Yea, so, he's been kind of a parody of a big businessman. But then as president, he is kind of a parody of presidential behaviour, what he thinks a president should be. There are other things to take into account, other factors. He probably doesn't have strongly held political beliefs.

SDJ: He might be the first atheist president.

RR: Well, you'd have to analyze other presidents and their beliefs.

SDJ: I take into account the Carter phenomenon. Where with Carter – I believe this has been analyzed by professionals or experts – with Jimmy Carter becoming president and being a sincere, believing Christian, Republican analysts saw this and decided to take advantage of this. You know this. Where every or most subsequent presidential candidates,

even the Democrat aisle, have to express some belief in God, preferably if not exclusively Christian of some form, he doesn't seem to have that.

RR: Carter had earnest religious beliefs, but just about every other president since Carter. You can probably question their belief to some extent. Trump is delivering a commencement address at Liberty University. He has made his religiosity—even though, it is less believable that he is religious than it is for most presidents. But you can similarly question the other presidents' religiousness.

America was founded as a non-religious country. Once Carter showed what you can do with religion in politics, the Republicans recruited the Evangelicals and made them a political force.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 14 – Dog Whistles 1

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 2, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: It's like the way things in America - I don't know about other Western countries, North America and Western Europe, but I do notice the terminology changed a bit. So... **Rick Rosner:** Well, they talk about dog whistles. **SDJ:** ...No, but almost. Dog whistles in a way, but it is a shift, so then a shift in dog whistles, if you may.

RR: America's tolerance for religiosity in politics—Americans became more tolerant of religion in politics from 1980 on. You talked about Trump and the next election, and there are things that could happen with Trump. Trump is someone that doesn't have strongly held political views except around jobs, taxes, tariffs, and trade.

He may find some flexibility in policy that would be helpful to the country. The defeat of Trumpcare is actually helpful to the country. He may abandon strictly Republican principles. That may alright. He may more belligerent and more isolated, and that would be bad. And his thought processes may decay.

The man is 70. He is borderline obese. He doesn't seem to eat very healthily. His dad – though he lived into his 90s, I think – had Alzheimer's for years when he died. Trump's thinking could become compromised. People love to diagnose him psychologically from afar. But he does seem to have some tendencies that allow him to be diagnosed from afar by experts and non-experts as having some kind of mental illness.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 15 – Sliver of a Chance

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 3, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: Imagine a president that comes down with frontal lobe dementia, where somebody with frontal lobe dementia loses their superego and become capable of just about anything.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So that would be an exaggeration of the ‘it becoming worse’ phenomena.

RR: Well, frontal lobe dementia is not that common.

SDJ: Well, it seems functionally equivalent to becoming worse in terms of his personality.

RR: But I mean, what could be just personality traits now, four years from now could be pathologies.

SDJ: What about a sliver of a chance of having a broader vision of society and getting over himself?

RR: That’s one of the possibilities. One of the possibilities with Trump, who wants to be liked, could start governing as a centrist, or saying what he actually thinks about stuff, which may contradict Republican orthodoxy. He could say anything. He could say Republicans are full of shit on certain things.

SDJ: Do you see hints of this at time?

RR: No, only in the defeat of Trumpcare or Ryancare. He doesn’t seem to be that devastated.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 16 – US Brain Drain

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 4, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: Trump also says that Obamacare will fall apart and the democrats will come to him to fix it. It's not really—what may happen is Obamacare has problems and the Republicans try to exacerbate the problems by refusing to extend Medicare. Trump cancelled advertising that reminded people that the deadline for signing up for this year was like January 31st this year, which led to 4% fewer signups than had been estimated because people tend to wait until the last minute to sign up.

Obamacare will continue to have some issues. But he may be willing to work to address those issues and he – with the democrats – will sell it as the democrats have a broken thing and then they came crawling to me. The democrats will think he is an asshole and will say things in an asshole way, but if we can fix things then we can afford to eat some shit about it. All of this is assuming Trump survives for 4 years as a president and may have another shot at another 4 years as president.

Which would be bad, he would make it a less pleasant place for the world's smart people to come and work. He is making it easier for other countries to begin to remove us from our place of technological dominance.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Canada is taking advantage of this.

RR: You're sucking up all of our smart people that want to come to America.

SDJ: Not necessarily, but possibly, I saw some mainstream discussion in Canada to adapt mainstream programs to take advantage of the brain drain from American.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 17 – Strip Joints

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 5, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I do say this in a very important context. And it is only 1-point long. Canada is 1/8th to 1/10th – or 1/8th to 1/9th - the size of America. We don't have the critical mass of talent. So America has more and more talented people.

Rick Rosner: You have something very important. You have Windsor, Canada, which has some of the finest strip joints in North America.

SDJ: Okay [Laughing].

RR: And the world's young entrepreneurs love strip joints.

SDJ: Okay, I could see--

RR: Also, you have a number of super starchy and sugary baked goods. And some of the world's best coffee at Tim Horton's.

SDJ: We have Tim Horton's. We have poutine. We have maple syrup. We have beaver stuff. We have the stereotype of being polite. And people going away from a belligerent president and attracted more to an assumed polite culture and people will find that an additional attraction in terms of especially working and living conditions. Also, Canada needs that.

We have too few people. Therefore, compared to China, India, and America, we have fewer people. We have fewer talented people. So we need smart immigration policies – as we do.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 18 – Next Election, Again

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 6, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: To go back to the next election, democrats, to beat whomever is president at the time – though that is contrary to everyone who hates Trump’s wishful thinking, you need somebody – a candidate – wit charisma. That’s the lever that was largely missing in this election. This was, 2016 was, one of the least charismatic elections in recent history. Where you had the two least popular candidates going against in each in American history.

Trump has a sloppy charisma when it comes to winning the votes of older white people, but it is a shaky charisma because it is super creepy and somebody like a Cory Booker on the other side – who might have a less creepy charisma – could leverage that into a democratic victory. And a democratic victory is a demographic victory. In that, more people vote for democratic candidates than vote for Republicans, but because of gerrymandering and the electoral college.

Republicans are overrepresented. There’s also the chance that the democrats will star getting their crap together when addressing demographic manipulation. Democrats get their asses kicked in 2010 with red map, when the Republicans figured out if they could manipulate congressional districts they could win the House of Representatives even though fewer people vote by manipulating the shape of congressional districts to concentrate democrats in their districts and spread Republicans out across a bunch of districts so more Republican congress people get elected.

For 20 years, people have said sheer democrats are going to strangle the Republicans. That the Republican Party is a dying party because there are more and more people who vote democratic due to demographic trends, but the Republicans managed to survive and win due to increasingly sophisticated means of manipulating the electoral process.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 19 – Earnest Babies

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 7, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I have heard a perverse form of optimism from the perspective of much of the political Left in America. And I want to get your perspective on this as well.

Rick Rosner: Okay.

SDJ: Where the hope in terms of the voting demographics is that older Republicans with “outmoded ideas” and other such phrases will die and leave room for more votes of democrats to weigh more heavily into the possibility of a democratic election victory, to me, it seems like a dark form of optimism and a little cruel.

RR: That’s one of several demographic trends. Another is that the US becomes less and less of a white nation at some point. In the next decade, white people will become less than 50% of the population and non-whites tend to not vote Republican. I’ve heard that every presidential cycle. The democratic advantage goes up by 2% because Republicans who tend to be older tend to age out of the population.

Because of immigration and reproduction, the democrats slowly gain an advantage, but it is not an advantage that democrats have been able to exploit over the last 20 years because democrats are earnest babies who don’t play as mean as the Republicans.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 20 – The Supreme Court

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 8, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: After the Supreme Court thing, which was a bold denial of Obama's ability to nominate a Supreme Court justice and have that justice voted on, plus a bunch of other stuff, I have been wondering whether representative democracy in America is irretrievably broken, but first let's talk about the justices, people like to say that Gorsuch is 49-years-old and may get 39 years on the bench.

The average age of the last 10 Supreme Court justices to leave the Supreme Court has been 87 years. So if he holds to that average, he will be on until 2048. But that ignores advances in medical science. He could easily get 45 or 50 years on the bench if not more. I don't know. If people start living to 120, 130. I don't know whether they will change the rules to the court. There will be a bunch of other stuff going on.

That will be disruptive of democratic traditions. So maybe, justices serving for 80 years, starting when they're 50 and going until they're 130. I don't know if that will be an achieved weirdness of the system. But whether the system is completely broken and whether it can be fixed, we've had two of the last 3 presidents. They didn't win the popular vote. They got fewer votes than their opponents. Bush in 2000 and Trump in 2016.

Trump lost by the popular vote, by 2.8 million. And the Senate and House, one of them – if you look at the number of people, anyway – the House is strongly Republican, and has a number of representatives. I believe more people voted for house democratic candidates than republicans. Even though, two of the last three presidents did not win the popular vote, at least Bush in his first election didn't. Things didn't get really bad until Red Map.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 21 – The Red Map

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 9, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: The Red Map was Republican Party realizing that by flipping state races, which are cheaper to win than national races, they could gerrymander the states and make sure Republicans are disproportionately represented in the national House of Representatives. So it has only been since 2010 that things have gotten really, really bad.

Though things have been trending worse and more towards polarization, political polarization for probably 30 years. Where there almost no centrist politicians left in our national political bodies, Congress and the presidency and even the Supreme Court, where there are some leftover centrist justices, but it may become impossible to get those people onto the court in the future.

Where if it turns out that only when the Senate and the presidency are owned by the same political party, as now, that you can get a Supreme Court justice onto the court, which might not be the case. We only have one example so far, Gorsuch, but if that turns out to be the case.

Then the Supreme Court will – not that it isn't polarized now – become just as polarized as the presidency and Congress. The gerrymandering this, which is – gerrymandering is where – every party in the House of Representatives have states divided into districts, congressional districts, that are members of their respective parties.

For the party in power, it ends up with more safe seats for them than the opposition party. In a state like Virginia, I don't know how many they have. But let's say they have 12. The Republicans in charge of gerrymandering figure out how to divide the states so that you have 9 safe Republican districts.

They consistently win by 55-45% margins and 3 safe democratic party districts, where the democratic candidate wins by a margin of like 70/30. It's like ghettos for the democrats. They're crammed into these districts.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 22 – “Gerry” Meet “Mander”

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 10, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: And almost everybody is in a safe district. It is a district that cannot go to another party due to the demographics, and it's gerrymandering that has led to the polarization because in a district that is safe, I believe, close to 90% of congressional districts are safe for one party or the other. The general election doesn't matter because it is the winner of the primary for that district who is going to win the general.

In the primary, it is the bigger partisan lunatic who wins. So unless gerrymandering is gotten rid of, and is seen as unconstitutional or there is legislation passed to turn redistricting over to non-political bodies, there may be a number of states who are stuck being brutally gerrymandered, and given the court is now 5-4 Conservative-Liberal. It may not be possible to win anti-gerrymandering cases when they reach the Supreme Court.

But we'll find out on two dates on whether it will happen at all or whether representative democracy will be truly representative again. We have 2018. Mid-terms are usually won the party that doesn't have the presidency, but in the Senate, which is owned by the Republicans 52-48. There are 25 democrats and only 8 or 9 Republicans running for re-election. So the democrats out of 33 seats up for grabs.

The democrats are running for re-election in $\frac{3}{4}$ of them. So the democrats will have to win more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Senate elections, 28 basically out of 33 elections, to flip the Senate, which is a crazy number to have to come through with. That's almost 85% of the Senate that will have to go to the democrats. So it'll be tough to take the Senate back.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 23 – The New GerryManderings

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 11, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: For democrats to win back either the Senate or the House, it will take continuing Republican overreach and incompetence for the next, pretty much, 17 months to even have a shot at taking even one of those legislative bodies.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Right.

RR: Also, 2020 offers the next chance at large-scale redistricting because redistricting is dependent on results of the 10-year census, which happens in years ending in 0. Not only is 2020 a presidential election year, it is also a census year that offers the possibility of redistricting and now that the democrats should be ‘woke’ about being fucked over by the redistricting of 2010. We’ll see if lawsuits can be brought to stop super-biased redistricting.

But it is going to be tough because Republican legislatures and governors own something like 37 out of 50 states. So we have 2 opportunities. 2018 and 2020 to see if we can get anywhere close to democracy starting to work as it used to work, which was not bad – before the 90s. Also, there’s one more chance for things to turnaround, and that’s if Trump leaves office for before his 4-year term is up.

That’s been look not terrible if you look at the bookie odds. They have been as high as 50-50 for Trump leaving before the end of 4 years. But I don’t know. He just bombed Syria and then the media decided that he looked presidential. He may be able to pull off 4 years and it is not inconceivable that he could get 8 years in which place healing democracy looks like it may not happen until the 2030s if at all.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 24 – North Korea & Ivanka Crying

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 12, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So one concern is the Trump Administration in the United States building militarily and provoking seemingly with little cause.

Rick Rosner: Well, when you say little cause, they continue to develop missile systems and weapons.

SDJ: I'll correct what I said. For instance, the USS—the aircraft carrier into sensitive areas to North Korea. They have begun to prepare for the firing of an intercontinental ballistic as well as preparing a 6th nuclear test. Something like that.

RR: Trump governs by reflex. He governs by what he thinks will give him the most approval. There were messages that he launched missiles into Syria when his daughter Ivanka saw children suffering and cried. It is an understandably human reaction, but it does not reflect a cohesive foreign policy.

SDJ: You read this in the news, right? That she cried.

RR: Yea.

SDJ: It sounds more like media narrative.

RR: It is a trending hashtag on Twitter too: #IvankaCried. Given the way he runs the White House, that seems entirely within line of how things work there right now. He also got a lot of praise from the news channels from various pundits.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 25 – Polling

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 13, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: We know from reporting on him in the White house that he watches hours of news every day. His popularity didn't pop very much. He didn't get much of a pop in approval for this. Depending on the polls that you look at, if you look a Gallup, he hung steady at 40% approval. This is day 83 in office. There are 83 days of polls available. On zero of those days did he rise to majority approval, which is unprecedented since they started polling during FDR's administration

But he is probably being reinforced for his – what he considers his – manly stands and belligerence with North Korea. Obama took a more measured approach. Probably the deal with North Korea is that they're going to – given their history over decades – continue to do what they want, they will continue to defiantly developed their nuclear and missile programs until offered incentives to back off for a while.

But that way of doing things, it assumes the leaders over there aren't self-destructive assholes. That what they do over there. Their own unconcern and belligerence is some way of gaining advantage to be paid off to stop the programs over there. But if Kim Jong-un is crazy/stupid, and is the one who is calling all of the shots, he may not be entirely pay-offable. So it's terrible over there because you've got a potentially crazy guy with Nukes and at least a belligerent asshole.

You could argue that you have belligerent assholes with nukes on both sides, but Trump will continue to do what he gets positive reinforcement for – and I think he feels as if he got positive reactions to launching 59 missiles into Syria. Even though, they did very little, at least strategic, damage.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 26 – Pee Tapes

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 14, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Those missile launches were signification. Yea?

Rick Rosner: Yea. People who are close to him are contaminated by their ongoing investigation into their ties to Russia. Whether they knew it or not, a lot of those people were talking to Russian intelligence agents. Trump himself may be compromised by the level of contact that he had with Russia. The pee tapes that everybody talks about may—there's not less evidence that they exist.

The Pee Tapes being that he engaged with some sex play with prostitutes and urination a few years ago in a Russian hotel. There's no evidence for it except for the reliability of the special agent guy that says it exists, but a lot of the other MI6 guys say that this fairly impressive dossier on Trump are either true or likely to be true. So there's likely a sex tape of Trump. His White House, he is spending a lot of energy to distract.

He is doing a lot to distract from the ongoing Russian investigation. So it continues to remain unclear whether he can serve out his entire 4-year administration or term. If there were a Democratic Party majority in either house of Congress, there might be more calls for impeachment just based on what has been disclosed so far. You have Republican majority. Many Republicans are trying to provide some cover for him.

Absent that he has any cohesive foreign policy philosophy. He will tend to continue to do what will earn him praise and will react emotionally to what happens with any kind of governance. Any kind of restraint being provided by—he's got a few experienced generals in his Cabinet. They may be the ones to stop him from really escalating or being dangerous.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 27 – Recent American Politics

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 15, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: At least in recent American politics, Republicans have been more willing to biased and unfair and come up with clever ways to circumvent democracy. They developed an apparatus long before the democrats developed one in response to the Republican apparatus to get hyper-conservative justices onto the Supreme Court. And Republicans were the ones who in 2010 came up with effective ways to gerrymander a huge percentage of the states.

Republicans are less hesitant to engage in non-democratic tactics. And that extends to what facts they choose to pull out of the confusing ball of all facts pertaining to a particular issue. They cherry pick. They build conspiracies.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: One thing in response to all of that. That you have facts. You have political positions in theory along a spectrum – in reality dotted along that spectrum on various topics for individual citizens. But an important thing is, the discussions people have with, for instance, a democrat vs. republican or a liberal vs. conservative. These discussions they rely on a premise, which I don't think necessarily holds up too much validity.

In that, you have people debating, essentially, political talking points, and that's not a real discussion. I do not mean to say that you and Lance did that because I saw a little bit of one video, not in full. But my sense is a lot of the time people have discussions on political talking points rather than on issues and trying to come to the most factual basis of it because people cherry pick as has happened – more on the Republican side at this point in time.

RR: I like what you're saying that political talking points not being discussions. They aren't really discussions. They are entertainment. CNN is super guilty of this.

SDJ: You can tell! The 'discussions' are dull.

RR: It is a bit like a sports match. You cheer for your side. CNN puts knuckleheads on like Jeffrey Lord.

SDJ: [Laughing].

RR: People do not get better informed from this type of discourse. It is more who can out argue the other or who can get in there and say the most—I don't know. It is not news.

SDJ: That has its own comedy. The solution to that is hard because you have to make a

genuine position of ignorance, which is in itself an experience of not knowing which is uncomfortable. It is like coming to a new kind of math when you're younger as most people have experienced. You don't know it. There's a moment of fear and anxiety about not knowing what's there and feeling like you want to give up.

But listening to someone genuinely makes conversation and, therefore, life less dull because you do not know what's coming, but you come to a negotiated and more complicated view of the world. Which is better because, because as we talked about on ideologies (Left, Center, and Right), those are simplified views of the world, which lead you to some modicums of truth, but, in general, wrongness about the world.

But the complicated views you come to from negotiation can help suss out what is really the case and then actually provide grounds for real discussion for solutions.

RR: People naturally – at least people for the last 100 years – have a progressive-rationalist view of life in America at least. That is, that things will keep getting better in the fullness of time and that people will keep getting more enlightened and rational, but since the end of the Fairness Doctrine and the coming of angry conservative white radio guys like Limbaugh and Glenn Beck and Alex Jones and Fox News.

A lot of discourse in America includes people who are belligerently wrong about—have been fed bullshit and have been made confident in it. So even when there's a clear set of facts based on evidence and often on the most sensible interpretation of what's going on, you have like a quarter of the country backing points of view that are deceptively manipulated, cynically manipulated.

And don't represent well-informed or very rational points of view. Tens of millions of people have been cultivated, have had their brains softened by a steady stream of propaganda. Decades of propaganda now, and so, rational discourse is often tainted by people who believe or endorse bullshit. Of course, there have been many periods in history in which that has been the case, but it is not the way that Americans thought that their country would—It is not a direction Americans thought that their country would go, but we are in the thick of it right now.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 28 – Sarin Gas and Bombs

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 16, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: Less than a week ago, Trump attacked a Syrian airbase from which Syria had dropped sarin gas or launched a mission to drop sarin gas on its own people. Trump launched 59 Tomahawk missiles and did some, but not a great deal of, damage. He received some praise for being kind of presidential or decisive from various pundits on the TV news. Trump is now known for not reading much of anything, especially books.

He watches hours of TV news every day. Just a couple of hours ago, I guess, Trump dropped the largest non-nuclear bomb in the US arsenal called the Mother of All Bombs weighing 22,000 pounds and costing \$314 million. He dropped that on what is being called an ISIS tunnel complex in Afghanistan. This thing is supposed to have a blast radius of a mile. Anyway, you'd expect that radius from a small nuke.

And we've yet to hear how the decision was made. He was the guy who said, "Do it." He's have to be the guy. How justified was it? But it leads to the fear that Trump is all over Twitter right now. There are tweets that claim that this is a distraction from his campaign people and possibly Trump himself colluded with Russia to influence the election. His campaign chairman Paul Manafort just registered as a foreign agent.

That is, an American who represents our interests. I think there are one or two other people who having to do this. It becomes more and more apparent that Trump's people were working closely with Russia as Russia employed all sorts of propaganda and leaks and pacts to make people vote against Hillary. And so—but everybody knows all of this now. And the people who don't know this are actively trying to not know this by consuming and looking at alternate news sources and disbelieving mainstream news sources.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 29 – Religions' Accuracy and Utility

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 17, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: With regard to religion, you have accuracy on the one hand and utility on the other. The window for accuracy is really, really tiny, especially as we learn more about the universe. The window for utility is bigger. The same for philosophy as long as the philosophy does not claim to explain all of creation. Religions tries explain all of creation. Philosophies don't have to do that.

To the extent that they do do that, it is a small window. There can be smaller philosophies. So there can be a number of—we were talking in an earlier discussion about where the appropriate level of explanation. That you don't need to go to quantum mechanics to explain everything in the world. Some of the best explanations exist in the context of what you're trying to explain. So when you're talking about people falling in love, you don't have to go all the way back to quantum physics. Particles lock into atom and molecules and amino acids and evolve into – ba-ba-ba – without going back to basic physics to explain how people fall in love. You can have different philosophies that have utility and accuracy within their limited domain.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: One thing to add to that. It is not boundless in terms of domains as well. There are—so you don't need to reinvent the wheel each time you examine an issue, whatever scope you're going for. So you can work within the well-defined parameters. So like, in international relations and geopolitics, people talk about state actors. You talk as if countries have personalities. “China would state that...”, “The United States behaved as if...”, rather than describing, as you noted, how electrons get into locked orbits around nuclei for atoms.

RR: Yea! And every explanation is subject to accuracy on the one hand and scope on the other. They're kind of mixed. When you talk about America having a personality, you can—that's subject to being inaccurate because you're talking about a nation in all its multiplicity as if it's an individual actor. That is, in itself, an abridgement of a huge amount of information into a singular idea. So that in itself – that abridgement – brings inaccuracy. You can also be wrong in what you're saying America does. America tends to define its place in the world based on our national pride in polkas. You know like the beer barrel polka. That's completely not right [Laughing]!

SDJ: Or to your example of people falling in love, you don't describe the neurochemistry. You use the narrative framework of people and their perspectives about one another and how that works out.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 30 – ‘Why is News an Industry?’

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 18, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: You had another question.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I did, a few. Th news, you mentioned a little while ago, has become industry. So much of news...

RR: ...hold on, hold on, hold on, we should discuss why it wasn't an industry for a long time. We should discuss why it wasn't an industry for a long time because the news business was a business. You are in the news to make a ton of money, which make sense. Even a town as small as Albuquerque when it was 80,000, 100,000, or 150,000 people, had a morning and evening newspaper, Denver when I was growing up had a couple newspapers.

Plus, there was a Boulder newspaper. New York probably had 30 newspapers simultaneously at various points in its history. They made money through the crappy forms of “yellow” journalism. That was the term for shitty sensationalistic journalism. It was called yellow journalism based on a comic strip called “The Yellow Kid” because used to buy newspaper based on what comic strips they had.

SDJ: [Laughing].

RR: “The Yellow Kid” was the kid in a night shirt with a buck tooth. He was yellow.

SDJ: [Laughing].

RR: It showed the newspaper was full colour. So people wanted to buy it, “Look! Our newspaper is in full color.” And if the newspaper got distributed, then great. In the late 40s, the first national T.V. networks went on around 1948 in America. At the time, the U.S. government has always owned the air waves. The frequency bands on which T.V. used to be broadcast. Now, most T.V. is not broadcast T.V. There are broadcast networks: ABC, NBC, CBS. But even those networks, most people get stuff through cable. In 1948, everything travelled via radio ways to people's T.V. antennas down from the roof into the T.V.s. The government owned the frequencies. They owned the radio and T.V. bands. The government said, “We will lease you these bands at super cheap rates because you are going to provide a public service.”

One thing they did was daily news casts in order to get these deals on broadcast bands. So the T.V. shows would do 15 minute nightly news shows, which became 30 minute news shows.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 31 – Happy-Happy, Joy-Joy

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 19, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: In the 60s, they were probably at least in the top 3 sources of people's news. Most people were still reading newspapers, but most people were also watching the half-hour nightly news broadcasts. Those things didn't have to make money. They were a public service. Everything else was designed to make money. Anyway, then things changed, people noticed that if you put on morning news and you made it a 3-hour happy news kind of sunny people in the morning *Today Show* with the late 50s and David Garroway, he had a co-anchor who was a chimpanzee named J. Fred Muggs.

[Laughing] Any time you've got a co-anchor who is a monkey then you're doing news wrong. People noticed these 2 and 3 hour news broadcasts were making a butt load of money. Then the whole Iranian hostage crisis, which begins under Carter in 1978 or 1979, and ABC starts running Nightline. It began as a half-hour update on the hostage situation 5 nights a week. It ran after the local news.

Then you had CNN come online in the 80s. As the—so in the beginning in the late 70s and 80s, people begin realizing that you can make news jazzy, and you can expand it. You can make a lot of money off of local news. You can make money off certain national news shows. Eventually, CNN started making money, then around 1986 you have Fox News come one. Roger Ailes noticed that – the evil blowfish Roger Ailes – you can use a news channel as propaganda.

So for 20 years and more, T.V. news was not profit driven. Now, it is crazily profit driven.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 32 – News:Business::Business:Usual

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 20, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: The original question was about the news being a business to make money.

Rick Rosner: That's what it is. You have Jeff Zucker running CNN. Zucker was the head programmer at NBC for many years, I believe. He was the guy who picked what shows made it to broadcast. Now, he's running a news network. His lieutenant is Jeff Gaspin who was his head of—no, I'm getting that wrong. Anyway, Zucker and Gaspin are the ones who put "The Apprentice" on the air, which ran for 14 seasons under Trump.

It took Trump from being a New York famous loud-mouthed real estate guy into being a national symbol of aggressive business. So to some extent, you can argue Zucker is the one responsible for Trump being president. Now, Zucker runs CNN. The statistics on how much free coverage Trump got from CNN and other news stations is astonishing and disheartening. It is estimated. You can estimate the news value--

You can estimate the PR value and the equivalent cost of appearing on the news. That if there's a 30 second spot on you on the news that is viewed by x million people that you're getting for free. That you're getting so many people's attention. That if you were buying that air time. It is cost you x millions of dollars. It is estimated that during the 2016 campaign Trump got \$5.8 billion worth of free publicity of news coverage.

It is almost exactly double or almost exactly double of what Hillary Clinton got, almost \$3 billion more than her because he pulled eyeballs. He says a bunch of loose cannon shit that either inspires people or scares people or makes them want to tune in to see what crazy crap he says next. He makes news channels money. So they're complicit in him becoming president.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 33 – Bad News Habits

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 21, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: Also! CNN learned a bunch of horrible new tricks during the election. They haven't given them up. The Countdown Clock.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Yes [Laughing].

RR: During an election, there are a bunch of event start to count down to. Certain number of days and hours to Super Tuesday primaries. Days and hours to debates. Now, CNN has a frickin' clock up there all of the time. days and houses until Van Jones has a show or a town hall. People like or are drawn to the clock. It is a terrible habit. There are super shitty news and opinion panels like those with the loathsome Jeffrey Lord.

Yesterday, he said that Donald Trump is the Martin Luther King of healthcare coverage because Donald Trump will somehow coerce the nation into acting on healthcare in the way Martin Luther King coerced the nation into acting on civil rights. That guy is just a jackass. He gets paid who knows how much to be a professional jackass on CNN.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 34 – Information and Behaviour

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 22, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Other forms of misinformation and information overload cracking the egg of normal human behavior.

Rick Rosner: Human behavior is going to—we have been, throughout our history, acting according to biological imperatives in increasingly fancy and technology-filled environments. We live in technologically mediated dwellings. Dwellings are a form of technology. Apes living in trees or sleeping in caves don't have dwelling technology. Once you start stacking up Palm Fronds and stick and skins, you are starting to have building technology.

The food we eat comes from technology. Clothing—language is a form of communication technology. Everything we do is a form of technology. It is mostly in the form of technology. It is mostly in the service of biological imperatives – continuing to live, to not die, to reproduce, to evaluate each other and the environment according to how they may help or hurt our changes to survive and reproduce.

We're still completely biological. Even though, we are surrounded by our technology. The entirely biological era of humanity will be coming to, not an end but—well, the era of non-purely biological humanity has begun. One of the major mediators of this change is information. The way we are now with regard to social media and how we exchange information is radically different from the way people exchanged information just 10 years ago.

The amount of information that's exchanged is radically different than eras ago. We are going to augment our information processing abilities. We have started, but it will begin to be more intimate. We will be more linked into non-biological information processing. So that eventually we will be integrated into large information processing systems. You can argue that we already are via the endless and constant flow of information that we have put ourselves into.

But that's more of an app—it's not physically connected to us for the most part. I have my fitness bracelet. A lot of people wear Fit Bits, but that's fancy jewelry. 1% of the population does have a computer built into him or herself. Pacemaker, cochlear implants, insulin pumps, but even that is not that intimate. Pacemakers aren't really influencing—you haven't changed your thinking. You made your heart beat regularly. That in-built intimacy will eventually take the form of information processing augmentation, and what becomes acceptable in terms of—we couldn't handle Google Glass, but 50 years in the future. There will be acceptable ways to have wearable either built-on or ride-on or built-in computing devices.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 35 – Mental Pacemakers

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 23, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: People with Parkinson's Disease can have mental pacemakers to provide some of the lost function due to the symptoms and consequences of Parkinson's. They aren't directly helping thinking, but they are providing support for mental processes.

There is research that shows that if you run an electrical field through the brain then thinking becomes more efficient for a little while. Somebody will find way to make that a wearable technology. One of the big guys in software says we are 10 years away from effective brain-to-brain interfaces.

We are seeing some of that stuff, where people who have lost limbs can think their way into controlling replacement limbs, which is via interfaces that are not too cumbersome. Those interfaces will become less cumbersome.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 36 – Unfettered Capitalism

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 24, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: Right now, in America, we are under the rule of the Republicans or the Right-wing. I thought we could talk about Right-wing philosophy. The major philosophy of which, at least under the current thinking and for the 30 years, is that if government just got out of the way, then everyone would thrive.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What conclusions follow from that?

RR: You mean if worked? If it weren't a kind of nonsense?

SDJ: In two ways, what follows in theory? What follows in practice?

RR: It is that government regulations and waste are holding back American business and entrepreneurship. If those roadblocks were removed, America, which is a nation of businesspeople – Calvin Coolidge famously said, “The business of America is business,” it turns out it was taken out of context because he said it is not just about business, and that you have to take into account human values.

But the idea is unfettered capitalism leads to happy outcomes for the most people, or at least the most deserving people.

SDJ: Unfettered capitalism, to be clear, is laissez faire capitalism that you can find in the Cato Institute or from Ayn Rand.

RR: Yea! That the market sorts everything out. That if people start effing stuff up environmentally and people don't like it, then people will find ways to make money out of it, or the people will become unpopular for business reasons and will clean up their acts. A lot of similar thinking, which has been disproven via economic statistics for the past 100 or 150 years by the idea that business works in the short-run.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 37 – Laissez Faire

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 25, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: John Maynard Keynes said, “In the long run, we’re all dead.” If you look at the horizon of the stocks in the stock market, people aren’t look much beyond 6 months. If you look at something that doesn’t obviously mess up things now, and might be a problem for the next generation, then that won’t necessarily be reflected in your stock price. Anyway, there are a lot of problems with this Right-wing philosophy.

In that, the economy appears to function better under, say, fettered capitalism. The version of government that under democratic administrations or democratic government. Democrats rule for a while. Right-wing people get annoyed that they are being bogged down in regulations. They remove them and run the market into the ground via no regulations, or fewer regulations. There’s a crash.

The Democrats come in and establish some rules and then you see a gradual recovery. One model of that is that you can’t assign all the blame to Republicans and all of the credit to the Democrats, but the example is the crash under Bush and the recovery under Obama. Right-wing philosophy, to the extent that it is, is putting a skirt on something fairly nasty, which is that the current Republican Party is dominated by dark money and the wish of a rich super-minority to have all of the rules go their way.

Even though, the economic data shows that the super-rich ultra-minority isn’t helped all that much by a faltering economy that doesn’t work very well because it shitty for most people. For the last 30 years, wages have been entirely flat, since the 70s. All of the economic gains have gone to people in the top 10% with most of those gains going to people in the top 1%. Whereas during other times, the top 10, the top 1, percent did pretty well and the bottom 90% also saw economic gains and the economy functioned better overall.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 38 – Trump & Optimism

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

April 26, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: So Right-wing noise about get out of the way and we're going to have business thrive without regulation ignores statistical reality and also ignores the fact that most people in this country are not small business people, are not entrepreneurs. There are plenty of small businesspeople and people regardless of what their day jobs are do engage in entrepreneurship, but it is not the majority of people.

A corollary to the Right-wing philosophy is let government out of the way and let business run things, then the wealth in the land will be so great that any charity or church-based work will cover anyone that is deserving. So it is pretty much BS. One way that America can thrive economically under Trump and the Republicans is if enough big and small business, and enough people who control the reigns of the economy--

The stock market is largely psychological. There are all sorts of economic data that influences the market, but there is a bunch of the market running on sentiment, how people are feeling. If enough people are dumb enough to think Trump and company are good for the country, then the economy can run for a while because most people are optimistic.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 39 – Trump 98

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

June 15, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: The tragedy and comedy of Trump.

Rick Rosner: Okay, this is day 98 of his presidency. The weirdness and awfulness of how he got elected and the awfulness with how he's being president and racism and sexism that has been brought out of the closet by people who have been empowered by this president.

They are all so awful that they thoroughly dominate people's comedy thoughts, at least as I've experienced or as I have experienced them in Twitter. Before, he was the comedy of gripes or of small complaints.

For me, it would be about people not getting off the equipment at the gym because they are using the phone while they don't fully use the machine they are on. Also, people joking about the annoyances of going through airport security lines.

Joking about their personal weakness with regard to food. Just little comedy topics, that in a different era would be expressed in front of a brick wall at the comedy club. Often, with the preface, "What is it with?"

One cliché

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 40 – Trump and Rich People

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

June 22, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: One cliché is, "What is it with airline food?" Now Twitter is mostly focused on observations the country in Trump's era like "Trump sucks" or "Trump is dangerous" or "Trump through incompetence and foreign policy aggression is trying to improve his approval ratings, and this may lead us into war">

Or that "in every possible area of politics, Trump is doing exactly the thing that people don't want him to do such as reversing federal policy, reversing everything that Obama did including setting aside federal land as land for parks, environmental protection."

Saying he was coming out with a tax plan, but the tax plan not really being a plan since it contained few specifics and it was only 250 words long, and is thoroughly a gift to the super rich, including probably himself.

Doing away with what Republicans like to call "the Death tax," but it has less inflammatorily been called "the estate Tax." Right now, you're allowed to pass on \$4.9 million to your heirs when you die, or if the passing on of assets of you as a married couple.

If you structured your family trust right, you can pass your heirs \$10.9 million tax free. For Trump and Republicans, that is not enough. The Death Tax should be eliminated, and you should be able to pass on an unlimited amount of money without passing your heirs any of that money.

Only the super rich have that money to pass on. So, people like him. Those with the tens and hundreds of millions, and even into the billions - and he gave other gifts to the rich including a low ceiling on taxes on capital gains made through stocks and bonds, which are primarily owned by rich people.

All of this with the idea of the trickle down.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 42 - The Trumpian Elephant in the Room

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

July 1, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: To figure out what would Trump do, as others have noted, ask, "What would a dick do?" That generally conforms to what Trump will do. He lies is blatant and not convincing, where all through his campaign he was talking about his 100 days would be the greatest first 200 days of any president.

Now, in day 98, this whole past week. Given that he hasn't been that successful and has failed at a lot of stuff, he says the 100 days is a silly and arbitrary number. Somebody told him to talk about 100 days. Obviously, it was his idea.

It is further upsetting that his followers haven't turned away from him, even though he is doing a bunch of things that aren't terrible. He is gleefully doing a bunch of things that are terrible for the country.

The whole situation makes it really hard to - when you're doing comedy noodling in your head - come up with things that are in the public consciousness. The way airplane food may have been in the public consciousness in the 80s to make jokes about.

It is impossible to avoid this big orange Trumpian elephant in the room.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 41 - Trickle Down

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

July 1, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: Trickle down ideas are that if you let super rich people pass on their hundreds of millions. Their heirs will use that money to hire people who aren't rich. I believe this idea was expressed by Trump's budget guy.

But he is one more of the crew of guys who mostly appear transparently creepy. I am talking about Mick Mulvaney, who looks like he would wear pointy shoes and kick you in the nuts in a bar fight, and then when you were down he would stab, stab, stab you with the pointy shoes.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Rick Rosner: ven though, it has been proven over and over again that when you give rich people money they just keep the money. They don't send it out into the world of employment and commerce.

They invest in more stocks and bonds and real estate and things that don't increase employment.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 44 - National Angst

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

July 8, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: Somebody should do a study on the extent to which Trump dominates on comedy Twitter. Oh! I have one observation that isn't just me bitching about Trump. Last night, I wondered if going from Obama to Trump the greatest step down.

The greatest step down in American history. Surprisingly, at least at first thought, it is only the third worst decline in presidential quality with the hugest decline being from Lincoln to Andrew Johnson in 1865.

With Lincoln, according to rankings of presidential historians, being the greatest president and Andrew Johnson being the 41st greatest president, so a decline of 40 notches.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I wouldn't assume the notches are equivalent distances.

Rosner: Yea. Trump is president number 45, but they only rank 44 of them because Cleveland was two of the 45 presidents because he non-consecutive presidential terms. It was 44, and it was based on the first 14 weeks. Trump is in 44th position.

You're right. He may even be below Andrew Johnson. But the biggest decline was Lincoln to Johnson. Obama according to presidential historians is the 15th best president, going from Obama to Trump is a drop 29 notches.

Putting the 3rd or 2nd most from Woodrow Wilson in 7th place to Warren Harding 42nd, a drop of 35 notches. Obviously, each other instance of a good president being replaced by a total asshole. There was national angst.

[End of recorded material]

People, Personas, and Politics 45 - My Captain, My Captain

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

July 15, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: Lincoln: "My captain, my captain..." in the words of Walt Whitman as his coffin was being brought by train and horse-drawn carriage, from where he was assassinated to where he would be buried in Illinois. The Saviour of the union, then you've got this guy who is so bad that he was the first president ever impeached. Obviously, the nation was wrecked. First by the Civil War and then by the loss of the leader during the Civil war.

From Woodrow Wilson to Harding, who may have been our most corrupt president or dumbest and least competent president.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Rosner: Until now. You had the joy at the end of WWI, which happened under Woodrow Wilson kind of because he was president in name and had a stroke a couple of years earlier and the country was secretly being run by other people including Mrs. Wilson. But going from the end of WWI, you've got the attempt to form the League of Nations. The precursor to the United Nations, to make sure the great war was the war to end all wars. The League of Nations was falling apart. You've got impetus to social reform with Prohibition and Women's Suffrage. you've got an economy that is beginning to boom. You've got the beginning of the 10 years of a tech economy before the crash of 29, and then in the middle of this you've got Warren Harding who was a machine politician and was elected in large part for his time being a handsome man.

A stout man with lots of grey hair and bushy eyebrows. He was letting his friends in the Cabinet, who was banging his mistress in the closet of the White House. Then who at least had the courtesy of dying a year and half or two years into the administration. He was replaced by a non-entity of a person, who was his Vice President, Calvin Coolidge or "Silent Cal." Who was known for not being interesting at all.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Rosner: A human placeholder.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Rosner: A little bit like Pence if Pence didn't have his creepy ideas about gays and women. The other two times we had a huge step down, and it was a great thing either. The end.

[End of recorded material]

TREASURE BOX KIDS

Teaching Sustainability - Advice and Tips!

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

August 21, 2016

Sustainability is important on the international stage. By implication, it's important in the national and provincial arenas too. The next generations are the key to sustainability. Their education on sustainability is crucial for the development of sustainable planet.

So, what can we do for kids? Kids love fun. Kids love outings. We can make the education of sustainability and sustainable lifestyles fun, especially easy to do while on outings. You can do some preparation by reading books, pamphlets, and internet articles from reliable sources.

Information gleaned about the natural world and sustainability can provide a basis for teaching sustainability to kids. The experience of the natural world, seeing the natural world, smelling the air and the dirt, seeing the integration of communities into nature and vice versa, and seeing the places that living beings thrive.

You can go to a local park and examine some of the flora and fauna of the area. Even with this taking a bit of time to catalog things in the local area, you can seem like a demi-god with the level of knowledge about the natural world with the kids. You can involve other parents, other kids, and make it a community event. These are the ties that bind.

Education, fun, and sustainability can be 'part and parcel' of that as well. Some of the practical principles for a wide variety of outings: know your stuff, know the area, know the plants, have an itinerary, bring snacks, take into account the limitations of children's attention span, try to involve other kids and parents, involve community, and do multiple events at different areas throughout the local region.

How does this look in a practical sense? Well, you can take the kids out even into your own garden. You can teach them about cold composting. You can teach them about the quicker hot composting. You can even teach them about those gross little red wiggler worms that assist in making the composting happen faster.

You can take them to a neighbors, or a community, garden to learn about plants and their lifecycles. Maybe, you can even start a community garden. Some of the prior practical principles can be part of this. It's all in fun. It's all for the kids. In addition, you might gain a little bit out of it too.

For instance, you can learn a little more, have fun with the kids, and take advantage of the incredible natural resources that Canada and North America in general have to offer us. And you can do it with the respect and sustainable intent that is required for not only our own but the next generations.

And don't forget, have fun!

NATASHA TANEKA

A Personal Interview with Natasha Taneka - Session 1

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

May 5, 2016

To start, let's talk about your personal life and how that lead into your professional life.

I am of African descent, particularly Zimbabwean heritage. My family immigrated to Canada. So, I am very much influenced by travel. I feel like I really have a diverse background as I have lived in 4 or 5 countries. That influenced me to choose to do my degree and my studies in international relations and it lead me to focus on immigration and human rights. From that point, I have always had an interest in working with the United Nations or volunteering for NGOs. I feel like I've always had this connection with development and growth.

So, it sort of lead me to focus on procurement and connecting suppliers with businesses and making sure everyone is involved is integrated in a fair manner. That's how I summarize how my background influences my work in a professional manner.

What about your family, in general, what kind of things do they do?

Yea! I would definitely say that my mom and dad sort of set a track for me in terms of travelling and education. My mother left Zimbabwe when she was 17 to do two degrees in Australia. One degree in Halifax, Canada. And then finally her PhD in the United States. That was definitely cemented in me the importance of education and to never far travel. And that also for my father he ended up doing his PhD out at Imperial College in the UK. It's kind of funny that I'm all grown up and now here in the UK.

I remember being a child and being like, "Yea, my dad studied long ago and like in London." Not myself here yet, here I am, my path in college. I think to myself, "Wow!" It's one of those things that they never grew up with dreams of growing up and seeing so many lands. My mother is based in New Zealand and travels quite often. And I think it's been instilled in me that the sky is the limit to travel for work, for opportunities, because where you are sometimes isn't enough and you shouldn't hold yourself back or limit your dreams.

That would be something that I got from my parent. As for my grandparents, my grandparents both had feisty personalities based on the stories that I hear when they were younger. It has always been an impression on me to never take crap as it is, and go forth and you could always do more.

Your father is a PhD at Imperial College, London. What was it in? And your mother's in the United States, what was it in?

Okay, so, my father was mineralogy, which is a PhD in engineering that focuses on minerals such as precious stones, basically, that come from the earth. As a kid, he was good at mathematics and science and coming from a poor family. It is the scholarship that ended up landing him at Imperial College, London. So, his PhD is basically focused on precious stones and turning precious metals into iron. And I think it is very highly in demand in the metals industry.

For my mother, she focused on human resource management and consumer behaviour. This is all focusing on how to sort of give people the skills they need to be able to be self-sustaining, and that sort of lead her to doing some research at home such as going to Zimbabwe and collecting

data, and that really influenced me and taught me what it is to do research and to get - be in partnership with a lot of United Nations to sort of deliver on projects that really could be meaningful in a lot of communities in Zimbabwe.

Currently, she is currently focusing the diaspora in Ottawa. Sometimes, she travels to Israel to see how the Israeli diaspora work and network. She's been to Ethiopia as well and trying to get all those lessons learned to see what they could do in Ottawa with a lot of immigrant communities, and so that's what they do - completely opposite when you think about it.

My father in science. My mother in the arts and politics and development.

A Professional Interview with Natasha Taneka - Session 2

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

May 5, 2016

With regards to professional life, your father with respect to work to mineralogy at the Imperial College in London and your mother in the United States in terms of human resources management and the arts. Those are very different as you pointed out at the end of the last interview. If at all, or to what degree, did these influence your own decisions to do with human procurement in professional life?

That's a very good question. I've always known that for them to have picked two different, very different, disciplines. It is always been the larger spectrum. I'm very grateful that both of them weren't in the arts because otherwise maybe growing up I would've only thought that my only options were the arts, or vice versa. Both of them being in the arts and mathematics.

Them being in the opposite spectrums has allowed me to dabble in the both worlds. So, I've always had an interest and enjoyed sitting down with my father and watching science documentaries on mathematics and at the same time I really did enjoy the human aspect of what my mother was involved in.

Understanding how decisions are made in the home, family planning, I think that sort of allowed me to cultivate my people skills! I do enjoy hanging out with people and talking to people about different things physically rather than in the abstract.

So with my career now in procurement and supply chain, I feel like I get a little bit of both. And so when it comes to contracts, I have to deal with numbers. You have to suspend what a suppliers... You have to see the risk. You have to see the rates that are being given, what you are negotiating will be your deterrent. There is a lot of mathematics that I have to deal with and I think that's useful from my influence from my father.

I am very interested in dealing with people. You have to be on the phone to get a supplier and then you have to actually get suppliers that want to help you, but you have to work on your listening skills to learn how they do business and that they have other options that your value chain partner hasn't thought of, and so in that case I am using my influence from my mom's background and working with people and learning that they come from different perspectives.

The two of them, I think, gives me good balance that numbers are important and do speak a lot and louder than, at times, what people say. In time, if you want to get more done, you have to understand that picking up the phone and having a rapport with people and listening to where they're coming from is just as important to a project that they have to complete.

So, in my daily life, I use a little bit of both my father's background and my mother's background.

A Perspective Interview with Natasha Taneka - Session 3

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

May 5, 2016

Now, we've talked about your personal life a bit with regards to parents and grandparents. You grandparents being feisty. You being of Zimbabwean heritage with a lot of Canadian cultural influence. In addition, your father's scientific background in mineralogy, the science of mineralogy, with the PhD from the University College, London and your mother getting her PhD in America and specializing in human resources management and the arts. With all of this in mind, some things do come into the line in inquiry here with respect to your general perspective. What is your general philosophy in life? What are your general ethical guidelines for personal and professional life and so on?

I would say with my sort of life philosophy as I gotten older it's always changing and I do things that I have been given, or what I have learned, and that I have been given permission to change. I think the background with Zimbabwe we have witnessed a lot of changes, and this could go for a lot of people, at least politically and directly in my lifetime. My grandparents grew up at a time in Zimbabwe under colonial influence during Ian Smith, when they didn't have access to certain jobs, and then they had children who were able to get a really good education and leave the country, and by the time they came back. Zimbabwe was independent.

With every option that came up, whilst everything was changing, my parents always went with the philosophy of 'to go for it.' I think...that chaos...in the community. So, they seem to be.. interpreted...there's always opportunity in chaos, and I think that in the way my parents had family. Other things can change, but there's staying in touch in the world. You'll make it through.

My philosophy has been to always remember that with one or two things everything can change and it can be okay... that is one of the most empowering things that one can do. It's going to come and that's what I've done with my life. I went to Canada to do my BA and then I decided to do my MA in New Zealand and then I fell in love and moved to England.

I picked up from that and came settled in London...I never am shy for change...procurement and...and for my benefit...my priority has been making sure that...

SUNDARI CREATIONS

An Interview with Anna Sundari of Sundari Creations

- Session 1

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 25, 2016

Tell us about your own personal background a little bit.

I grew up in England in South West. I studied as a hairdresser when I left school. So, I had this calling to travel. I started travelling at the age of 20. I travelled for all of my 20s. I was out eating, visiting shamans, and so on. People who were amazing around the world.

I've been into creativity, making jewelry, making clothes, painting, singing, writing, and so on.

What kind of painting and writing?

I was into different things. I used to write a lot of poetry. Now, I am writing less poetry and more about what I've learned, spiritual lesson. Painting, I have some friends who are incredible at painting and they started to teach me.

I haven't actually painted recently, to be honest, at least for the last 4 years. I have been based on Bali. (Laughs) It can be hard to focus on these things.

Some people write about things spiritually important to them and paint things relevant to that. It seems unavoidable. For instance, some people are into 'Eastern' philosophies and might paint mandalas, for example. Were there themes for you a couple of years ago?

Not really, it was whatever was at the time like nature and love. That's it, really! (Laughs)

(Laughs)

An Interview with Anna Sundari of Sundari Creations

- Session 2

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 25, 2016

Before Sundari Creations, what was some of the work?

I taught myself to do jewelry. Before I taught myself to do jewelry, I was a hairdresser. I studied hairdressing and did that before I travelled. When I was travelling, I was still doing a lot of hairdressing.

Was this primarily women's hair, men's hair, or both?

Both, when you travel, it is easier to get jobs in men's salons like in Australia when I was young I started working in barbers. Because they aren't particular. With women, it takes longer to build a clientele.

When you travel, it is not ideal. For men, it is much easier to walk into a salon if there is already a clientele there.

I am interested to know. You've cut men's hair. You mentioned Australia. What is the defining characteristic for an Australian man's hair – top 3?

This was 15-16 years ago. They liked flat tops there. It's not the easiest haircut to do in the world. Short in the back and the sides, in Australia, they have a style that is longer in the back to keep the sun off their back.

It is short on the side, on the top, but it's a bit longer on the neck. That's classic.

Have you cut hair in the UK?

A bit ago, but not now, I've been doing the Sundari Creations for about 10 years now. I did salons in my 20s.

Now, with Sundari Creations, what is the general theme and message that you're trying to convey, thinking about deeply, feeling about, as you're making your products?

Each collection has a theme in general. My latest collections are *Sacred Moments – Dance and Yoga*. The message behind this collection is that every moment is sacred. That collection is based on that theme.

The other collection called *A Touch of Grace – Tencel and Silk* is an expression of being connected to the divine. All of that is collection about free spirit, being a gypsy, playful style. It is about being elastic.

It adds a bit of Spanish gypsy feeling. I painted *Amazonia – Dance and Yoga* shortly after a trip to the Amazon. It is inspired by nature. The collections are based on the same thing. That we're making high quality clothes to last.

One of the things that I stand for.

An Interview with Anna Sundari of Sundari Creations - Session 3

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 25, 2016

You've touched on personal background, spiritual inclinations as it applies to art for you, in addition to some of the works and collections you have through Sundari Creations. What's your philosophical outlook? In your own terminology, what's your own spiritual perspective on things?

Look after the Earth, which means you need to be conscious with all of our actions, where what we're buying and to make sure we are recycling everything, it is having the motivation necessary to preserve the Earth.

That way, we can take care of this Earth. So, my principles are to be in tune with the Earth and connected to it. It's taking care of water and be thankful that we have fresh water. I don't call myself a certain religion.

I practice yoga. I count blessings that we have like family, friends, and our health. For me, I believe it is all the same. It is all one spirit. It's all God, spirit. It's a very deep question and so much to add to it.

An Interview with Anna Sundari of Sundari Creations - Session 4

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 25, 2016

If we look at a production line and supply chain, they can differ with the individual consumer, the company, or the set of companies, but your own company, Sundari Creations, might have lessons for those that are early in their business adventures. Do you have any advice for them?

I might not be the best to ask because I am continuing to learn myself. I think you should follow your heart and passion. If you enjoy doing something, it's going to work out. Online presence is important.

But I've used PR to help me with that. We can't do everything ourselves. There are people that are more skilled than us in certain areas. It is important to specialize. It depends on the individual.

People have lots of skills to ring to the table. It is important to come together and collaborate and help one another.

LA PETITE MORT

Personal – Session 1

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 1, 2016

Let's talk a little bit about your personal, familial, and educational background.

As far as education goes, I went to a bilingual school in my hometown. My hometown is this tiny, small city in Southern Peru, not far from Chile. Life is different there than in the capital, way different. Most Peruvians don't even know where the city is located, but I do have to admit that it has its advantages growing up in small towns because you'll get good education at lower prices. I had the chance to experience that.

My school had an agreement with an international organization. They send schools' students abroad to finish high school. I was among them. When I was 15, I went to the US to finish high school over there. It was to experience the cultural change and improve my English. I have tried to keep it like that since, but it has been a while. Living in the US and going to a regular high school, you get to compare the movies, and entertainment, to real life.

I lived here with a host family. I learned a lot of American culture in fashion, eating, and education. I notice a lot of gaps in American education to be honest. I was happy with what they put in arts and sports, but, for the rest, I was like "meh." I went back to Peru to finish my education because university, and otherwise, the US is expensive. I went back to Peru to study communications with a major and specialty in advertising. My initial idea was to develop a career in advertising entirely.

In terms of wanting that career in advertising with that experience, how did that lead into La Petite Mort?

It's been a journey. In Peru, we finish high school at 16. It is hard when inquiring a 16 or 17-year-old to ask, "What do you want to do as a career?" In my head, at the time, it seemed obvious. The advertising industry seen in the US. It seemed like the world of creativity. I thought that I was going to get to be creative all day. I'm going to get to create and pitch ideas.

And then, you see the reality. It has these positions. Yes, you get to create, but it's also very commercial. You have to learn that in the real world. I've been working for a few years because I'm not sure because, for example, in France it's different. People after university do their Masters degree. In Peru, you get right to work, and then get a Masters. That led to fashion for me.

What about parental background and family life?

Nothing out of the ordinary. Mom and dad, brother and sister, I'm the youngest. I have a second set of parents. My American parents. I developed a strong relationship with the American family. I was the only child for their case. We bonded a lot. I always say that I have my Peruvian and American parents.

Process and Production Chains – Session 2

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 1, 2016

Let's talk a little bit about processes and transparent production chains, what is a concern for you there? What should those that aren't that area know?

I think when it comes to fair fashion, fair trade, whether it is eco-friendly or not. That is something that people care most about nowadays. People want to know what they're buying is made in an ethical point of view in social terms. That nobody has been exploited. That people are getting paid at a decent rate. There's no kids working on it.

There's a perception that people are getting more into questioning it, or even not thinking about it. Most people probably don't think about it. I think there's a lot of excitement among people to make people ask, "Who is making my clothes?" That is where the movements started years ago.

People started to ask the brand. Who is behind all of this production? One of things we see in the advertising world is cool people, young kids, wearing very nice clothing, but then, what else? That is the last point.

When it comes to chains, and if we ask the big brands, and we have in the last three years, they cannot tell who. They might say in Europe or we're doing it in Morocco. They don't manage who is doing it. They are hiring and somebody they don't know is doing it. They can't really answer.

What I try to do with brand is try to keep on a very short chain, that's why I went to meet all of the suppliers myself. I tried out several. I put a lot of time into it. That's why when somebody asks me, "So, where do you do this?" I say, "Here in Lima, Peru." I am trying to get the the suppliers as my team.

When the small businesses start, you don't have a production team. You do have different workshops. We get to establish a closer relationship. I help you; you help me. It is much more strong as a relationship. At the end, even though they are not part of the company, they are the stakeholders.

That could be extended into suppliers in Peru. How does that extend to supplier chains and your own work?

When it comes to suppliers in, for instance, raw materials, we talk a lot about support, farmer's support. People who are basically the first contact with Earth and do the hardest work. When i talk to my suppliers, and I go to certified organic, I get to know the people working the fields. I do not get to see the people and check out their living conditions - if they're decent.

At first, I couldn't because I am a small buyer and have to rely on their certifications. When we are looking for suppliers, we make sure they have fair trade for cotton and all. When we worked with them more and more, they shared pictures and more of the news. It is a close relationship now.

At first, you don't get to connect that much. I, personally, haven't met them. I wish I could go back next year to some of the fields. That would be amazing! For the moment, I am trusting that they follow what our certification process is. That is when it comes to raw materials.

When it comes to suppliers, manufacturers, that's another word and another world, but, in that case, I can go to see how they products are being made, how the farmers are living, and whatever they price they say I put it. I don't bargain with them. I don't think it's fair, even a basic blouse. To me, to be honest, sewing is super difficult. (Laughs)

Some are not skilled, like me! I do appreciate the work on it, even if it is something basic.

Product Branding – Session 3

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 1, 2016

The operational side can involve things like branding. What is branding? What defines branding to you? How do you incorporate it into your business? What are some issues with it for you?

Branding is a challenge because at the end communicating that brand is ethical, organic, and that is fair trade. It is a lot of content for the brands and not really the heart of the branding. The branding to me is communicating the soul of the brand. What's the main idea around it? It is to get people to connect with it. You can have the branding message right.

This concept of mine is already heavy when it comes to the whole liberation of the mind with La Petite Mort and the ethical side. It is a whole lot of content that I am trying to put into a simple message. Then, I work through social networking because that's how the world is moving nowadays. I try to translate the message more visually than with words because, to be honest, people are not much into reading.

I do complement the visual side with articles that I turn to posts on Twitter or the ones that I do with Trusted Clothes. (Laughs) All based around the idea: why do we need to get into ethical fashion? But then the branding is more the transmission of the feeling. I do my best, but we're just building it.

We want it to be coherent in the networks. It has been a few months since we started, and I am learning. I have gotten a little bit of feedback. When people respond to it, sometimes it is clear. Sometimes, there is no response at all. I try to keep a line in my head. I have visuals in my room where I work. (Laughs)

Minimum Wage in Peru – Session 4

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 1, 2016

What is the minimum wage in Lima because everything is centralized? How does that relate to the fashion industry?

The minimum wage in Peru is 750 Soles. In American dollars, it would be around 122 dollars per month. The minimum wage in the country. How we receive this amount is going to change according to the city you live in? Outside of Lima can be very high quality and not expensive, you can get good education. You can transport inexpensively. In Lima, on that budget, it can be very tough. The city is gigantic. You can spend a lot of money to get around because there is not an integrated transport system. It is all particular services.

At the end, it ends up being expensive. Food and education are more expensive. That's why there's a lot of people that keep on living in the surrounding parts, the outskirts, of Lima. That's where I have my workshop. They live far from the main districts of Lima. It is a long road away. This is how Lima has been growing through the years. The main official district and the people moving for the jobs in the outskirts. That's how the city has grown with no borders. It has spread all around.

Again, people working in these areas do not have a legal situation. They haven't bought the area where their house is now. They come in and build around. They stay there for several years. If they stay there for 10 years, they can apply to legalize the space of their own. You don't really pay for buying the space. So, there are ways to make your life with a small budget in Lima, but that means that you're going to have access to education or health, or other things.

Again, how does this apply to the fashion industry? To be honest, what I know from the main industry in Lima that is concentrated in emporium. That is, it is a big cluster, where there is a lot of workshops. All of the services you can imagine. In terms of services and production, it might seem like paradise. You can find any type of fabric. You can any type of service. However, a lot of the people that work there. They're not really legally hired.

So, the company that hired them for the day for that job that they get. They don't have to pay the rights to the government on behalf of the employee, which allows them to get more money 'on the low' or 'under the table.' That's why it is important to produce in mass quantities because the more that they produce, the more they get, because their profits are based on how much they make. That's why this particular cluster - though it is super interesting to me - I couldn't find a lot of suppliers to work with me. A lot of fine brands are going to have a hard time.

When you're starting, when you're doing small prototypes, for good reason it's hard, because their income depends on that.

There are some international discussions around the precarious - the global precariat - around those that live in uncertainty and do not know if they will have their livelihood, their income, their job, the next day. Does this seem to reflect it?

To be honest, I have a part of my family connected to this cluster. One of my cousins that worked for me. She worked for this industry. At the beginning, she would say that she would

have to go early to produce an sewing machine pieces. They gather there. The people with jobs come there in the morning. They say, "We have this thing to do with these pieces." You would get the job for the day. Once you've done it several times, they will know you. They will call you, directly. It is like a job date. When we started talking about the project, she had to participate in the sense that she would not have a fixed job.

She is one of these people that keeps the house together. Her mom and the family, she was always looking for something else like in sewing. Also, she does little repairs for the neighbours. You do what you can because you're not legally part of any enterprise. That would be probably half of what happens because there's another side that does work legally. They do work for a company.

They ask for a minimum level of quality. So, the companies that produce need to hire qualified people and keep them because they have a strong orders from abroad. The rest are the ones that produce for the local market that know that the local customer is not really looking for high quality, but for fashionable items at available or low prices. This production or market helps keep the situation of informality.

Behind La P.M.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen works with various labs and groups, and part-time in landscaping (lifting, mowing, and raking) and gardening (digging, planting, and weeding). He founded *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* and *In-Sight Publishing*.

Peruvian Style, Fashion, and Culture – Session 5

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 15, 2016

Peruvian style and Peruvian fashion, every culture has a unique set of attributes that they are 'bringing to the table' with regards to fashion, or even with the fibre they use such as Peru using alpacas as far as I know - or at least that seems to be prominent in that fashion culture. What distinguishes Peruvian style and fashion within the culture apart from other ones?

There's this thing when it comes to Peruvian style and that makes it apart from other styles. It is the mix of what we really have and what we really wear, and what we used to wear, historically, and the cliché that people have of us. It has all mixed together. So, it's hard to explain. What we have as our national fibres, that we exploit a lot. I can say that industry has a real skill for cotton. It is a cotton country. We do not produce as well as Brazil, for instance. We are way smaller. In terms of quality of cotton, we are well placed internationally.

It is one of our export products. What we are most known for is the Pima cotton, that's the softer quality. So, you're going to see in the US more Pima cotton than others from Peru. You're going to see a lot of production of brands like Guess, Tommy Hilfiger, and so on, using cotton. Of course, the alpaca fibre. I'm going to say alpaca is the one that is most known. They're fibres used, historically, by the Inca, but this fibre was so soft and fine. It was limited to royalty. The peasants would never wear it.

We have kept this as a tradition through colonialization. Once we became a republic, we continued to work on it. We call it our flat products like a national product. Indeed, it is super soft and warm. The quality of the fibre will depend on if it is the first time they cut, what part of the body the wool comes from, and so on. For instance, I have decided to work only with baby alpaca, which is a name of a type of fibre. The one that comes from the back of the animal.

I am careful talking about this topic, this prototype. People might think about a real baby. It is the quality of the fibre! (Laughs) The Peruvian government and the Ministry of Commerce decided to work with these materials. So, we can be revisited and become a bit more modern. They do contests for young designers to bring up collections entirely made out of cotton and alpaca. Why? Because when people think of Peruvians and alpacas, they think of the cliché of the Andean person with the Chullo. It is the name for the hat that covers the ears.

That, in Peru, is a chullo. I know that is something we wear in the mountains because it is cold in the winter. I am not going to deny it is part of our culture, but it is not entirely part of it. I mean, ponchos, of course, but Peruvians have been stereotyped to this style because it is strong and different. That's why the government is trying to push designers to bring the fibres to a new life. It is to break into new markets.

Everybody likes the chullo. Everybody likes the poncho. However, the ethnic style market is going to be small. You will be limited to people that want to look ethnic. However, what I think the ministry is trying to do is to push the boundaries is and say, "This can be fashionable today-to-day wear." Other than that, I can say that even as Peruvians we have imperialized the whole Inca heritage. I know that when I started my project, La Petite Mort, and I was explaining the project to other Peruvians.

They said, "You're going to have Inca signs with Inca patterns." I said, "Not necessarily, they might be of use at some point in one collection, but I'm not going to close the design to that." They said, "You should know people abroad will love that." I said, "Yes, of course, a share of the market will like it." I try to keep open design-wise.

I am super proud of the heritage contribution to us, but I do not want to close it. It would be as if Americans only designed things with stars and red and blue stripes.

Testino and Juana Burga Cervera – Session 6

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 15, 2016

Who are some people that are exemplars of this? With respect to some aspects of fashion in terms of Peru, and what makes it unique, there are also some aspects that make it unique. Who is, then, exporting Peruvian culture well? Who stands out to you?

When it comes to exporting Peruvian culture, I think Peru has a lot of ambassadors. They are not known internationally, but they do the work and get known abroad. They do it right. To mention a few, Meche Correa is a designer. One of the first designers that does the whole Peruvian from the Andes style with the colors and make it more classy and elegant and creative. She's been working on that for 20 years. Now, she's a well-respected designer, very well-known in Peru.

Internationally, I know her work has made it abroad and been appreciated. Her name is not internationally known. She has not made a super-breakthrough, but her work is good. For her, there are a lot of designers that with their work they are getting to be in in that position in places abroad.

For those people that have made that breakthrough in major houses and magazines that known them, they are not really designers, but photographers like Testino and Juana Burga. Testino is the main photographer for *Vogue* in the US. He has collaborated with a lot of major publications internationally. He was worked with Princess Diana, the royal engagement.

He has made it big time internationally. He gives us this influence he has to push the image of Peru. He brought *Vogue* to do a special edition on Peruvian style. He did a shooting in Cusco and in Lima. He attracted international interest to the country. He even opened a museum with his work like a collection of all of his work.

For the opening, he brought Naomi Campbell. He invited his famous friends to come and see a bit of Lima. In his way, he is contributing to get the image of Peru better. On the other side, not as famous, but also way younger, there's this model called Juana Burga. She must be 25 or 24. She is interesting.

Five year ago, ten years ago, models were the white kind of look - the beauty canon is towards white European type. The thing with Juana Burga is that she has the typical Peruvian face and style. Of course, she is tall and skinny as any model seen on the runway, but she has Peruvian features like dark skin and dark hair. The girl next door type; the girl next door in Peru type.
(Laughs)

(Laughs)

She got selected and started doing runways in Spain, and then in New York, and then in France. She has participated in major runways for super-important fashion luxury houses, internationally. Here there are other models, they have made it, of course, into some luxury runways, but she's the one that has made it through. You will see her modelling for the major companies.

I think it is interesting because in Peru she would not have been appreciated, but, abroad, her type worked out. That also helps to better the vision people have of Peru abroad. Of course, there are a lot of ambassadors in the country. The more influence you have, or the more you're known abroad, and if you use it to bring attention to the country, then so much the better.

Sustainable Fashion for Peru – Session 7

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 15, 2016

What is the way forward for sustainable fashion?

That is a big challenge. That is a big question. As I was telling you before, La Petite Mort was not inspired for a particular personality or person in Peru. It was rather inspired by the lack of sustainable fashion in the country. I figured there was a need we had to cover and the industry had to cover. I remember living in Peru years ago.

Yes, we heard about it, but we talked more about sustainability in marginal ways: climate change, the weather, and contamination. We do a lot of extraction industry stuff. We would never think of fashion. Fashion was becoming an important industry. When I learned about sustainable fashion, I figured, "How are we letting this pass by, and how are we not informed about it?" We do have a high appreciation for everything that is handmade.

Handmade embroidery because worked with a lot of artisans and artists from the coast, the North, and the different regions of Peru. When we talk about ethical fashion, they would think social-wise. It is important, super important. However, they would never consider the green side of it, which should be equally important. So, this is how La Petite Mort is in Peru.

In my mind, it was to develop in Europe exporting Peruvian materials that were high quality. It is crazy in Peru that we didn't do it. So, I started to do some research to look if anyone was doing anything, and if we could work together. Eventually, I did find out about a year and a half ago, when I started with this product. An association for sustainable fashion was created in Peru. Other than that, there was not much.

They were young girls with a great spirit and a lot of energy trying to push and tell people about sustainable, and ethical, fashion. They started. It has been a year and a half of their work, plus my work, and to me, right now, it is unclear. My objective is clear. The how we're going to get there, or get people to care about sustainability in fashion, is a mystery.

Is it seminars? Is it movies? We don't know how to. We know what we want. It is a big need. I certainly hope that the Ministry of Commerce will get more into this, too. They are into pushing cotton, alpaca, and social enterprises, but the ecological side of it. It is still off. Nobody is mentioning it. Most of our cotton production is regular cotton and pesticides. To change the industry, it is a lot of money invested. How long will it be going to take? I don't know. Can the government intervene to give incentives to farmers to change their ways? I don't know if they have the money.

There are a lot of things to change. I cannot really think about changing the industry without changing the customer first. Finally, I think the industry will change based on the demands of the customers. If the customers in Peru keep on thinking it better to have ten pairs of jeans of H&M or ten t-shirts to have a lot of options, then we're wrong. That's a trend to change. Not to stop buying at H&M, but that they choose to buy fewer pieces and better quality - instead of buying a zillion. This is the one idea we're trying to settle.

However, to be honest, I don't know how long it will take for us. (Laughs) We don't know how we're going to take us. (Laughs)

This makes me think about a conversation with an individual. I talked to Cory Doctorow. He talked about the separation between material culture and green culture. That is, there shouldn't be a separation between them because material things can be cool. Some parts of green culture are about complete reduction of whatever owned materials. Don't have ten garments, have two, but there's also the idea that if you can have a certain production cycle, and decomposition cycle, that is essentially carbon neutral and pollution neutral, then that has no impact on the green culture, and, in fact, that would provide a reason for a convergence of green culture *and* material culture. Any thoughts on that?

If we choose the good materials to use for that, if we buy less, then yes; we might choose better. In a market, the market, as I see it, when we import a lot of fabrics from China, and not even because they are super new and even cheaper than the national fabrics, people with the economy worldwide has been messed up, but in Latin America it has been steady for the last few years. Even though it has not been as good as it was a few years ago, but the middle class has grown a lot, you have to understand that in developing countries when you started making money. You wanted to show that you made money.

I'm not sure how the ethical or the green culture can get into this space of showing off all of the money they have by buying more things.

Professional – Session 8

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

August 1, 2016

So, we've covered some personal and familial background, and educational background in Peru and America, and having two sets of families. What was the inspiration and motivation for founding La Petite Mort?

When I was working, and quit advertising and moved to marketing because it pays better - and advertising was harsh, I started working in marketing and seeing how things in the fashion industry in Peru were moving a little. More of a design was taking place, and I figured, "Wow, this is something that is going to be interesting to develop." I was excited to see it. I was a part of it.

I always wanted to develop. I started taking some professional classes to get a taste of it. Then, I realized. In terms of education, we were in the basic, in diapers, compared to the world. It was expensive too. I figured if I was going to take this seriously, then I would have to take some money and study abroad to study it more seriously. My idea was to go back to Peru and sell internationally.

Once you have gone abroad, it is hard to not think of the whole world. It is hard to think of your country alone. When I arrived I figured I would do a year and a half, a year of study, and six months of internship, and then come back and do business, things blurred for me. It was overwhelming. Things switched for me. I got into sustainable fashion.

And then, my original idea of selling a little brand switched as well. It was not going to be a brand, but content too. It is going to be transmitted through fashion and have an essence. Eventually La Petite Mort was created, I cannot even tell when the idea came for me. It came little by little in the whole process.

The title itself is a casual, popular, or colloquial reference to a sexual orgasm in addition to having a translation as "a little death." Could you go a little bit into that? What else does this mean to you - general associations as well?

To be honest, I know it's a popular reference to sexual orgasm. It is like the obvious thing. To me, it was more appealing as total realization, total liberty, or this space, mental space, of endless possibility. To me, that's *la petite mort*. I know they relate it to sexual orgasm, but to me it is more than that. I hope that eventually I can work the brand so that people can relate to endless possibilities rather than orgasm.

Perspective – Session 9

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

August 1, 2016

There's some other aspects to do with writing such as in this blog or for Trusted Clothes. These relate to sustainable, ethical fashion. how does this relate to some of your professional work?

I haven't had the chance to work for sustainable fashion brands. I work for luxury houses now. I am doing one now. They're changing their ways, and how they approach people. For example, they are saying, "The fur we are using for this shoe is not killed animal by us. It was accidentally killed on the road."

That's the way fashion is adapting to the new consciousness. It is growing on people. I don't think I could mention a brand that is from the beginning sustainable, not in the field that I worked because I worked in luxury. I know small brands - 5-10 years old - are born with this idea in mind. It has a chance to work for them. I learned about them in recent years.

I hope to discover more. I work mostly freelance jobs. I would not take a part-time job in H&M. (Laughs) But I hope to do it with something beyond fashion, something beyond style, even if it is not sustainability oriented.

Your general perspective might be of interest to readers. In terms of reasons to get into ethical and sustainable fashion, take, for instance, we have trillions of pieces of micro-plastics in the ocean. The synthetic fibre industry comes out to 60 million tons of output. Natural fibres come out to about 25 million tons. It's a more than a 2-fold difference in output. We know one of the major contributors to the pollution of the earth are plastics because these materials do not decompose or biodegrade, which is an issue. In the sense that most fibres co-evolved and have enzymes that can break them down – natural fibres, synthetic fibres do not and cannot break down as far as we know about them. These link to climate change or global warming and many other issues.

I try not to be closed to the idea that everything should be made of organics or naturals. I understand plastics are one of the major things that are our waste. I think synthetic fibres will still be part of our wardrobe for sports, winter clothing. We're always going to have to put some synthetics with them.

Not only natural, I think it's a matter of balancing that. I believe in the idea of upcycling. I wish to eventually put upcycling into the product. We can reuse rather than minimal plastic materials. There are a few major brands like Puma and sports brands. They re-utilize the materials.

I think that will be the answer because, to be honest, I don't see a world that could be 100% organic.

Product Branding – Session 10

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

August 15, 2016

The operational side can involve things like branding. What is branding? What defines branding to you? How do you incorporate it into your business? What are some issues with it for you?

Branding is a challenge because at the end communicating that brand is ethical, organic, and that is fair trade. It is a lot of content for the brands and not really the heart of the branding. The branding to me is communicating the soul of the brand. What's the main idea around it? It is to get people to connect with it. You can have the branding message right.

This concept of mine is already heavy when it comes to the whole liberation of the mind with La Petite Mort and the ethical side. It is a whole lot of content that I am trying to put into a simple message. Then, I work through social networking because that's how the world is moving nowadays. I try to translate the message more visually than with words because, to be honest, people are not much into reading.

I do complement the visual side with articles that I turn to posts on Twitter or the ones that I do with Trusted Clothes. (Laughs) All based around the idea: why do we need to get into ethical fashion? But then the branding is more the transmission of the feeling. I do my best, but we're just building it.

We want it to be coherent in the networks. It has been a few months since we started, and I am learning. I have gotten a little bit of feedback. When people respond to it, sometimes it is clear. Sometimes, there is no response at all. I try to keep a line in my head. I have visuals in my room where I work. (Laughs)

Ethical and Sustainable Fashion News in Brief

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

December 10, 2016

Stella McCartney speaks out on the fashion industry

Bazaar reported that the designer Stella McCartney is an outspoken critic of the fashion industry on the topics of "animal rights, animal cruelty and sustainable fashion." Of the luxury brands, McCartney is the only one to not use animal skin, fur, or leather in the collections.

"Fashion really is getting away with murder. There needs to be more systems in place, more vigorous testing," McCartney said, "and as a customer you can do that, you can challenge the people who are making your fashion."

She noted the importance of being mindful of personal decisions in purchases. Furthermore, she emphasized the reduction in animal product through the use of faux as opposed to real fur because customers "really can't tell the difference."

Eileen Fisher acknowledges negative environmental impact of the fashion industry.

According to Triple Pundit, the public wants to make more sustainable fashion decisions in their personal purchases. Customers are more aware of their negative impact on the environment.

The Savers State of Reuse Report described that "more than half of North Americans report they are more likely to practice reuse after learning about the clothing industry's environmental footprint."

However, if the sustainable and ethical products are not on the shelves of the stores, then the general public as consumers cannot purchase those products. It becomes a problem. People know more, want to make the choices, but the options are not available.

Sustainable fashion: the whats, the hows, and the getting started

As well, HuffPost Style, states that 13 garment workers "died from a fire or the waste and pollution fast fashion is causing" and the rapid breakdown of fast fashion products for those even recently bought.

They quote the Green Strategy in definition of sustainable fashion as "clothing, shoes and accessories that are manufactured, marketed and used in the most sustainable manner possible..."

The sustainable fashion movement can include being made locally, "green & clean," in a fair and ethical manner, being remade, reused, and even upcycled. Also, people can rent, loan, or swap clothes, even buy second hand ones to reduce overall waste. All important in sustainable consumption and fashion.

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