

Make Me Smart August 26, 2021 transcript

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Kai Ryssdal: Who's in charge? Who's in charge?

Molly Wood: Ask and you shall receive. Hey, everyone, I'm Molly wood. Welcome back to Make Me Smart, the show where we make today make sense.

Kai Ryssdal: And we will find out at the end of this podcast who is actually in charge because I honestly don't know. Anyway, I'm Kai Ryssdal. It is hollowed out shell Thursday. Thanks for being here. You know the drill, 15 minutes of news, little small thing if we're lucky, and then we are gone. Gone, gone. Gone.

Molly Wood: It is indeed. You know, we have had talks over and over about whether to change the name of hollowed out shell Thursday. And usually it comes to like, you know, we're just not going to because like most people are just tired by Thursday. And also, it just keeps going that way. It just keeps ending up. Obviously today is, today is a horrific day in America, where obviously we're speaking to, as we've heard, that at least 12 US service members and thousands, hundreds, hundreds of Afghan citizens have been killed in this bombing. I mean, imagine, imagine the inhumanity that you have to, have to say people are packed in here like rats trying to save their own lives. Let's blow them up. Yeah, and then everybody immediately turns around and plays their favorite fun game of politics. And then the economist calls up Henry Kissinger of all people to expound on how America--he wrote a column for The Economist on how America should have dealt with--Henry Kissinger, we have reached the stage of absurdity where we are calling Henry Kissinger. Just google it if you don't know what I'm talking about. To find out how we should have prosecuted this war. So yeah, we are at max absurdity and hollowed out.

Kai Ryssdal: Right. Let's, let's do our slice of the news, shall we? You want to go first?

Molly Wood: Yep, I am mad about women, as usual. And not just the regular old patriarchy, but the part of the patriarchy that we don't talk about a lot, maybe not quite often enough, which is the part of the patriarchy that is propped up by women. Tina Chen, President and CEO of Time's Up, which you may know is one of the organizations, organizations that was supposed to support women in the wake of the Me Too movement, or in alongside the Me Too movement, its leader resigned, told her staff Thursday that she would resign after admitting that essentially, the organization did all kinds of private consulting for Andrew Cuomo, the recently resigned New York Governor. Yeah, ostensibly to help him weather sexual harassment storms. It sounds like the organization declined to issue, wrote but then declined to issue, a letter supporting his first

accuser. The co-founder of Time's Up, Roberta Kaplan, also resigned earlier this month after Letitia James, the Attorney General in New York, released the case against Cuomo because it showed essentially some of these consultations in great detail. And yeah, and Tina Chen, in her statement, sounding like someone we'll talk about in a minute, said I think it's just, it's too much of a distraction for me to stay on, but also said that she had no idea how deep these issues with Cuomo went, and she could see how people felt betrayed. And at least one New York State Senator is just not having it. Alessandra Biaggi has this like, crazy long thread about the times that she felt that that the Time's Up organization threw her under the bus at Andrew Cuomo's request. How closely they worked with him, how, how survivors of sexual assault and sexual harassment were just sort of like shunted aside because Cuomo himself was so politically powerful in New York. It's infuriating, it's infuriating.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, rightly, rightly. It's crazy.

Molly Wood: And it comes on the same day that the New York Times reports, cause remember when I was like, there's no way that Mike Richards is gonna stay the executive producer of Jeopardy, that's just crazy. Yeah, no, he is, apparently.

Kai Ryssdal: And not only that, yeah, he's getting sensitivity training, the New York Times reports, and he's gonna have like, a minder watching him. But no, we can't not have him be here because, I don't know that.

Molly Wood: There's no way that would create a hostile or uncomfortable work environment for women. Right? Why would it after all those fun things he said about them?

Kai Ryssdal: I'm gonna go not very far out on a limb and say he doesn't make it 90 days. Not 90 days.

Molly Wood: You know, you are right so much more often than I care to admit. And this is one that I'm just gonna lean in. I'm hitching my star to this wagon, it's gonna be right.

Kai Ryssdal: I'll take that one. Yeah, it's just too, you know, it's just too, and so.

Molly Wood: So gross. It's just all so gross! Anyway, sorry about all the yelling. I'm done now.

Kai Ryssdal: No, look, it's, it's this, these are both smash the patriarchy kind of. And it's enablers, I guess, moments. Okay, mine, a little more mundane, a little more wonky. A little more, I don't even know. Just a very quick aside on the travel plans of Emmanuel Macron, the President of France, went to Ireland today at which he was expected to, and I'm bringing this up because we've talked about it, he's expected to lobby the Irish to get on board with the global minimum tax that Janet Yellen has been pushing and that the OECD bought in on that we covered, I don't know what, a couple of months ago. Ireland, of course, is the, is the key point player here because they have like a 12 or 15% tax rate, which is why Apple and all those

companies park so many, so much of their profit overseas. So I just thought that was interesting, and Macron is sort of going to bat for that whole thing.

Molly Wood: It is pretty interesting. That's pretty dishy for tax nerds.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, for tax nerds, right? Well, this is two days in a row. We've had tax nerds on the program right now. We know we have them. Here's the other thing. And I'm riffing off a piece in Politico, I think today, that says--is it Politico? I think it's Politico--saying that Kamala Harris, Vice President of United States from the great state of California, by the way, is, was going to stop in California on her way home from her Asia trip to campaign with Gavin Newsom in the recall election we're having out here. And that's not happening, for obvious reasons, having to do with Afghanistan. But I'm not sure how many people out there really realize that Gavin Newsom could conceivably not be the governor of California in 45 days. The recall is the 14th of September. This is an overwhelmingly blue state. But the way direct democracy works in this state, which bugs me no end, is that Gavin Newsom could lose, could get 49.9% of the vote, saying yes, keep him in office. But 50.1% would throw him out. And then the guy who might replace him, since there are umpteen bazillion people on the ballot, could be like a 16% vote getter, 18% vote getter. I think it's just, it's amazing. I don't think enough people outside the state of California paying attention to it. And it could easily happen. Easily. Easily, easily, easily.

Molly Wood: It really could. And it would just upend, upend this state. I mean, it really, because who knows, literally who knows with 18 candidates, and you know the name, and, and a very energized, angry base of, you know, conservatives and hard right conservatives.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And Democrats were like, oh, it's gonna be fine. We're such a blue state. I don't have to vote. Right. That's what's gonna happen.

Molly Wood: Which is why it's a big enough deal.

Kai Ryssdal: Right. I'm sorry. Go ahead. I'm ranting.

Molly Wood: No, I was gonna say that's why it's a big enough deal that Kamala Harris was literally going to stop here and stump for what otherwise seemed like a pretty standard recall election. Yeah, it's a huge deal. Yep. Now, also, though, I don't mean to do this, because I'm not trying to be, I am not trying to perpetrate conspiracy in any way, shape, or form. However, there were reports like two days ago that while Kamala Harris, Vice President Harris, was on that trip, in Vietnam, in particular, that some people in her entourage, we don't know, who were afflicted with symptoms resembling the Havana syndrome, which is this kind of increasingly scary thing. The, the I don't know what they call it psychogenic illness, the thing where some Americans and service members and diplomats are starting to have these neurological issues that they think might be the result of like microwave radiation being beamed in their direction. It seems very clear. It's like it's a tax. It seems. And it keeps happening and it happened to Kamala Harris and her delegation in Vietnam, and I'm like, sitting here hearing that she canceled this rally and

wondering if it happened to her because they haven't said anything about who it was, but also, when are we going to take this a lot more seriously, because it seems really scary.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah. Yeah, I agree. I agree. It's a big deal. And you know, I've done my time in overseas posts. And the idea that this is happening to you and you can't really get the government to pay attention is, is--until recently, anyway--it's kind of infuriating. Kind of infuriating

Molly Wood: It's kind of bonkers. I hope that at the super-secret-y levels, they're paying lots of attention.

Kai Ryssdal: Ah, yes. What's your classification? It's super-secret-y.

Molly Wood: It's super-secret-y. I'm willing to acknowledge that we journalists do not know everything. And people don't tell us everything. And so maybe there are, you know, super secret layers, where they're really trying to figure this out. But Yikes. Yikes.

Kai Ryssdal: For sure. For sure.

Molly Wood: Okay. All right. All right. We're hollowed out enough. There we go. I had one make me smile. And then I got a second one courtesy of our copy editor Carrie Barber. What do you know? The first one is--

Kai Ryssdal: Who always pops up with awesome stuff, by the way. Carrie just always finds random stuff.

Molly Wood: She really does, Carrie like, finds the good parts of the internet for sure. Yeah. Evidently there is news inside TechDaily.com today that an antibody has been discovered, antibody therapy, has been discovered that appears to neutralize, quote "all known SARS-COVID-2 strains."

Kai Ryssdal: Seriously?

Molly Wood: And other coronaviruses. Yeah, so literally yesterday, we were like, when are there going to be pills and when are there going to be these therapeutics and this is not a vaccine. It's a therapeutic. But it evidently is like a seriously hardcore, effective drug developed by GlaxoSmithKline and Vir Biotechnology, and it has, quote, "remarkable breadth and efficacy." Neutralizes all the strains, including the newly emerged mutants. And that is awesome. Yep.

Kai Ryssdal: Wow, that's crazy. This is a story that needs more coverage. That's cray cray.

Molly Wood: And it really does, right? I mean, why am I reading this?

Kai Ryssdal: Right. Yeah, that's the problem. It would encourage people to say, oh, no, I'm just gonna take this magic pill. Right.

Molly Wood: I mean, I don't know, they're already taking the horse one.

Kai Ryssdal: Exactly. Exactly. Oh, my God.

Molly Wood: They're even saying that this antibody could prevent a COVID-19 infection if given prophylactically. The new work was published in Nature. So yeah, let's get that in some front pages. That's great news.

Kai Ryssdal: Let's for sure.

Molly Wood: And then the awesome Carrie Barber just sent me a link to a story from Australia about how an Australian farmer who couldn't go to a family funeral for his aunt because of COVID. He used his sheep to make a big huge heart in a field and took a drone picture.

Kai Ryssdal: Oh, I thought it was, I thought it was like did some weird cloning thing or took a cell and built a sheep part and oh, okay. All right. Never mind. I totally that wrong.

Molly Wood: Oh, right. Right. No. Wrong. Sorry. Sorry. Yes. No, he somehow got a whole crap ton of sheep to stand in the same place, in the, in the heart, which is like amazing. It's like the beginning of the Beijing Olympics except with sheep.

Kai Ryssdal: Awesome. Yes. And much better than the way I was imagining that story. Okay, so anyhow, moving on. Okay, no look. I mean, it would not be, that's not a story you would not bring. You could, I could see you bringing that.

Molly Wood: I would definitely be all over that story. You are correct. Yeah, we're happening. A cloned sheep heart as a gift. Yes.

Kai Ryssdal: Exactly. Here you go, granny, or auntie. Anyway. So mine will be quick. And then we will get out of here because I think we're just past repair. I would just like to point out as, as covered in the Wall Street Journal today that in a mere two weeks, the country of El Salvador will finalize its adoption of Bitcoin as legal tender, the first country, obviously, to do so. It will be one of two in that country along with the US dollar. And the mention of the dollar makes me obliged to point out that two days ago, Bitcoin was worth \$50,000. Today, it's worth \$48,000. What could possibly go wrong in an economy like El Salvador's when you've got that kind of volatility, that's all I'm saying. It's not a make me smile, it's a make me shake my doggone head. That's, that's what that one is. I just, I can't.

Molly Wood: I was like really hoping that the headline was wrong and that they meant cryptocurrency but they actually mean Bitcoin. Bitcoin. Yeah. The foray into bitcoin. Right. So the Wall Street Journal risks wrecking El Salvador's \$27 billion economy. Oh my god. Wow. Yeah, okay. Yep. So we'll see.

Kai Ryssdal: Right, watch these pages. Yeah, more to come.

Molly Wood: It's a big story. It's a big story. Yeah, we should get someone from the El Salvador central bank to come on.

Kai Ryssdal: Not sure this person would want to.

Molly Wood: And just be like, sir or madam.

Kai Ryssdal: The politicians, the politicians, they don't understand economics.

Molly Wood: Dang. Dang. Dang. Yep. Okay, well, that's it for us today. I'm going to be just refreshing whatever I can news about that in two weeks. We will be back tomorrow for I think a very well-earned economics on tap and the YouTube live stream. We will be excited to hang out with all of you at 3:30pm Pacific, 6:30pm Eastern. Keep your questions and your comments coming. We're at makemesmart@marketplace.org, or, of course, you can leave us a voicemail at 508-827-6278, 508-UB-SMART. Boom! Right on time. Make Me Smart is produced by Marissa Cabrera. Today's episode was engineered by Brian Allison. Tony Wagner writes our newsletter.

Kai Ryssdal: Donna Tam is senior producing this week in addition to whatever other job she's assigned by the executive director on demand, who is Sitara Nieves, just cause she can do it all. She's a five-tool player.

Molly Wood: That's right. this show really makes me realize what you can accomplish in 15 minutes. You can't fold laundry, but you can get a lot of content. I got a lot of laundry on my mind right now. So much laundry.