

Make Me Smart October 28, 2021 transcript

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Kai Ryssdal: I was never a costume guy to begin with, so. And there we go.

Marielle Segarra: Never?

Kai Ryssdal: No, never. I hated costumes. And that will surprise absolutely nobody.

Marielle Segarra: Like even as a kid?

Kai Ryssdal: Anyway. Even as a kid I hated it. Hated it. And it won't surprise you to find out that that's coming from Kai Ryssdal. That's my name. Welcome back to Make Me Smart, making today make sense, costumes or not.

Marielle Segarra: I am Marielle Segarra. I did like to wear a costume as a kid, as a teenager. Thanks for joining us. It is hollowed out shell Thursday. How hollow is your shell today, Kai?

Kai Ryssdal: You know, it's not too bad. It's not too bad. I'm in reasonably good spirits. Given everything. I don't know, you?

Marielle Segarra: Yeah, mine's okay. I got a fridge. So that's something.

Kai Ryssdal: Really? Like a big like, a full sized one, a big one?

Marielle Segarra: It's been purchased. So, you know, it's really sad. My apartment is in New York City, right? So it's small. My fridge is not a normal sized fridge. It's not a mini fridge. But it's like, it's, it's a half sized fridge. So it's one of those, and it fits into kind of like a corner in my kitchen. So it's that. I can barely fit anything in it. But, you know, at least it's--yeah. Tomorrow, I think.

Kai Ryssdal: That's a plus. It could have taken, you could, you are lucky to be getting something that is not like, 12 weeks away. I'm just saying. I'm just saying.

Marielle Segarra: Yeah. So I'm just trying to figure out what I'm grateful for today. That is it.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, I got a fridge. Right. Let's, let's do the news. I'll go first just because mine is the owes. I'm going to channel my inner Molly Wood here and point out that Mark Zuckerberg did not do what Molly thought he was going to do. So Facebook has now been renamed into

Meta, M-E-T-A. And it's going to be an Umbrella Corporation for Facebook and Instagram and WhatsApp and whatever else Zuckerberg decides to buy. Here's the thing that we have not seen happen quite yet. And that was Molly's prediction that he was going to make himself the CEO of meta and then let somebody else be the CEO of Facebook, ala Larry Page and Sergey Brin at Google, where they elevated themselves to Alphabet and Sundar Pichai, Pichai runs Google. That has not happened yet. I think Molly's probably right that it's gonna happen. But that's, the that's the sort of tech news. Oh, and corporate news of the day. I don't know if it's the most underwhelming bit of corporate rebrand I've ever seen. Really.

Marielle Segarra: So it's meta as in metaverse, right? Yeah, he had a whole video where he tried to explain the metaverse and I just did an episode of Tech, on Marketplace Tech on this and I still don't really get it. I mean, what the metaverse is exactly, it seems like a mix between virtual reality and sort of like God, I'm even. I'm hesitant to try to explain it right now. Because I feel like people are gonna be like, yeah, wrong, but I feel like there's a, there's a lot of different sort of descriptions of it. And maybe that's because it doesn't totally exist yet.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, I don't think it totally exists. I think the video that Zuckerberg did was a little cringy, to be honest with you. But look, I mean, maybe it's coming in two years, five years, 10 years, don't know, and Zuckerberg will have been on the leading edge of it, I suppose. But it's, it still doesn't detract from the fundamental problems that that company has and has caused in the society and we'll see how that plays out in the new branding scheme, you know.

Marielle Segarra: Yeah, they're kind of like, look at this shiny object over here.

Kai Ryssdal: Right. Well, that's exactly that's exactly it. And that was Molly's point, right? Zuckerberg is gonna go oh, no, I don't run Facebook anymore. All y'all take care of that. You know, you work for you know, a person X now and I'm not sure that's gonna work. Just super quick, quick. I want to touch on two other things. Number one, gross domestic product amount this morning. It's slowed from the previous quarters, right? It was 2% annualized from July through September, which we knew was happening. So not as great as we wanted, but, you know, in an ordinary year, you'd be pretty good. So it's gonna get better from here, the Delta variant did its number and now we're all getting boosters. And it's, it's gonna ramp back up again. I also want to just talk really briefly about the framing issue around the Democrats having all these internecine squabbles about the infrastructure bill that they're working on, the social spending bill, I guess, with Biden. And here's what I want to point out. I'm guilty of this, talking about the Democrats just not being able to get on the same page for a whole lot of reasons to get this thing done. I think it has to be pointed out that the only reason that they need all 50 Democratic senators and all 218 Democratic members of the House is because the Republicans are refusing to join in governing. And that just has to be said. And I think it's an important framing issue, as we talked about, sometimes political reporters with great glee, the disarray that Democrats are in. It's not all on the Democrats. Right? There's, there's plenty of blame for the dysfunction of Congress to go around. And I just want to say that. That's it.

Marielle Segarra: Yeah. I mean, it's one of those things like, I feel like you've talked about this on the show before where you're almost hesitant to say something obvious like that, because it's

like, oh, am I, am I allowed to say, to point this out? You know, or am I being, not being objective enough? Or whatever, but it's true. It's just a fact.

Kai Ryssdal: I totally agree. Totally. Yeah. All right. Those are my, you know, one and three-quarters, news items. What do you got?

Marielle Segarra: Yeah, so the, I don't know, if you saw this, the city of LA is, as opposed to the country of LA, LA is launching like a universal basic income program. It's a pilot to give families \$1000 bucks a month for a year. And it's like 3,000 families. They have to be at or below the federal poverty level, have a dependent minor or be pregnant, and have experienced some kind of financial or medical hardship because of the pandemic. But there are no strings attached to the money. That's the idea of universal basic income. And I just think it's interesting, there's, there's been a lot of talk about UBI. And a lot of mayors have, have pushed for it. Actually, the city of Stockton, California tried this before the pandemic. And they found that giving people \$500 a month not only decreased their depression and anxiety, which makes a lot of sense, but among that group, full time employment increased. So even though they were getting money every month, their employment increase. And I think that's, there are a few possible reasons for that. One is that unlike unemployment insurance, it doesn't disincentivize you to work, it doesn't say you can't work if you're getting this money. So people actually had an incentive to, to supplement the money they're getting. And then also, I mean, thinking about the anxiety and depression part, financial stress, or not knowing where your next meal is coming from is incredibly, you know, debilitating, and it can be hard to get out of that hold if you're literally hungry. And you're like, I have to find a job now. You know, it's, it's a lot harder to go on that search if you have nothing to work with. So I wonder if that's part of it as well.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, I think it absolutely is. And I think the third component here is that \$500 a month or in Stockton, \$1,000 in LA for those families, goes a long way toward childcare, right? Because a lot of the reasons that people don't work in this economy is because they can't afford or cannot find any kind of childcare. And if you got \$500 a month, no strings attached, that you can spend on childcare, then you can go to work. And that makes a huge difference. But it's, it's, it'll be really interesting to see in Los Angeles, the biggest city to try it, how it works out, you know?

Marielle Segarra: Yeah, for sure.

Kai Ryssdal: Alright, this news isn't too grim for a Thursday so far. Alright, shall we? Alright, you go first there.

Marielle Segarra: Okay. So there is a woman who is suing Kellogg, the cereal company, over their Strawberry Pop Tarts, saying that they don't contain nearly enough strawberry. That actually they contain more pear and the like, bright red color that that makes them, yeah, I guess it's pear. Strawberries are apparently expensive. And I'm surprised they have any fruit in them at all to be honest. But yeah, the, the bright red color just comes from food coloring. It's just, it's kind of bold, right? I mean, look, I think it'd be great if companies had to be more

responsible with the way they label their food, but also if you're eating a pop tart, like if you were to eat a banana lollipop, you know, do you really think there's any banana in there? Probably not. Doesn't taste like it.

Kai Ryssdal: Doesn't taste like it, although just to be clear, I'm a big fan of artificial banana flavor. I kind of like it. Just that's a whole different. Oh, that's a whole different podcast I guess. Alright, well, so here's mine. I've got two quickies. Number one is that Wendy's today, upon the news of Mark Zuckerberg changing the name of the company to meta, said, Wendy's on its twitter feed said, changing name to meat. I'm just gonna like no, I just thought it was great.

Marielle Segarra: Wendy's has a funny Twitter account.

Kai Ryssdal: Right? And you got to figure it, you gotta get some like 23-year-old intern, right, running it. Here's my more substantive one. So the Wall Street Journal yesterday printed an absolutely banana pants letter to the editor from Donald J. Trump, in which Trump listed all of the lies about the election and how, in essence, he's still won, that it was fraud, all the way down. So the journal op ed editorial board today published a statement in which it lays out its defense of publishing the lies of Donald Trump. And they said this, and I couldn't believe it. I love it, but I couldn't believe it. And we think it's news when an ex-president who may run in 2024 wrote what he did, even if, or perhaps especially if, his claims are bananas. And that's the Wall Street Journal editorial board. I just, that was kind of funny. Made me laugh.

Marielle Segarra: I mean, it is funny that they use the term bananas. Maybe they listen to this podcast. I mean, not to end back in the dark place, but it is kind of wild though to publish something and then refute it. Like publish something one day and refute it the next day.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, yep. Don't get it for a second. Not for a second. Yeah, all right. So before we actually go to the dark place, let us get out of here, we are done for today, send us your make me smiles. What are your other thoughts, your questions or comments, you can also email us, we're at makemesmart@marketplace.org, or you can call us, our number is 508-827-6278, 508-UB-SMART. Also, you can write to us on our website and attach an audio file, that is marketplace.org/makemesmart, if that's easier for you. You can just talk to your computer.

Marielle Segarra: Yeah, and we will be back tomorrow for economics on tap and the YouTube live stream at 3:30pm Pacific, 6:30 Eastern. If you don't want to miss a show, be sure to subscribe to the podcast so you can get new episodes straight to your feed.

Kai Ryssdal: Automation, it's an amazing thing. Alright, we're done. Make Me Smart is produced by Marque Greene, who is filling in for Marissa Cabrera today and this week. I think today's episode was engineered by Brian Allison in DTLA.

Marielle Segarra: Bridget Bodnar is the senior producer. The Interim Executive Director of on demand is Donna Tam.

Kai Ryssdal: We should just call her the executive director. At this point, what are they, what are they going to do? Fire us? Probably not, you know? One hopes.