

America's 'Manifest Destiny'

Ross [00:00:28] Welcome to Renegade Inc. It's election season in the U.S. of A, and the rest of the world has to pay attention because whoever wins heads up a nation with economic clout and a bellicose military. But internally, America is more divided, more polarized and angrier than ever. Just before his death, the renowned former Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker outlined a sinister turn he feels the US has taken. He says, "nihilistic forces are dismantling policies to protect our air, water and climate, and they seek to discredit the pillars of our democracy, voting rights and fair elections, the rule of law, free press, the separation of powers, the belief in science and the concept of truth itself." So if he's correct, where next for the country who was once dubbed the leader of the free world?

Ross [00:01:31] We've arrived in America, Margaret, and one of the things that really strikes me here, like in many other places in the world, certainly the U.K. is the huge division that we were presiding over as a society, as a nation. Why has that come about?

Margaret Kimberley [00:01:46] It's come about because people's needs aren't being met. And we have a system which gets people to talk about things that aren't important, because if we had a system that gave people a higher minimum wage, a better healthcare system, as you know, we have a health care system, it's profit driven and people go either don't have health and even after Obamacare, don't have health insurance go broke if they get sick, people going into debt to go to university. And we're told these are things that can't be addressed. And the reaction, I believe, is for people to argue and they may argue over things that are important, but I think what the media want, what politicians want, is for people to not focus on the things they should be focusing on, the things that are really essential to their lives - the impact that America has on the rest of the world, the violence that our country inflicts upon the rest of the world. So instead, people may argue about it could be something serious, could be abortion rights, it could be gay rights - and I'm not saying those things aren't important to some people - but the most basic needs aren't being addressed. So these arguments are stoked. Recently with the impeachment hearings about Ukraine and the president's phone call, while there was all this news about testimony and who said what, the Congress extended the Patriot Act. The Patriot Act was passed in the wake of the attacks of September 11th, which basically do away with our rights. Government has the right to surveil us. We lose all manner of rights. And this just sailed through under the radar because everyone else was focusing on what this or that Congress person said to somebody, the ambassador, that Trump fired.

Ross [00:03:36] So it's a tactic?

Margaret Kimberley [00:03:37] Oh, very much so. And it works because I think now it's it's rather sad Americans don't know how to make demands. We've been told that we can't. We've been told the only thing we can do is vote.

Ross [00:03:49] But Obama told everyone that they can.

Margaret Kimberley [00:03:51] Ha ha. He's not saying that anymore, though, is he? He's running around telling us what you know, you can't ask for this, you can't ask for that. Don't go too far left. That's a tactic. Now Obama's election was a marketing genius.

Ross [00:04:03] But he was brilliant.

Margaret Kimberley [00:04:04] Oh, very, very much so.

Ross [00:04:06] What an actor.

Margaret Kimberley [00:04:07] Very much so. But now it's over. The bloom is off the rose. His successor failed. And people want more. There's a divide among in the Democratic Party. There are people who are very angry about Bernie Sanders and the way the establishment rigged the primaries against him. And then they give it to Hillary and she loses to Trump, who we were told had no chance to win. So they have to misdirect because if people say, well, wait a minute, I thought Trump couldn't win. I thought it was going to be Hillary. I didn't know there were 60 million people who would vote for Donald Trump. And if people start asking those questions, it could be very dangerous. So there has to be some thing or some things that distract.

Ross [00:04:54] It was interesting to see how the establishment came out and said there was absolutely no way Donald Trump would ever be president.

Video clip (Elizabeth Warren) [00:04:59] He is a thin skinned, racist bully. And he will never be president of the United States.

Video clip (Jerry Springer) [00:05:06] I don't think there's any way that Donald Trump gets elected president of the United States.

Video clip (unknown) [00:05:10] He will never be president.

Video clip (Barack Obama) [00:05:13] I continue to believe Mr. Trump will not be president. Donald Trump will not be president.

Video clip (Bernie Sanders) [00:05:17] Donald Trump will not become president.

Video clip (George Clooney) [00:05:18] There's not going to be a president. Donald Trump.

Video clip (Stephen Colbert) [00:05:20] You're not going to be president.

Video clip (Nancy Pelosi) [00:05:21] He's not going to be president. He is not... Donald Trump is not going to be president of the United States. Take it to the bank.

Ross [00:05:28] Even in the face of all out, how did Donald Trump end up as president, the United States of America?

Margaret Kimberley [00:05:35] Well, I believe his very overt racism was appealing to many people. He got two million more votes than Mitt Romney did - the last Republican

candidate. Looking back on it when he said, 'I'm going to build a wall and make Mexico pay for it', I believe that's when he won. He also or the people advising him were clever enough to have him speak to issues of concern. For example, he said he would bring back the industrial jobs that had decimated the Midwest, many portions of the country. 'I'm going to bring back coal'. Things like that that he either didn't care about or couldn't do that peeled off votes. Obama being gone lost votes. There were people who loved him, who loved this man, especially many black people. And there were some people that I don't want to say black people don't vote because that's not true. But there was a segment of people who were really disengaged from the system, but they loved him and they came out for him. Now, once his name was no longer in the ballot. You've got Hillary Clinton, who had her own ethical issues. I believe she's...

Ross [00:06:34] That's probably the greatest piece of understatement we've had on this programme.

Margaret Kimberley [00:06:38] I think she spent most of that year worried about her legal problems. And I think that's why she was caught flat. And she's also a terrible politician. She chose not to campaign in certain places or even to do a get out the vote, an outreach effort, which Obama does. That was another thing Obama's team did very well.

Ross [00:06:55] Apparently, she doesn't like Wisconsin.

Margaret Kimberley [00:06:56] She doesn't like, or didn't want anybody else to like Wisconsin, you know. So the very basic things of running a campaign she did not do.

Ross [00:07:05] But it was her turn.

Margaret Kimberley [00:07:06] It was her turn. And she also played a role in promoting Trump. Because the corporate media is very funny. They gave Trump a lot of attention. He got billions of dollars in free advertising, but she thought that was a good thing because she thought if people saw him, he'd be less popular. And she completely missed that. She doesn't have Obama's skills. Obama could get away with lying. She couldn't. She could not talk about things the way he did. So he could make people believe he was going to do something when he wasn't. She couldn't do that. And then, of course, being a bad politician, is you're supposed to leave office and then get the pay out and then get the five hundred thousand dollar speeches from Goldman Sachs and other banks.

Ross [00:07:46] She did it the other way around.

Margaret Kimberley [00:07:49] She did it the other way round. So she acted like she was already president. I'm going to do this, you, you know? And then, of course, Bernie Sanders called her on it, as he should have done. And so that means she couldn't stand. She'd be two faced. If you're already gotten the pay out, you're already getting your palm greased, as we say, and then you turn around and want to talk about the workers. And also, the Democrats had not done anything. They hadn't done anything about raising the minimum wage. It's hard for her to say, 'and we're going to raise the minimum wage when they hadn't. So Obama's record, which was sketchy, was something she could not run on because she didn't have his skills.

Ross [00:08:23] Let me float an idea to you. That the American presidency is too important for just the Americans to vote for because we've worked from a far foreign policy, how you sort of conducted yourself around the world as a nation. And a lot of people are scratching their heads saying, 'I think we need to have a say in who should be running this place'. So I propose to you that actually, the world should vote for the American president.

Margaret Kimberley [00:08:46] Well, I mean, it's a good point, but I also...

Ross [00:08:48] Who'd get in if they did. If the world was going to vote, who would be the next American president?

Margaret Kimberley [00:08:53] It's hard to say. I think it probably would be somebody like Bernie Sanders. But I would say to the rest of the world, you've got to stand up to the US. Now, the US is this hegemon, you know, the dollar, people always talk about the de-dollarization. Hasn't happened yet. The United States is the military and financial power. And countries just give in. So these countries, especially where they're always sold their democracies - the UK, Canada, NATO - they do what ever the United States says. Do they really care who runs Venezuela? Nope. But the United States drops the hammer and says, we're going to try to get rid of Maduro and they all go along. I would say to the people around the world, it's time for you to rise up against your governments, against the systems in your nations that have you going along with horrible acts, with wars, with sanctions or war by other means. They kill people. So anything the US, as the E.U. says, it's not a coup in Bolivia or whatever, they basically sided with the US. It's very sad. It's pathetic. So, yes, other people should have a say, but other people, I think, need to speak up where they are.

Ross [00:09:56] What you've done brilliantly as a nation is sown your neo liberal economics all over the world. I saw a sign recently in Chile, a woman holding a sign saying near liberalism was born here and it die here. But the Chicago boys, Milton Friedman and Wall Street have been very, very good maintaining empire through really dreadful neoliberal economics.

Margaret Kimberley [00:10:18] Oh, yes, they have. And through the threat of force, because what happened with Chile? Chileans elected a socialist president and the United States said, well, we can't let that happen. So on September 11th, it was September 11th, 1973, that President Allende was killed - he and along with thousands of other people. So they have the might of the U.S. behind them. So if you know that the United States is just going to try to get rid of anybody who won't toe the line, then, yeah, you can come in - you know, the Chicago school or whomever. It's violence. It's the threat of force. It's aggression. And I think the U.S. should be seen that way as the aggressor around the world.

Ross [00:10:59] Allende's successor, Pinochet. Very good friends of Margaret Thatcher. And when Thatcher was in a lot of trouble in the U.K., he said to her openly, well, don't you own some of the television stations? Well, just get the message and keep pumping it out. And she listened to that and also the radio stations. So the media have a huge part in this. Everyone talks about the military industrial complex, the economics, and all the rest of it, but ultimately the media have been so terribly co-opted and I switch the TV on here a few times. And some of the stuff that blairs out of that thing is quite something.

Margaret Kimberley [00:11:32] Well, that's why I keep it off most of the time. And I even have to be careful with social media. And that's another way that they distract people with garbage, with nonsense. Even entertainment isn't very good anymore. But the corporate media, it well, it's corporate. And so the forces of neo liberalism that control the financial markets or anything else, control them too. We have here in the U.S., we've had this media consolidation. Bill Clinton gave us that. That's one thing Democrats do, they get away with things that Republicans can't. So Bill Clinton shepherds through this bill. And now there's six corporations that control all the TV stations all the way. They used to be hundreds. And what that means is that we get propaganda and that far from having this free press that people go on and on about, it's actually quite the opposite. And it's it's getting worse.

Ross [00:12:21] The American people can't be blamed for that because basically they've been hijacked. And if the education system has been denigrated and the media is consolidated and money is in short supply, you're working three jobs to try and keep bread on the table. The people can't be blamed. People say, oh, conspiracy theory. But there's been a concerted, structurally determined effort to achieve those goals.

Margaret Kimberley [00:12:44] Sure. And the term conspiracy theory was coined by the CIA in order to dismiss the opposition, just call it conspiracy theorists.

Ross [00:12:51] Why, because it has a chilling effect?

Margaret Kimberley [00:12:53] Sure it does.

Ross [00:12:53] You don't want to be embarrassed by...

Margaret Kimberley [00:12:55] No, because then you dismiss whoever is whoever is speaking, they're ridiculed or then they're not to be paid attention to. And we now have a situation where I often say, unless you know where to get information. If you read The New York Times, The Washington Post, if you watch CNN, if you watch MSNBC, especially with foreign policy, you have no idea what's going on in the world. So it's left to individuals to try to ferret out information any way that we can. And most people don't even know that. So you have to be interested enough. You have to be curious enough. You have to be well-informed enough. And what happens when the same information is repeated over and over and over again, it's treated as if it's true.

Ross [00:13:48] In that first half we talked about America, deep divisions, I don't quite know who's going to come along, because when you look at the primaries now so the politicians can come along and try and heal what is a very, very divided country. Who's going to do that?

Margaret Kimberley [00:13:59] Well, we need someone to give us what we need, and we need that person to be left alone. So instead, we have the media and the bipartisan Democrats and Republicans limiting what we can talk about, think about, tell us what's possible and not possible. So we're told that you can't have you know, Obama's telling us the after the debates, they have all these talking heads on all these pundits and they all say the same thing. We can't

have Medicare for all, which will be Sanders plan to give us all health care. But you can't have that.

Ross [00:14:30] But in the land of the free where everything's possible, it seems to me there's a lot of 'no'.

Margaret Kimberley [00:14:35] People are lied to, just to be blunt about it. The first thing Americans say is how are you going to pay for that?

Ross [00:14:42] Well, listen, that's the first thing that every right wing media station says in the UK too. You hear every single Every single post. How are you going to pay for it? The point is they never asked when you go to war, 'how are you gonna pay for that?'

Margaret Kimberley [00:14:52] No, that never comes up, how are you going to pay for a war? How are you going to pay for these subsidies that billionaires get, the subsidies that corporations get? The cities and states and the federal government just give away land, give away money. Nobody asks how you're going to pay for that. Nobody says we can't afford that. So when anything to help us, the people, suddenly it's how you're gonna pay for that. Money plays a huge role in politics here. The people who put the politicians in office are rich people. In New York. It tends to be real estate developers, that's where the big money is. They decide who is and isn't going to be in office. And without a robust mass movement, politicians will give in to them time and time again.

Ross [00:15:32] So this is an oligarchy?

Margaret Kimberley [00:15:34] Oh, absolutely. Of course it is. There was actually a study done which proved that even when the person we want gets into office, we don't get what we want. So we say it's a democracy only to let us vote every few years, but then they get it and don't do what we want them to do.

Ross [00:15:51] Who's running things?

Margaret Kimberley [00:15:52] Rich people. Rich people and corporations. The military industrial complex, they make foreign policy decisions. There's huge profit motive. If you go to Washington, D.C. and you're in Washington's subway system, you see all these ads for Raytheon, for defence contractors, for the CIA. I mean, if you didn't know who ran the country, just go to the capital of the country and you'll see it's very open that that's who tells us what is and isn't going to happen.

Ross [00:16:22] So you can work out who runs America by looking at the billboards around Washington?

Margaret Kimberley [00:16:25] You sure can, yeah.

Ross [00:16:27] But worryingly, because of your military prowess, if I can put it like that, or might is probably a better way of saying things. You know, the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act 2019. That is a moment, is it not, because, you know, when you have a battle for supremacy, I don't think that the US really enjoys coming second. And basically

what you have is China on the march developing very, very quickly. Yes, they've got their own internal problems and enormous amounts of private debt and overcapacity and all those things. But in a sense, that unanimous passing of that act draws battle lines between both of those nations. And of course, what happens is you start with currency wars and then you have trade wars and then eventually, God forbid, hot wars.

Margaret Kimberley [00:17:14] Yes.

Ross [00:17:15] What's your view on that?

Margaret Kimberley [00:17:15] Well, it's very frightening. China is poised to become, I don't know if it already is, the number one economy in the world. But the United States made it that way. Finance capital triumphed over manufacturing capitals. That would not need to make anything. It will just make it in China. Well, hello. That makes China eventually number one. So all we have, we have the power of the dollar for now and we have military superiority. The United States has eight hundred military bases around the world, many of which surround China, have huge navy, a huge army. And eventually my fear is we've had this standoff for decades. But these competitions, and we've seen in Hong Kong and other places around the world, are, to me, a very scary harbinger of what is to come. It's interesting. It's nearly 30 years now since the Soviet Union collapsed. When there was a Soviet Union, there was an understanding that we didn't run the whole world. The United States didn't run the whole world. There was another power that we had to contend with. When that ended this American drive, to expand, to conquer, to be the aggressor, it seemed to have no limit. And now that's not true anymore. We have China, which is an economic power, Russia, which can keep the US from doing everything that it wants to do. But this but this exceptionalism, you know, people Obama used to say is it made me crazy to say this all the time, America is exceptional. America's indispensable, which meant the rest of the world was dispensable. It's propaganda that starts from the time we're little. It's what we're taught in school. We are always good. Americans love to think of themselves as good, even if they're killing people somewhere. Even if you're invading a country, it's for somebody is good. It's to help them out. You know, we're better than them, that's why you have to demonise people. And Saddam Hussein or Assad or somebody is evil and worse we are. So even as our armies kill people or we get a proxy to kill people, it's because we are being good.

Ross [00:19:17] But that's the Hollywood story model, isn't it? Because, you know, what happens is you find a bad apple, you then take the bad apple out the system, and then the system goes on and works perfectly and everyone goes, well....

Margaret Kimberley [00:19:27] It's not just Hollywood. That is a fundamental belief about the country, the educational system. If you look at textbooks in this country, I mean, it's horrible what we're told about our history, the history of this country, our history, vis-a-vis, the rest of the world, the concept of things like Manifest Destiny, that the United States was manifest by God to control this continent. The Monroe Doctrine. That's a 200 year old doctrine which said that in this hemisphere, the Western Hemisphere belongs to United States and we can do what we want. And people actually with a straight face will say Venezuela is in our backyard. You know, it is kind of laughable, but it's also very dangerous. So you have a country full of uninformed people who think they're good. And even in their aggression, in

their country's aggression. I just mentioned the collapse of the Soviet Union. That was a moment of triumphalism. See, we were right. We were the best. We were the good ones.

Ross [00:20:25] And capitalism reigns supreme?

Margaret Kimberley [00:20:27] Capitalism is good. Socialism doesn't work. Socialism doesn't work. Nobody ever says homelessness, the public utility, the electric utility in California is turning off the power. They are failing. They started fires. But no one ever reports that story and then says capitalism doesn't work or even capitalism has got some problems. It's like nothing. No indication that you can think in a different way. And we're fed this steady diet that excludes any other thought. And the end result of that is people are ignorant and don't even know that they're ignorant. And then we have this problem of the establishment media like The New York Times or NPR. And people think if they consume that they know what's going on because those are good. And the smart people and the well educated people all read The New York Times or listen to NPR. But that's crap, too. So they don't allow any other thought, any other idea to come in. You keep feeding people stuff. And the end result is, is what we have, that there are millions of people who will speak against something that could help them.

Ross [00:21:33] How do you begin to arrest this? Because it seems to me we've been coming to the US now for many years. And every time you come, I don't want to speak ill of your country, but poverty rates here in New York seem to me have skyrocketed. The economy across the Midwest has been hollowed out. Financial capital has devoured the place. How do you begin to start turning this round? Not from on high. Bernie Sanders and whoever his running mate might be if he gets the nomination. But from grassroots, how do you start to say to people, actually, we've got to think differently now, there is another way?

Margaret Kimberley [00:22:10] I think you have to start with the grassroots issues, with issues that impact people's lives the most. So I believe that it could be anything. Gentrification, for example, I like the neighbourhood right now.

Ross [00:22:21] But things that people can touch that....

Margaret Kimberley [00:22:23] Absolutely. So that if you had a mass movement against people being displaced by housing, for example. I read a couple of days ago that some women in Oakland, California, who are homeless, they took over empty houses. They just moved in. And I think it's that kind of direct mass action. So, you know, I have to tell people about, you know, socialist theory or anything like those houses are empty, we're going in. So we have to study how movements grow, study how they are stopped, how they are crushed. But I believe we have to start where people are. Take on one issue at a time that really impacts people's lives and start there and they end their success will build on. And when people say, oh, I don't have to be homeless, I can take over a house, too. Let's do that in New York. Who knows what can happen after that?

Ross [00:23:11] All the embers of Occupy still glowing somewhere?

Margaret Kimberley [00:23:14] I think so. I think they are. And it's funny how that grew. Like one week you never heard about Occupy. The next week you heard about nothing but

Occupy. And this phrase, the 99 percent was suddenly on everybody's lips and still is. And we talked about the 1 percent. That can happen again. But there has to be honesty. And the big problem in this country, I think, for people on the left. Progressives have one thing when he describes himself as the allegiance to the Democratic Party. That's the killer. And I think progressives and I always say you have to lead the Democratic party. I think that's the other thing that has to happen.

Ross [00:23:49] Because I heard that you left.

Margaret Kimberley [00:23:52] yes, I did.

Ross [00:23:54] I've done some research. I find out that you've cut your card.

Margaret Kimberley [00:23:58] I did. I'm a member of the Green Party. Now we have to build a real left party in this country.

Ross [00:24:02] And is that not the point that legacy systems are so sort of twisted and broken? You know, you got the aftermath of Hillary and all the stuff that went with that actually come reform that culture, you've got to go off and start building something new?

Margaret Kimberley [00:24:15] You do have to, but that takes some courage. And unfortunately, you can learn the wrong lesson from something. So the lesson from Hillary Clinton's defeat is it's your fault because you didn't vote for your fault because you like Bernie Sanders. It's your fault because you voted green. It's your fault because you were turned off, which is very unfortunate because it's the very opposite of what we need to do. Instead of people saying, well, how did this happen? How did she lose? Weren't we told she couldn't lose that she was a shoe-in. But that's what happens in a culture where the truth has been squelched so much.

Ross [00:24:49] It's the economy stupid. That's one thing she wouldn't speak about isn't it? And ironically her husband coined that phrase.

Margaret Kimberley [00:24:55] He sure did. But he didn't mean it. And then Obama didn't mean it. And she didn't know how. She really is a terrible politician. She really was. I joke. She's been married to Bill Clinton all these years and didn't learn anything. She didn't know how to pretend.

Ross [00:25:09] Lots of people are giving her lots of pressure to run again.

Margaret Kimberley [00:25:12] Oh, my God. I think it's just the voices in her head. She would run tomorrow if she if she thought she could. But no, nobody's clamouring for Hillary Clinton to run again. People are desperate for Trump to be defeated. But we can't even do that when there's still more dishonesty in there, and there's still more lies. And the way to beat him is to not ask for what you want, which is the thing that would beat him because that would galvanise people, that would bring people out. And we saw with Obama, even though it was phony, people will come out if they think something new is going to happen. So if we actually had someone talking about what we needed to change, then Trump would lose. But they don't want that.

Ross [00:25:55] Who's the next president of the United States?

Margaret Kimberley [00:25:57] I think it's going to be Trump, sadly.

Ross [00:26:00] No space for Bernie?

Margaret Kimberley [00:26:01] They're going to find a way to steal the nomination from him. We have this crazy process in the Democratic Party. Republicans don't do this, by the way. I think it's so hilarious. Democrats think they're the more enlightened people, but we have superdelegates who are elected officials, politicians across the country. And basically their vote gets to outweigh that of the public. That's one of the reasons they have all these people running. They keep trying to find somebody will catch fire and keep him from getting the nomination. So if he should get to the convention with enough delegates, he probably will be difficult for him. They'll just have a second ballot and they'll pick somebody else.

Ross [00:26:37] Lastly, if you carry on down this path, can the United States of America remain intact? Can it remain in its current form? Will it be reconfigured?

Margaret Kimberley [00:26:45] It should be reconfigured. I've often had this fantasy that, you know, that New York would, you know, secede from the union. It was like the bad people who did that back in 1861. But I think there is going to come a point where things break up. Now, what exactly that will look like? I don't know. I'm not sure what it will take for people to reach a level of desperation where there's the mass movement that we need. But I think we're getting there. Or there could be warfare. That's my terrible fear that the superpower competition will turn into a hot war. And I think that something that extreme could galvanise people over.

Ross [00:27:27] Margaret Kimberley, thank you very much for your time.

Margaret Kimberley [00:27:29] Thank you.