

Introducing Rafe Hubris MA (Oxon) Tory Party Special Adviser

Ross Welcome to Renegade Inc. The only person who won 2020 was the lead adviser to the Conservative Party, Rafe Hubris (BA Oxon). Rafe, by his own admission, is the most promising 24 year old in the country and definitely the most classic.

Ross Rafe Hubris, great to have you on Renegade Inc.

Rafe Hubris Ross, how are we? Hope you're feeling very well - testing negative, but feeling positive.

Ross You've colossally mismanaged this pandemic. Why?

Rafe Hubris Well, define mismanage. I mean, I think semantically that's a really interesting question. I mean, the way that I would look at that, you know, challenge your language and say, you know, rather than mismanage, take away the mis. I've managed it very, very, very well.

Ross OK, so 1.9 million cases to date, 65,000 deaths and counting, and you're actually saying that this is actually a success story?

Rafe Hubris Well, the thing I would say about the death numbers is that... I hate to tell you this, Ross, but everyone dies so, you know, people that, yes, sure they die, but they were going to die anyway at some point. So really, we've just sort of made the inevitable happen quicker, which, you know, for the sake of their families will allow them sort of get over it faster and generally, it seems like a better tactic. So, yeah, yeah, I think we've done well.

Ross The Tory Party sometimes is, well in fact, most of the time, levelled as being the Nasty Party - no compassion.

Rafe Hubris The Nazi Party or...?

Ross The Nasty. Well, in fact, it was your Freudian slip, I think. But do you see that lack of compassion shining through when you think about how you've mismanaged this thing?

Rafe Hubris I mean, no, absolutely not, mate. I mean, I think you know, I think the thing you realise when you sort of look at a lot of the good guys or the bad guys of the Conservative Party - the politicians - is that, you know, they're incredibly compassionate. I mean, Govey tried to get a test just for his daughter when it was much more difficult to get tested. I mean, that's compassionate. I mean, I'm really nice to a lot of my mates. I managed to palm them with a lot of cashish. You know, there was that guy who got 150 million quid for that papier mâché PPE. And I mean, that's an incredibly compassionate, nice thing to do. So I think that's a little bit misdirected. I mean, I'm a great chap.

Ross Jacob Rees-Mogg, though hardly the friendly face of the Conservative Party is he?

Rafe Hubris Ah, yeah, Mogg the Dog. The thing about Mogg the Dog.... Yeah, sure, you know, he says some stuff every now and again and we're like, oh, that's a little bit.... But he's you know, he's very polite.

Ross Priti Patel?

Rafe Hubris Priti Patel.yeah, yeah. Priti Patel is absolutely classic. I mean, a lot of people have said, you know, she's a bully. Now, is it bullying to, you know, throw a stapler at the head of Matt on his hands? No, I mean that is classic. I mean, everyone would admit that is an absolutely hilarious thing to do. I think it makes her a bully. I mean, I think that's just her sense of humour, mate. You know, If I were to slap you across.... Sorry, that's the dealer. If I were to slap you across the face right now, that would be classic. It's just the way that I'm saying, listen, I like you, so I'm going to flush your head down the toilet for an hour because it's funny.

Ross So what does a typical Rafe Hubris day look like? You're right there in the bowels of government, you know, levers of power writing speeches. What does it look like?

Rafe Hubris Yeah. Yeah. I mean, so so a lot of it is, a lot of it is that. I mean, I suppose, you know, I'm in fairly regular contact with Balaji, not in person normally sort of on the WhatsApp because he doesn't really work in the week. But he does send me some that are pretty hilarious photos. In fact, I've got one. I can't show you on camera but look at that. It's insane. So yeah, he does a lot of that stuff in a lot of his speeches. Yeah, but it's pretty chill. That's the best thing. You know, I've worked so little for the amount I've been paid and I've still managed to do such a brilliant job that, you know, I think that really sort of reveals something that's endemically excellent about the political system.

Ross You're at pains to point out that you were educated at Oxford and you wear that badge quite heavily.

Rafe Hubris And I wear it very well.

Ross Why do you want to tell us this so much? And how did you get there? How did you get into Oxford?

Rafe Hubris Well, the thing is Ross, if you went to Oxford and I did, the thing you realise, and the thing they tell you when you leave is that you must every third sentence mention it to people otherwise they won't realise and they won't know that this guy is an Oxford grad. and what he has to say is incredibly important. So, yeah, I mean, that's that's that's I'm just, you know, sort of a bit like Rudyard Kipling's White Man's Burden. It's the Oxford Man's Burden. You know, you've got to spread the word and civilise the people who have inferior degrees from polytechnics like Durham and Exeter. But, you know, the thing I would say is, you know, why do I need to tell people that I went to Oxford? Well, it's because, you know, the thing I learnt there was you didn't have to be intelligent or have experience in something, you know. If you've gone to those institutions, you are entitled. Well, you are entitled, but you're entitled to walk in somewhere and just get the job done. And, you know, you might not be good at it. You might not be able to do it very well. But because you went to that institution, that is enough.

Ross If you think about the pandemic, what would you have done differently? Because you're obviously very capable. You did PPE at Oxford but an inability to get PPE to front line workers. Is there any correlation there?

Rafe Hubris Well, you know, I think well, you know, Theresa May said was, you know, there's no magic money tree but there is magic money in PPE, incidentally. And, you know, it was a really good way to help out a couple of mates, you know, because I think ultimately that's what politics should be just helping out your friends. And, yeah, we managed to do that very well. I mean, yeah, are there things we would have changed over the course of the pandemic? Not really. I think it's gone pretty well. I think we did a pretty good job, I guess, you know....

Ross Would you have changed Matt Hancock?

Rafe Hubris The thing with Matt is, yeah, look, I mean, you know, the guy is I mean, he's he's a bit of a disaster. I mean, his normal speaking voice, as both you and I know, he looks and sounds like he's being on a Japanese game show, which is unfortunate. But you know, what I would say about Matt is that it takes b***s to go out there every day, make a speech up on the hoof and and sell it every time. And he's really, really good at not doing any of the work, but just going in there like a lamb to the slaughter. So for that, I commend him.

Ross Did you advise him to fake cry on breakfast television?

Rafe Hubris Absolutely, mate. As I've said, the the whole of his normal speaking voice thing, that is an absolute train wreck. And we tried having him laugh in front of Kay Burley and he just sort of looked like, you know an arrogant f****er. So, yeah, I mean, the crying thing. Well, basically what we thought is, you know, if he's crying, he can't be scrutinised. And that makes him look very, very, very good. And I think, you know, he acted it very well. He's clearly a very, very good actor. And he definitely didn't look like a sort of snot nosed year 6 explaining to his parents tearfully that he bombed all of his SATs.

Ross Former British Prime Minister David Cameron said that your old boss, Dominic Cummings, was a career psychopath. What was it like working under Dominic Cummings?

Rafe Hubris Yeah, I mean, I didn't really have that much contact with Dom because Dom....

Ross Doesn't seem to me that you have contact with anybody. You don't speak to the Prime Minister. You don't speak to the Special Advisor.

Rafe Hubris Well, I mean, the thing is, they sort of know how good the job I'm doing. They just sort of say, Rafe get on with it. And, you know, that's the thing, it's sort of that Oxbridge understanding of you know what you're doing. So you can just smash it. And I do. But I mean, I don't see Dom that often. I mean, Dom tends to sort of communicate through a team of, well, homeless children and communication vowels and they basically will sort of scrawl Norse symbols above your laptops and at your workstation in CCHQ and just sort of give an assessment of your performance because he's watching all the time by those people.

Ross So he's not in the office? But he's now not in the office. He's been fired.

Rafe Hubris I mean, the question is, what is Dominic Cummings? Is Dominic Cummings actually a man or is he just a sort of a concept that helps us reassess what conventional wisdom is? I mean, I went into the toilet and Number 10 once for a bit of a nosey and, you know, someone on behalf of Dominic Cummings had scrawled conventional wisdom is a c**t. And, you know, but maybe he's sort of like Banksy - you know, you don't know who he is, but he's there to make you sort of reconsider stuff. It's pretty clever if you think about it.

Ross So Dominic Cummings gets kicked out because you're second boss, Carrie Symonds...

Rafe Hubris The real Prime Minister, Carrie Symonds, yeah.

Ross They have a spat. He leaves. He gets 45,000 quid when he leaves. The average nurse in the UK earns £33,000 a year. Can't you see how this looks in the bubble? Why does he get forty five grand?

Rafe Hubris Well it's a fair point. I mean what we've got to consider is we spent a lot of our valuable time clapping, you know, women like that - an NHS worker - who gets 33k. And you know, clapping costs money. So we can't just sort of hand out money to people who we've clapped. Dom didn't get any applause when he left, so that is worth 45k, you know, just for him. So you've got to consider these things. I mean obviously, I mean I didn't, and nobody in the Conservative Party, apart from Boris in front of the cameras, actually did clap for carers, we bellowed for BUPA the following day on a Friday afternoon. But yeah I mean I just think, you know, at the end of the day, if you don't clap for someone, then you've got to pay them all.

Ross So, applause. You're monetising applause?

Rafe Hubris Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, absolutely, absolutely. I mean, think about the mental health benefits the NHS worker would have felt because a load of Tory MPs, you know, I mean, it just, don't you feel better? Sorry my hands hurt from handing out money to my friends.

Ross Post the pandemic, now you've Brexit. Have you given that any thought? Have you had a look at Brexit?

Rafe Hubris To be honest, mate, no. I mean it wasn't on my desk sort of six months ago because I was an intern six months ago and managed to work my way to the top via, you know, hard work and my....

Ross Dad?

Rafe Hubris I mean, you know, you can call it nepotism. Basically my dad knows a lot of guys at the top. If that's nepotism, then I guess I'm a nepotist. But yeah, I mean, I'm not particularly concerned about it. I don't know if there's some sort of deadline. But, you know, even if we miss the deadline, it won't affect me or any of my mates, probably, so I'm not really worried.

Ross So what about man and woman on the street? The working man. The working woman.

Rafe Hubris Yeah. Sorry. Yeah, the man and the woman on the street. Yeah, absolutely. I guess the real question is, do they actually matter or certainly do they actually matter as much as the people in the CBD? Sorry, is that... Yeah, she's a bit old for a BJ. Yeah, I think do they matter as much as the chaps? I think the answer to that is probably no. So, yeah, sure. I mean, we'll look after them if we've got time. But I think the most important thing is to focus on the people that really matter.

Ross One thing that a lot of people are very worried about is a British fishing, the fishing industry. How much thought have you given that? A specific question is how are you going to protect British fishing waters from the French?

Rafe Hubris Well, I mean, the advantage that we have is that I own a lot of those waters. My family actually owns Torsa Island just off Scotland and a lot of those places. And, yeah, we're pretty draconian at stopping people from coming in and stealing our salmon. I mean, you know, salmon is a very important industry. I love smoked salmon. I mean, that's really important. And, you know, where would Pret be without that? So, yeah, it's obviously top of our priority list because if Pret goes under I mean, we might as well just kill ourselves.

Ross So 2021, optimistic?

Rafe Hubris Yeah, I mean, absolutely. I mean, obviously we've got this vaccine now produced by Oxford University, which is where I studied for three years. I was a student there. I have a degree from Oxford. So that's obviously very, very encouraging. And, you know, I'm sure based on how everything's gone prior to this point, that we won't find some sort of way to muck that up either. So, yeah, it's going to be distributed very quickly. We're still trying to get it out to BUPA first and prioritise places based on income as to where, you know, people that get it. Because, I mean, if you think about it, there's a real logic to that, actually, because, you know, people who earn more money are worth more. It's just a fact. I mean, you know, that's what everyone in my party believes and anyone with any sense believe.

Ross So walk me through that. You're going to target the high net worth individuals first - give them the vaccine? Where do the hungry school kids come when it comes to the vaccine?

Rafe Hubris Well, I guess it depends if they live, you know, I mean, maybe they don't. And then that solves that problem because you don't have to worry about vaccinating someone that's dead. So, ideally that would be what happens.

Ross Wow! Compassion. And so the vaccine goes to high net worth individuals first. And the rationale is?

Rafe Hubris The rationale is they're worth more because they earn more money. They're certainly much more classic. And generally people with money, anyone who's ever been around, people with lots and lots of money will know, they are great company. So you want to keep those guys. You want to keep those guys alive.

Ross Josh Berry, welcome.

Josh Berry Thank you very much.

Ross Rafe Hubris is horrific, absolutely horrific.

Josh Berry He's only 20 percent away from me.

Ross Is that right, you only write what you know? You must have bumped into these people all the time at Oxford?

Josh Berry Yeah, yeah, yeah. I've come across a lot of people like that, I think.

Ross Implacable self-confidence?

Josh Berry Yeah, complete. Well, hence the surname, Hubris, is just insane.

Ross And absolutely zero ability?

Josh Berry Well, I think it's because the reason for that - and it's a mockery of Oxbridge confidence, obviously - and the joke is it's because we have this society that seems to be predicated on assert your confidence over ability and that seems to sell. That seems to get you into high positions. And it's supposed to be a parody of that.

Ross Yeah, but Boris Johnson does exactly that. I mean, this is why he's Prime Minister. In some way I blame the guys at Have I Got News For You? because they sort of softened him up and made him cuddly and funny and all that stuff. And now, look, we've got a totally incompetent in Number 10.

Josh Berry Yeah, it's difficult that one based on sort of who you blame, whether it is the producers of Have I Got News For You? or whether we sort of... People did it for Savile, right? Afterwards, lots of people who interviewed Savile, oh, no, I humanised him and Louis Theroux did that particularly. But then, you know, these people are clever. He was playing a very clever comic persona. And you sort of think, well, I can maybe see why they fell for that.

Ross The brilliance about the Rafe Hubris character is the way you've positioned him. He is the puppet master, basically. Obviously, that's a conscious choice to put him in the heart of government and then start dancing these people around?

Josh Berry Yeah, well, it actually came from in the run up to the election in 2019. I don't know if you saw this - Stormzy does something very vocally against Boris Johnson and he's obviously a big critic of Boris Johnson. And Michael Gove was asked about it and he tweeted Stormzy's lyrics back at him. And I just thought it seemed so unbelievably tone deaf that I thought, oh, it would be perfect. Who would tell this person that that's a good idea? And I thought, oh, yeah, I'll phone him up and go, 'Hey, Govey, it's Rafe. Listen mate, tweet out

some grime lyrics. People love it'. The joke is, I mean, obviously, they had an enormous majority. So clearly it wasn't that terrible a move. But it just seemed so tone deaf to me.

Ross Satirically, there's never been a more important time in the UK, but unfortunately, a lot of the satire that we see punches down and punches hard when it should be punching up and punching brutally. What's your view on where we are sort of satirically as a nation?

Josh Berry I think we're in an interesting position where I think television companies seem to be quite afraid of going for stuff that is perceived to be edgy, which is kind of what people say when satire really bites, I think, you know, because arguably the best satire makes you uncomfortable. It's like what Frankie Boyle does. It's like, you know, he makes people feel uncomfortable because he's revealing truth that they feel, oh, God, that is injustice. That is wrong. You know, and yeah, I don't really think the satire that we're seeing a lot at the moment does do that.

Ross Why is that?

Josh Berry You know, economic times are quite fragile at the moment because of Covid and you want to earn some money.

Ross And so there's a chilling effect. People are scared of what to say?

Josh Berry Yes. It takes bravery to risk, you know, to risk saying something, because it's sometimes inherently divisive to say something new and different and interesting, right? So you end up with the sort of fairly soft gummy satire that is just about... I mean, it's that very famous Chris Morris interview where he says it's about placating the court. You know, you say something, I think I'm quoting him, I'm paraphrasing, but he says, you know, you give a very nice dissection of how things are in the orthodox elite and you get patted on the back by the orthodox elite saying, jolly good, can you do us another?

Ross All I heard was Spitting Image.

Josh Berry I'm not going to comment on that, but I think it's difficult with a lot of those shows because they're just afraid of criticism. And I think satire is supposed to be... I mean, if you look at someone like Sacha Baron Cohen who's such a satirical genius, it has to be able to be misinterpreted, you know what I mean? I mean people might look at someone like Bruno and be like, oh, that's homophobic for a straight man to do an impression of a gay man. But it's not about that. It's about eliciting homophobic bigotry and saying, hey, look, look at how people think.

Ross Coming back to Rafe Hubris character, that implacable self-confidence and the casual cruelty. You know, he doesn't care about free school meals, for instance. Where's his vulnerability? Because, you know, often when you see that character and you meet these people, you also see somebody who's desperately insecure. And everyone wants to be loved by everybody.

Josh Berry Yeah, I think it is. I mean, I think it is precisely that. I was saying to someone the other day. Like, Rafe wants to be your friend. You know, like brilliant, much more

sophisticated, better characters than mine, Alan Partridge, is uppity and difficult and would be fairly objectionable in our company, whereas Rafe wants to be your mate. You know, he wants to go on a night out with you and all that. Yeah, I think these people, they already have a set idea of who their clan is and you want to stick to that. You know, you don't want to be out of that grouping and so he's just desperate to be accepted, I suppose.

Ross In a country that is absolutely riven by class, and because of raging inequality, that class war is daily, more and more intense.

Josh Berry At the moment, we seem to be in a class war and arguably a culture war. And certainly people like sort of really, you know, stoke up that rhetoric that we're in a woke versus traditional values or however you perceive that. And you know you've got sort of Lawrence Fox on one side and then apparently the hard left on the other. And it's only those two perspectives. I mean, that's what a lot of people would have you believe. But yeah, I think it does. But it's a difficult one because it's kind of isn't really a war. It's just it's the people in power on the people from the north and the working class, right? There's not really any change in that sense. And I think it just seems authentic for someone that looks and sounds like me to communicate that because, you know, it is a real reality.

Ross I love the line in your stand up where you walk out and you say, don't worry, I try to avoid me at a party and I look like exactly the type of person I'd avoid.

Josh Berry Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But I think Simon Evans has a really good line, that the sort of characters you create are sort of what you see yourself becoming and you're scared about that, you know?

Ross So you created this whole character just so you don't become this character? So you could have been a management consultant at McKinsey and become this guy?

Josh Berry Yeah, quite possibly. I think the thing about Rafe is that some of his jokes are funny. I mean, you know, I think he has likeable elements. He's not completely... I mean, a lot of people are, oh, this guy is the worst in the world. And yeah, when he's doing the hard stuff for children, that is awful. But I think you have to see some humanity in these characters and he has a sort of sensitive side.

Ross So what next for Rafe? What does he do? Where does he go? I mean, because another four years of the Tories. So you've got a load of material in front of you?

Josh Berry Yeah.

Ross If they get voted out, I doubt that he'd be advising Sir Keir Starmer. What does Rafe do now? What's his trajectory?

Josh Berry Yeah, well, I mean, I think one of the lines that I've used for this is that he's sort of views himself as on the fabled Tory life trajectory, which is a good school, Oxford, Westminster, MP, PM, public speaking circuit, you know, consultancy, Celebrity Bake Off, or Gogglebox and then death. And so he's on that trajectory.

Ross So what's next?

Josh Berry Well, I guess, Westminster for a while. But I think, maybe columnist. I think he could become a columnist and he's, you know, a parody of right wing rhetoric as much as anything. I think the joy is that he can just kind of Hoover up a lot of the amusing aspects of the right that you see at the moment, like Laurence Fox creating his own political party and Toby Young and the Free Speech Union and all that stuff - you know, that sort of faux victimhood thing that a lot of powerful white men are claiming at the moment, which, you know, is a complicated discussion. But I think there's something amusing about the fringes of it where they're like, oh, you're attacking me because I'm white. So, yeah, I think there's a lot of areas that you can go in terms of just Hoovering up that right wing rhetoric and a lot of forums you can put him in as well.

Ross That type of character claims this victimisation and marginalisation. And, you know, if he gets called a gammon and then all hell lets lose. Why have they adopted that so hard, that victimhood, do you think? Why have the guys who've been incredibly privileged, economic advantages everywhere, the right network, nepotism and all the rest of it, why have they said, actually, no, woe is me?

Josh Berry I think social media has a lot to do with it. I mean, obviously, the reality of Twitter is that anyone can create an account and can go and tell you what they think about you. As I think any comedian knows, you're very aware that people will tell you what they've been thinking. And I think that that means that a lot of these guys in powerful positions are subject to feedback in a way that they haven't been before. And don't get me wrong, that's not a pleasant thing for anyone to receive. So I'm not suggesting that it's easy for them to deal with. I think they've just noticed the power of victimhood, which is an incredibly powerful thing in society, and was popularised by Donald Trump so brilliantly as president. 'Oh, they're attacking me. They're doing terrible things'. You know, that's his whole schtick. If you're a victim, people listen to your testimony more than if you're a perpetrator, right? So it makes it makes sense. There's a lot of sort of vitriol on the far left and an aggression towards these people. So I suppose you're seeing a comparative aggressive counter reaction. But, yeah, we seem to have lost nuance a little bit because of the way that social media has created such polarity. And that's depressing because you feel like the best satire that gets across nuance and subtlety seems to be undervalued. For my money, Who is America by Sacha Baron Cohen - and he doesn't seem like necessarily the most subtle because some of this stuff is some sort of pantomime - but I mean, it's brilliant. He did such an impressive parody of a liberal character, which was which was so nuanced, so on the nose.

Video clip (Sacha Baron Cohen character) I stopped at South Carolina to dine with the couple who suffer from white privilege.

Video clip (Middle class couple) We would traditionally say Grace. Is that all right with you?

Video clip (Sacha Baron Cohen character) In my household, we normally start with a first people chant. May we?

Video clip (Middle class couple) Sure, of course.

Video clip (Sacha Baron Cohen character) Oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh.

Video clip (Middle class couple) Amen. Amen.

Ross So when does the Renaissance start? When does British satire come and start to, you know, bite again? I'm only putting the future of British satire on your shoulders. So good luck with it. So if you could knock up a couple of series, we'd really enjoy that.

Josh Berry Quite possibly the answer to that question probably doesn't rest with a white, posh, male. I think that's probably one of the biggest problems is that it seems to be monopolised by that. But a lot has been said about it. A lot has been said about what it is. And I think you get people who are very assured about what satire is. And that Chris Morris interview, for example, is very certain that it must come from an outsider perspective, which I think is true. But I think people are very sort of dogmatic about what satire is without necessarily that being defined that clearly. But what I would say is, I mean, you know, obviously a really big thing is black satirical voices. A guy on line is brilliant and and does a lot of that very, very, very, very well. But there seems to be too much white man behind a desk saying, 'Oh, and this is what happened in the news, you know, that that sort of thing. And it's just it's just having new voices because I think that will stimulate and create different formats because it just feels a little bit dead to me at the moment. But there's so much good stuff - Partridge, Sacha Baron Cohen, you know, all Chris Morris's stuff was brilliant. So, yeah, these people are out there. It's not as if we don't have good satirists now.

Ross Josh Berry, thank you very much for Rafe and also thanks for your time.

Josh Berry Thanks for having me.

Rafe Hubris Mate, bloody good effort, really, really well done. Seriously, that was great, a really good try. You need to be a bit more Paxman with it though, you know. You need a bit more sort of enthusiasm and go for it. I mean, I've done a lot of interviewing myself over the years with Oxford Polo and I know what I'm doing. But yeah, you'll get there mate. Keep trying. Keep going for it.