

## Renegade Predictions 2022

**Ross:** Welcome to Renegade Inc. On this programme, we talk with some of our Renegade Inc. friends and ask them about what surprised them over the last year and, as importantly, what they foresee happening in 2022. Strap in, it's about to get interesting.

**Ross:** Dr Ashley Frawley, wonderful to have you back on the programme.

**Ashley Frawley:** Thank you so much for having me.

**Ross:** Ashley, tell us what shocked you in 2021? What surprised you? What ambushed you, and you thought, Wow, I didn't see that coming?

**Ashley Frawley:** I don't know. After 2020, does anything shock us anymore? I think the thing that most shocked me was the ease with which we abandoned so much of what we thought was worthwhile in favour of better life, really. I mean, everything that isn't strictly functional is now recast as superfluous, as unnecessary. I mean, OK, at the beginning we were unvaccinated. We were uncertain about what was going on with the COVID-19 pandemic. It made sense to be careful around the holidays. But now in 2021, we're being told to avoid unnecessary socialisation at Christmas. I'm sorry but socialisation is necessary, especially during the holidays. We are human. We are social beings. I mean, what is necessary now? Simply life? I thought that, you know, life isn't just living it has meaning, and we give meaning to life socially. I mean, for some people, caring for other people is their reason for being. I mean, I feel like I was really blindsided by just how little value we were able to give to so many of the little things that make life meaningful in favour of prolonging life sometimes.

**Ross:** And that reductionist approach really took you aback?

**Ashley Frawley:** Yeah, absolutely. Especially, you know, I work in education, I work in higher education. And what goes on in a university is not just the information that I give to students, it's people that they meet, it's the experiences that they have. And all of this now is seen as unnecessary.

**Ross:** What are your predictions for 2022? What do you foresee coming down the track for this new year?

**Ashley Frawley:** It's interesting. We live in interesting times.

**Ross:** Is that a blessing or a curse?

**Ashley Frawley:** I think it can be a curse because so many things that we never thought possible, so many things we never thought we would accept, we do now accept. And so we can in the future if we're not careful, through a very slow education process, come to allow things to be slowly removed from us that, you know, a year or two ago, we never believed we would allow. A year and a half ago, somebody sent me some conspiracy theory and I laughed. I said no one would ever accept that. It was basically a phone version of the whole

electronic chip theory that one day we'll all have electronic chips in our palm. And I said, no one will ever accept that. And now it's like, yes, of course you have to have all of your documents on you to go to a restaurant. Of course. And I think, you know, I still think that's crazy. By the way, I don't think we'll be electronically chipped. But the sorts of things that I laughed at and I thought were insane two years ago, now we just accept as part of life and as a responsible citizen, we think, yeah, you should, you should give in.

**Ross:** If you were starting your career again, just say you were in your mid 20s and you were starting out, looking at the macro context, what's going on in the world, what advice, if you could go back in time, would you give yourself now, or anybody else starting out, given what they are about to confront and also given that the rule of law isn't really being respected in many places around the world?

**Ashley Frawley:** Well, I think that actually, if you look at the statistics, fear is pretty well correlated with risk. So if you look at each age group, just looking at COVID-19, people are pretty fearful in relation to how much risk they actually have. If you look at vaccine hesitancy, people tend to be more hesitant the less benefit the vaccine has to them. So people in older age groups tend to see it as quite a good thing, and people in younger age groups tend to be slightly more hesitant. I mean, that actually shows that I think people are pretty reasonable when it comes to assessing their risk. I think that people do have possession of rationality, that they are capable of judging. And I would say to myself, you know, you're not a bad person for questioning things, but actually as a good, responsible citizen, we can use our reason and we can use our judgement to act for our own best interests, but also in the interests of others. I think, increasingly, we are being told, you know, that people are stupid, people can't be trusted. And I think I would have had that kind of scepticism when I was young. I think I would have looked at the world and thought, you know, something bad to me is being done here, and I think I would have been made to feel bad about that. And I would say, don't feel bad about that, actually, you are being reasonable here. And I think lots and lots of people are actually being reasonable in judging this. And I think we should have some faith in people just a little bit more.

**Ross:** Sage advice, indeed. Dr Ashley Frawley, always a pleasure. Thanks for coming on. Happy New Year!

**Ashley Frawley:** Thank you. You too.

**Ross:** Ben Norton, friend of the show. Great to have you back on Renegade Inc.

**Ben Norton:** Thanks for having me. It's always a pleasure to be here.

**Ross:** Ben, tell us what's really surprised you in 2021. I know it was a volatile year - ups, downs, shocks all over the place. What's the one thing that stood out for you that was astonishing or surprising?

**Ben Norton:** For me, the most surprising thing in 2021 has been seeing the Biden administration not only continue exactly where the Donald Trump administration left off in terms of the new Cold War on both China and Russia, but also to accelerate it. We knew that

the Biden administration would continue many of the same foreign policies of the Trump administration, just as Trump continued much of the foreign policy of Obama and Obama at Bush. We've seen for many decades this kind of continuity bipartisan foreign policy consensus. But I think what has been pretty striking is to see the Antony Blinken State Department led by this neoconservative figure, Antony Blinken, who was a key figure in the war in Libya, the war in Syria. I mean, maybe we shouldn't be that surprised, but to see the degree to which he has really accelerated the war drive against China and Russia is really shocking. There are some people who thought that the Biden administration might try to play this kind of inverted Kissinger-ian strategy, where Kissinger and Nixon famously took their trip to China in 72 and famously open relations with China to try to weaken the Soviet Union. The strategy was triangulation, form an alliance with China against the Soviet Union, and that strategy succeeded. Instead, the Biden administration continued taking a very hard line against both China and Russia, which actually push China and Russia even closer together. And now, in December 2021, we're on the verge of Moscow and Beijing basically declaring a military alliance. They already kind of have a political alliance. They're strengthening Urasian institutions like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. But we've seen more and more that as the U.S. and European powers and Japan are threatening China, sending joint military forces near the Taiwan Straits through the South China Sea, basically threatening China with a war. At the same time, we've seen China and Russia beginning to do military exercises and share military technology. So in short, the most surprising thing for me is to see that the Biden administration has accelerated this new Cold War on China and Russia to a shocking degree to where in a few years we've basically seen a total breakdown in U.S. diplomatic relations with Russia and China. And we've seen basically the emergence, not of a multipolar world. Many of us thought that we were moving toward a multipolar world. Instead, what we're seeing is the emergence of a bipolar world. And as George Bush famously said, you're either with us or against us. Well, the Biden administration has continued that policy and said to China and Russia and the rest of the world, you're either with us or against us. You're either with the US, NATO, the European Union or you're against us.

**Ross:** Given those comments and excellent analysis, I'm probably not going to be too surprising when I ask you, what are you going to keep an eye on for 2022? What should we look out for? It might be economic, political, military. What are you going to be looking for from a megatrend point of view?

**Ben Norton:** Well, not just for 2022, but really then the next decade and the next century, I think, the most important development that we're seeing right now is the emergence of this kind of bipolar global order, which I mean, we call it the new Cold War and the two sides of that Cold War becoming very clear. And I don't say this with any hope. I mean, I don't think it's a good thing that we're seeing the emergence of a bipolar new Cold War order, but we have to have open eyes and see what's happening. And when we look to 2022 and the years coming forward, that is going to mark all of international politics because, increasingly, the US is telling countries, you cannot have good relations with China and Russia and with us, you have to pick a side. And more and more, countries are saying, OK, fine, we're actually not going to pick the U.S, we're going to pick China and Russia because China has surpassed the U.S. as the largest economy in the world. And China and Russia, as a bloc, form a major security bloc, a major military powerhouse. And also, Russia can counterbalance China's weaknesses in terms of China's weakness. It has very few hydrocarbons. It doesn't have oil

and gas. It imports oil and gas, and Russia exports oil and gas. So increasingly, in this bipolar world, we're seeing countries are going to be forced to pick a side and they're not always going to pick the U.S. and the European Union, especially if they're in Asia and Africa.

**Ross:** Ben Norton, it's always a pleasure. Thanks for a brilliant insight. And all it leaves me to do is wish you a really happy 2022.

**Ben Norton:** And you too. Everyone at Renegade Inc., keep up the great work. I always love watching your programmes and I've learnt a lot, so thanks a lot.

**Ross:** Welcome back to Renegade Inc. It is that time of year again where we look back over 2021, asking what had surprised some of our friends of the show and also getting them to look ahead to 2022 to see what we should all be looking out for.

**Ross:** Richard Wolff, friend of the show, great to have you back on Renegade Inc.

**Richard Wolff:** Thank you. Glad to be here.

**Ross:** When you look at 2021, what is the one thing that really shocked or surprised you over the last year?

**Richard Wolff:** I think I have to admit that, like so many Americans, what I hoped for was not only that Mr. Trump would vanish from the political scene, but that the election of Joseph Biden and the Democrats by a large plurality would somehow shake the economy into something new and different. And I have to tell you, honestly, very little new, very little different. And in terms of the reality, very depressing. I mean, let me say it very simply, we started 2020 and again in 2021, with an absolutely unusual catastrophe, an economic crash simultaneous with a public health disaster, arguably the worst crisis in American history. It demanded a massive governmental intervention to try to cope with it. Mr. Biden gave us the idea he might. It's all gone. There's no chance. He's given it up. It is devastating, not only for the country, but for his political party, even more so.

**Ross:** What is the one thing that you are looking at for 2022? Now, I'm not asking you to crystal ball this, but if you were going to give a prediction for where next - could be economic, could be political - what are you looking out for in 2022?

**Richard Wolff:** Well, it follows from what I've just said. It's the reaction to nothing changing. I think the crises, the tensions, the bitterness, they're all going to get worse. You know, we've just had information that the inequality which got worse during Trump has continued to worsen. Now we are at record levels. Corporate profits are off the chart positive, while the average American worker can't even get money wage increases to stay even with inflation. I mean, you put this together and there's no reason to expect anything other than worsening of the very scary trends of the last decade or more anyway. So I'm afraid that's what I see coming.

**Ross:** If you were to give advice to a say, 25 year old Richard Wolff now, because people leaving university and going into the workplace or people leaving school, going to the

workplace, it's an incredibly volatile and precarious landscape, isn't it? What sort of advice would you give to somebody who's making their way in the world now?

**Richard Wolff:** Well, precisely because things are so uncertain, because the United States for a century has been the top dog in global capitalism and is now experiencing decline, a decline I don't think is reversible and that we will be replaced basically in that position by the People's Republic of China, which is already a reality, my argument would be two things. Be sure to diversify whatever skills you can accumulate because you're facing uncertainty. Don't put all your eggs in this or that career track. You will regret it. Number one. And number two, face it. As most investors have already done, diversify whatever assets you have. Do not rely on the United States to be the go to place, the dollar to be the go to currency and all the rest of it. All of those positions of the United States are in decline. The only difference among them is the pace at which this decline occurs. I'm no predictor. I'm not going to tell you what's going to go first or last. But we are in a situation in which a country facing the decline of its century in the sun is mostly in denial. And that's not a very healthy way of coping with any kind of problem you have, and you have to adjust to that reality.

**Ross:** Professor Richard Wolff, always a pleasure. Happy New Year!

**Richard Wolff:** Same to you, and I hope I'm wrong in some of the things I've said.

**Ross:** Dr. Lisa Mckenzie, it's that time of year again, but it's wonderful to have you back on the programme, welcome.

**Lisa Mckenzie:** Thank you. It's great to be back, actually.

**Ross:** What shocked you in 2021? I know you're not an easily shocked kind of person, but you must have been surprised at something?

**Lisa Mckenzie:** To be honest, I've been shocked at so much in 2021. The rolling back of all human rights steadily but stealthily, to the point where the population are not really noticing and backing up those measures to take away rights and freedoms, has been quite shocking, actually. And I know that is a quite complicated answer, but it's something that's been happening all over this year and it's still happening. At the moment, you know, we've just had new measures for the new COVID variant. And again, without evidence, really, people are prepared without law, to give up their rights and freedoms, and, for me, that is quite shocking.

**Ross:** Is the shocking bit that people are so happy to roll over without so much as debate about this, or are you shocked at this or the authoritarian nature of governments just pushing this through, or is it a bit of both?

**Lisa Mckenzie:** It's a bit of both. I mean, I'm not shocked that a government is looking at an opportunity in the eye and thinking, hang on a minute, all the things that we thought we'd like to do over the last 30 years that we, you know, we daren't do, now we can do it. That's not shocking. What is shocking is that the way that the public and parts of the media, and definitely the whole of Westminster, has not really put up a fight against this.

**Ross:** We've concluded 2021. We now look forward to 2022. What are you keeping an eye on in 2022? What should we be having a look at?

**Lisa Mckenzie:** Every year I say housing because housing has been the top five issue for working class people for 60 years. It never goes away and it still isn't. So I always say housing. And this time it might be a different slant on it, a slant that I don't care too much about. But I am fully aware that the middle class all getting concerned about their own housing situation. I know that they're concerned about how they can buy houses now. I know that they're concerned about how they can pass houses on. I don't think it will be working class housing need that's going to push the agenda. It will be the middle class putting pressure on the Tory government about their right to be homeowners because they're struggling to get on housing ladders as well. So I think housing will come up again. And obviously this continued assault on human rights under COVID restrictions, I think that's going to come to a head. I think the people that have been out on the streets protesting against that for the last year and a half, I think they're going to continue to protest. It's been interesting watching that because the Left and the Labour Party in the UK has almost branded them as far right. I think there's going to be something around that, about who starts now coming out on the streets and protesting. You know, that Brexit split, that Brexit separation where, you know, the great and the good are on the side of the authoritarian, you know, and then everybody else gets branded stupid, ignorant, not understanding the arguments, far right, et cetera, et cetera. So I'm expecting that to pull out even more.

**Ross:** Dr Lisa Mckenzie, always a pleasure. Always unvarnished. Always entertaining. Happy New Year!

**Lisa Mckenzie:** Happy New Year!

**Ross:** Michael Hudson, friend of the show. Welcome back to Renegade Inc.

**Michael Hudson:** It's always good to be here, Ross.

**Ross:** Now, look, it's this time of year where we look back and we also look forward. Let's start by asking you what shocked you in 2021?

**Michael Hudson:** Well, unfortunately, there weren't any real shocks. The world just continued on the trajectory it's been moving along, getting worse and worse. You can say there was handwringing. You can say, hasn't anybody thought of changing the direction they're moving in? But nothing really has changed. When President Biden took over from Donald Trump, he said, nothing is really going to change. And so far, his administration's been Trump 2. He's supported Trump's Cold War policy. Foreign policy is left in the hands of the CIA and the military. He's continued the antagonism towards Russia and China, and he's thrown his weight behind Wall Street and very cleverly pretended to move to the left while making sure that enough Republicans have run as Democratic senators that they can prevent any real socialist policies, such as socialised medicine. So everything was held in abeyance in 2021. There were no foreclosures because there was a moratorium on foreclosures. There were no bankruptcies, millions of people losing their home. That's been put off until next February. There's been no reconciliation between Germany and Europe on the one hand and

Russia, because the Germans have followed the Americans and said we would rather freeze in the dark and have our pipes break this winter than be anti-American. We know they beat us in World War Two so they must be better. Or we're loyal American's. And so Germany and Europe are slowly shrinking. The US economy is slowly polarizing, and the West is sort of gnashing at hands. It's the fact that China is not suffering its fate, but is simply going ahead steadily.

**Ross:** It's an even-handed recap of what was a year of running through treacle, really. 2022, what does it bring? What is the one thing on your radar that you're looking out for in 2022 and that might be either economic analysis or it could be political?

**Michael Hudson:** I'm more concerned about military confrontation right now. National security people in the CIA and the FBI and the State Department, these are the people that I work with 50 years ago at the Hudson Institute on National Security. Their mentality is, things are getting worse and worse. We've got to have a military confrontation, at least to stop things. But all a military country can do today is destroy. You can bomb a country. No country is able to occupy another country because they don't have an infantry. All that military can do is bomb. And so we're all worried that there's going to be either a flash point in Ukraine or in the China Sea or in the southern flank of Russia. There's going to be some kind of frustration at the West as they see themselves falling further and further behind because they've made a policy decision in America to deindustrialize, to move their industry abroad, and now they're left empty. So the question is how long are Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia going to continue to support this rentier economy in the United States that simply has no visible means of support over time?

**Ross:** How worried are you about that confrontation, militarily?

**Michael Hudson:** Well, maybe 60 percent. All the military people I talked to are worried about a crazy person acting on their own, and Biden has appointed crazy people. I think he has psychological advisor's doing tests. And if somebody is not willing to just go for growth and blow up the world, they're considered not really sufficiently confrontational.

**Ross:** Final question, Michael. If you were starting out now as a mid-20 year old, Michael Hudson, seems to me that as we look around the world, the rule of law is being ignored roundly. You know, all bets are off. Let's put it that way. What sort of advice would you give to somebody who's starting out now?

**Michael Hudson:** Maybe they should be a musician or an art historian. You can't go into politics without getting support from one of the special interests acting as their sort of proxy. So politics is sort of out. Law, as you point out, is divided the same kind of division you have in the world, you're having in the United States and other countries with a right wing philosophy of law against any kind of law strengthening government. I'd almost say, on the one hand to study history. To be a historian at least, then you'd have some perspective of the kind of jobs that existed when I was in my twenties don't exist anymore. I worked as a bank economist for Chase Manhattan and other banks. And banks don't have economists anymore. They have public relations people. They don't do any analysis because you don't need any analysis. You don't need to be smart to make money. All you need is greed. And how do you



fit into a system like that is going to be rewarding to yourself unless you're very greedy and just want to join the crowd?

**Ross:** Michael Hudson, always a pleasure.

**Michael Hudson:** Good to be here.

**Ross:** That's it from us here at Renegade Inc. this year. As always, you can drop the team a mail - [studio@renegadeinc.com](mailto:studio@renegadeinc.com). Thank you very much for your ongoing support and all the kind words and notes that you've sent in over the year. The team here, and I, really appreciate it. Have a really brilliant 2022. And remember, above anything else, stay curious.