

Courage My Friends Podcast – Episode 1

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ANNOUNCER: This is a rabble podcast network show.

VOICE: New voices in your head. It's radio...free...

[music transition]

COURAGE MY FRIENDS ANNOUNCER: COVID. Capitalism. Climate. Three storms have converged and we're all caught in the vortex.

STREET VOICE 1: How do I feed my kids and protect myself from this virus?

STREET VOICE 2: I'm safe here in Canada, but I'm worried about my family back home.

STREET VOICE 3: I'm scared about the future. When this pandemic is over, we still have the climate crisis to deal with.

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COURAGE MY FRIENDS ANNOUNCER: What brought us to this point? Can we go back to normal? Do we even want to?

Welcome to this special podcast series by rabble.ca and the Tommy Douglas Institute (at George Brown College) with the support of the Douglas-Coldwell Foundation.

VOICE 4: Courage my friends; 'tis not too late to build a better world.

COURAGE MY FRIENDS ANNOUNCER: This is the *Courage My Friends* podcast.

RESH: Welcome to the first episode of the *Courage My Friends* podcast. I'm Resh Budhu, co-producer of this special 6-week series and coordinator of the annual Tommy Douglas Institute at George Brown College.

Early last year when we were organizing the annual Tommy Douglas Institute conference, we didn't quite know how much of a game-changer COVID-19 was going to be or how seriously it was going to impact everyone and everything. By about March as we began to understand the true scale of this pandemic, we realized that we might not be having a conference at all. And indeed, last year's event was cancelled.

A year later, we found ourselves in much the same position – locked down, social distanced and with few resources to organize the conference, even online. But then

long-time media partner rabble.ca came to us with an idea – How about transitioning this year’s conference into a podcast? The answer was an enthusiastic, yes!

So, it is with great enthusiasm that we bring you our first episode of the *Courage My Friends* podcast with special guests Ed Broadbent and Kofi Hope.

Chair of the Broadbent Institute and author of the [*Broadbent Principles for Canadian Social Democracy*](#), Ed Broadbent served as a federal Member of Parliament for 21 years, 14 of which were spent as leader of the New Democratic Party. Throughout his political career, his focus has been on Aboriginal and economic rights, women’s equality, child poverty, ethics in government, and tax equality.

Kofi Hope is a thought leader, social entrepreneur and Toronto Star columnist. He is also a senior fellow with the Wellesley Institute and teaches at the University of Toronto. Founder and former Executive Director of the CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals, he was named one of the Top 10 People to Watch in Toronto in 2006 by the Toronto Star for his work in establishing the Black Youth Coalition Against Violence. Kofi has recently co-founded and is CEO of Monumental, focused on supporting organizations for equitable recovery from COVID-19.

In our first episode, *The Convergence: COVID, Capitalism, Climate* we discuss this moment of crisis that reveals, even as it accelerates the deep fractures within our societies. Was COVID-19 the trigger for a disaster waiting to happen? Does it offer us a chance to redeem ourselves by building sustainable communities that honour the rights and dignity of all?

Here is my conversation with Ed Broadbent and Kofi Hope.

RESH: In our pilot episode, we speak with Chair of the Broadbent Institute, former leader of the NDP and author of the *Broadbent Principles for Canadian Social Democracy*, Ed Broadbent. And thought leader, social entrepreneur and Toronto Star columnist, Kofi Hope, about the convergence of Covid, capitalism and climate. Kofi, Ed, Welcome.

KOFI: Thanks for having us.

ED: Good to be with you.

RESH: Lovely having you.

RESH: So Covid, capitalism and climate. Let’s start with some initial thoughts. Ed, where do you see these three forces converging?

ED: Well, what happened of course, is that Covid came along, just at the moment that the intellectual bankruptcy of neoliberalism was being revealed. It’s encouraging that sort disintegration of a very harmful form of capitalism, namely neoliberalism, where there’s an effort to turn everything into markets. And following 2008, the whole intellectual framework has been called into question. So, when Covid, came, it meant that governments around the world, were much more open with public support to intervene directly, seriously, promptly. In a way, that had occurred, even 10 years

earlier, we wouldn't have had the same response. So, the only good thing about neoliberalism was it was its death. And it was encouraging to see governments of different political stripes, often, former quite conservative governments that didn't believe in any interventions in the economy, suddenly realized that they had to intervene. The other point that I would make off-the-top of course, is the whole unequal aspect of capitalism, and the Neoliberal model, that was still with us, and social reality was revealed. That is to say, racialized workers in essential occupations, normally even without trade union representation, were the worst victims of Covid, and that was an inherent aspect of capitalism too, the inequality. And in this case, the inequality, had a racial dimension, where Brown and Black people were much more seriously affected here in North America, than their White fellow citizens. I'll leave it at that for a start.

RESH: Kofi same question: How do you see this convergence between Covid, capitalism and climate?

KOFI: Yeah, so thanks for the question, Resh, and I think for me, I'll start with, and building on where Ed went, what's happened with Covid is, it's been a revelation of how our current form of capitalism, how we organize the economy, and also the political models that we have, because I think democracy is the other piece that I would add into the mix here, but how our economic system and our social and political systems have not been built around resiliency. And when I talk about this idea of resiliency quite simply, it's the ability a society has to respond to a shock. Whether that's a pandemic, whether that's another type of disaster, like a natural disaster, or you know, a depression: economic disaster, we show that we don't have a lot of resiliency. And I believe the reason we were in that position where our resiliency was so low, really has to do, primarily with our kind of economic system where we've had, as Ed pointed out, this Neoliberal model, which not only has sought to expand markets into any every sphere of kind of human existence, but it's also built around the central principle of efficiency, right? That we want to try to squeeze out maximum inputs from every aspect of life and especially every aspect of our economic life, which, you know, has been great at raising GDP rates, right, but has not put us in a place where we are a very resilient society because it squeezes workers, it squeezes families, it squeezes communities, right to the edge of what they're able to do in this kind of ever increasing chase to raise productivity. But also, it's horrible at redistributing that wealth, right, it's a great system to create wealth but it's also a great system to take that wealth and funnel it to the kind of 1%, to the managerial, or professional classes, and not redistribute it at all. And so when you have an economic system that sets your society up that way, when you have people living, check to check, when you have people having to work, you know, who are essential workers: three jobs to make ends meet, when you have personal, you know, personal support workers who have to jump around to different long term care facilities, because the most efficient way to run those facilities we're told, is to have these kind of temporary workers, to not have benefits, to not have security and scheduling. When you have a society that way, sure, it might be able to push to the edge in good times, when you take a shock, when a hit happens, you know the House

of Cards kind of crumbled, and we saw that and how that I think connects to climate is the climate crisis. That is probably the biggest shock, we will face in the next kind of 30 years, really for the rest of this century. And it's not going to be one shock. It's going to be a series of shocks, whether it's from rising sea levels, whether it's from increased adverse weather events, and we're thinking ice storms in Toronto, and we're thinking flooding here. You know, it'll be different, across the nation. But those shocks are going to continue and they're going to be more frequent and I think the reality is, a society that isn't very resilient, a society that has deep inequalities, is going to take longer to respond to the shocks, because they're going to have certain areas which are going to bear a disproportionate burden from whatever that disaster is, in this case climate disasters, and that is going to put a huge stress on our public services to respond to those areas, but we're also going to have folks who are in increasingly precarious situations, because the economy has already put them towards the edge and these things will just push them over. And that's what we've seen, right, in the impacts. I really focus my work on Toronto, and the way we've seen the impacts concentrated in our lower income areas in our communities that have higher amounts of racialized folks, we've seen that. The final thing I'll say about capitalism, when we think about neoliberalism, you know neoliberal globalization, right, our current kind of capitalist paradigm around global trade, and we've seen from that this idea that we can import everything, that we have highly globalized supply chains, also puts us super vulnerable, and the system, you know, worked to a certain extent in the good times, but again what we've seen with the shock is so many nations falling into nationalism and thinking about their own best interest. And we realized in Canada, hey we don't produce some of the essential things we needed, but the paradigms beforehand said that doesn't matter. It's okay to get it from China. It's okay to get it from Mexico. Now I think we're seeing, okay well, wait maybe there are certain things that are part of national security, and not national security, in that previous idea of military defense, but of our health, and we need these things here in this country. And so I'll maybe leave it there, but I think it's not just about how capitalism is playing out here, but globally, how it's actually made us much more vulnerable to be in this kind of neoliberal paradigm of global trade.

RESH: Right. And when we have a crisis and it disproportionately hitting our vulnerable, our most vulnerable, because of our social system and because of our economic system, this is not the first time that we've seen this. Sociologist Robert Brym, in writing about Hurricane Katrina, he said that there are no natural disasters, only natural events that are turned into disasters by human systems and human responses. Now, a pandemic of course is never a good thing, but, and I'm going to ask you, Ed, did it have to be this bad?

ED: No of course it didn't have to be this bad. The economic system really crashed in 2008. We were not really out of that, when it hit, and it crashed, because of a Neoliberal approach to life. As Kofi has just mentioned, one of the essential features of a neoliberal model of capitalism is to turn everything into markets and markets are inherently unequal. So we had a very unequal Canada when the Covid hit. And we had that

inequality, because of previous federal governments and provincial governments that refused to take steps to intervene with the market to have a tax system that was equitable, to redirect investment into certain essential areas like long-term residents for senior citizens. Tommy Douglas is associated with this program, and Tommy, as all Canadians know, was the father of universal public health care. Well, one of the recommendations of the Romanow Commission on Health, way back a couple of decades ago, was the next step in universal health care and Canada should have been financing of home care. And then, by extension of that, senior citizens, long-term care residents, being a public, not-for-profit enterprise. Now, if we had had that action before Covid hit, then the incredible high number of deaths and long-term care residences for example, simply wouldn't have occurred because we would have had the allocation of funds to make such care and extension of universal health care. So, it is absolutely the case that we have disasters, overwhelmingly, because of bad politics. We take a natural disaster, like the appearance of Covid, and make it much worse when we don't have equitable political systems in place.

RESH: At the beginning of this pandemic though, it seemed that, you know, we sort of had this moment that you see in disaster movies, right, like *Independence Day* or *War of the Worlds*, where there's an attack on global humanity by aliens, but in this case by a virus, and that we would all come together for the common good. And that would be it. And that seemed to be happening, sort of, in the beginning and you were talking about this. And then we shifted, and now we seem to be so far from that point. So, why this shift if it's not going to really benefit anyone? And Kofi, I'm going to put that to you: why are we not doing what we should be doing at this point? Who is this benefiting?

KOFI: Yeah, well I think there's, it's a complex question. I think the answer comes in different places. I think one piece has to do with trust, right, with social trust, trust in each other, and trust in government. And that being so key at a moment like this, because so much, you know I was talking to a health policy expert this week around it, and they were saying, you know, if you look at Canada, let's see, take our nation, in particular, if you compare us to other OECD countries and kind of, you know, more advanced economies, you know, we weren't in the best of class. We weren't in the kind of Australia or South Korea, but we weren't the worst. And you know that person was saying, and it really wasn't because of our leadership of our government it was because, you know generally we have a population that has a decent degree of trust in government and folks when they were told to distance and do different pieces in their own lives to help stop the spread and kind of flatten the curve, we stepped forward and we did it. But what you've seen specifically now in Ontario is inconsistent and at times incoherent messaging from government, and an inability to make the tough decisions and put the right policies in place. And so, we've, you know, Toronto's had one of the largest lockdowns of any jurisdiction in North America, and folks have just started to lose that trust that government really knows what they're doing here, that government can actually get us out of this. And when that trust is lost, you know, you can't police

your way out of it, you can't police your way into compliance, you need people believing that their leaders understand the science and have a plan that's viable. And how long things have stretched out, I think is a key piece of eroding that social trust, but the other piece that we have to be honest about, is that we have a highly individualistic society to begin with. And you think again to this kind of, what was in place before, you know, we had a society which, even though its social trust is better here than in the United States, still people don't necessarily have the highest degree of trust in each other, in our systems we question, whether it's the media or unions or other major organizations. And so when you had a society that doesn't have as high a degree of organizing, and that's so key to trust and response, when people do things in communities together, whether it's in their unions, whether it's in civil society, whether it's in faith communities wherever it is, and that's gone down over the decades in Canada. When people aren't used to that, they don't necessarily have the same degree of deep bonds and connections to each other, and so yes people stepped up and showed really inspiring degrees of solidarity. But I think, again, the foundation wasn't as strong, and as the months went on, people went back to the default, and that default mindset, which we've seen in North America growing over the decades, is, as someone said to me once, who researches this, the Frontiers Man, or Frontiers Woman, mentality: it's a dangerous world out there, it's just about circling the wagons and looking out for our families, and I think that despite that being a growing trend in our culture, we pushed back against it at the beginning of Covid, but now I think people are exhausted. They've lost trust, they're not sure that people know, who are experts, know what they're doing. And now we've defaulted back to that trend in North American culture of, hey it's just about protecting me and my family. And if I can just get my parents vaccinated, if I can just get the vulnerable people I know vaccinated. That's all we need right now. And so, you know, as we come out of this I think we need to really think about government, its relation to the population, communications from government, right. Moving beyond it just being self promotion and constant election cycles, to saying no, Government Communications has to really focus on educating people being, factually based and having integrity. Those are things we need to think about and also how we revitalize our civil society, because those networks in neighbourhoods and towns and communities between people that really are the fabric that holds us together when we had a crisis.

RESH: There seems to be multiple pandemics that are happening, obviously we have the viral pandemic. But we also have the pandemic of inequality and we also have the pandemic of misinformation. They're all, you know, they're all converging as well, and this loss of trust in our institutions, in our government, in each other, as Kofi, you're saying this has been eroding for quite some time and Ed, I'd like to hear your perspective on this. When did this start for us, this erosion of trust in our public institutions?

ED: The erosion really did start, and it went on for a long time, with varying degrees of intensity from the 1980s when Tony Blair picked up from Margaret Thatcher and picked up from Ronald Reagan, as politicians with real power and authority in society began

this Neoliberal model of capitalism, which is, as Kofi said, one of the characteristics is that great overemphasis on efficiency and markets were going to provide that in almost all aspects of life. So, inequality really began in the 1980s and continued, in its own way right up to virtually the present. And it was a complete reversal of the periods say from 1945 to 1975, where the government intervened in the market. And, quite deliberately so, to produce increasing levels of equality. There was, of course, in that period, inequality based on racial differences and gender differences, that shouldn't be overlooked. But, overall, there was an increasing commitment to an equal society that came undone with the rise of neoliberalism. And with the rise of neoliberalism, when you turn everything into markets and emphasize, efficiency, there's an erosion of trust, because people can no longer turn to their governments, with the sense that the government is going to do something constructive to get us out of a mess. Let me give you a concrete example. Relationship between governments and citizens is absolutely crucial if you're going to have a sense of trust. Well, we're recording this in Ontario, when we've had a Premier throughout Covid has denied having paid sick leave for workers. The workers most affected on the front lines have to go into work, because if they if they don't go to work, they're not going to be paid, more often than not. And so, what is an appropriate government response to that is to have a system of paid sick leave that operates on insurance principles, but this Premier in Ontario refused to do that. And that contributes to a lack of trust, by the people affected. So you have to have responsive governments, they won't have, governments will never have all the answers, but the citizens have to have confidence that they're moving in the right direction. Let me just add to this, so there's this inequality affecting our frontline workers, and everyone's aware of this now and the government's lack of response, but at the same time, the accumulated impact of an unequal economy in the tax system, is that the people at the 1% level, the top 1% have actually increased their percentage of income, vis a vis the rest of the population during Covid, and the recent federal budget doesn't alter that tax system at all. So we have in Canada, an affluent upper 1%, and then the rest of us. And the upper 1%, even in the recent budget, have not increased their share of the tax burden. That too overtime, will contribute to an increasing sense of lack of trust in society.

RESH: One of the, you know, the powerful things about this pandemic, and it's powerful in so many ways, but another way in which it's powerful is in its ability to reveal things about our societies going into the pandemic, and both of you have talked about this: lifting the veil has become a Covid catchphrase as well. And this really most powerfully refers to what it says about the levels of inequality within our society, and Kofi in your recent TED talk, you state that "we're in the same storm, but we're not in the same boat." So how do you see inequality, playing out, now, in this third wave of the pandemic?

KOFI: Thanks, Resh. I think it's not necessarily in the third wave that we're seeing a distinct interplay of inequality and disproportionate outcomes. I think we're seeing a continuation of what's been going on for the past year. And I'll give one example of

where I see it distinctly playing out that we haven't talked about and that's in the vaccine rollout. And this is from the public policy perspective, right. So we're in the City of Toronto, we've had, you know, 10 months, a year, you know, around that time, of people talking about, okay, there's certain neighborhoods which are disproportionately being affected by the virus. Okay, we know there's certain populations that are being disproportionately affected by the virus. There's been hundreds of articles around it I've written about it. I'm sure Ed's spoken about it. You know we've all talked about this. And yet, when it came to vaccine rollout, when there was the program to distribute vaccines through pharmacies, there was huge inequality in that, because pharmacies in those kind of, what they call the inner suburbs in the city, the Jane and Finch, the Rexdales, etc. There were much fewer pharmacies in those communities that had the ability to roll it out. And then when it came to actually, kind of vaccine distribution centers and getting it on the ground, again, we saw that it was not appropriate to where the need was highest, and we ended up, you know at the beginning of the month, where Forest Hill, Rosedale, the communities that are the richest and the whitest in the city of Toronto, had the highest levels of vaccination, and Jane and Finch, which had one of, if not the highest levels of deaths and infections, had the lowest level of vaccine rollout. And what that shows me is that, thinking about equity is still not an instinct, is still not a core perspective that's built into our public policy making. Because somehow these folks who were creating the rollout plan and many of them are at the Province level, well, I'm sure had read these articles and knew this was an issue, still went and made vaccine distribution policy that didn't think about equity, that didn't think about race, that didn't have a place-based approach, that thought about, okay, we know there's certain places we actually need to focus on, even in distribution across the province, if people were using an equity lens, a focus on the vulnerable, they wouldn't have needed articles that came out afterwards complaining about it. They should have known instinctively, we actually need to focus on Toronto right now. And yes, that might be controversial, you know people that are in Chatham Kent, or in North Bay, or other areas would say well how come we're not being prioritized, but someone who was versed in understanding equity concerns would have been able to explain to the population, hey, we have to focus on where the need is greatest, and if we don't get it down there, then these folks will travel throughout the province and bring it eventually to your communities, and keep us all in this kind of hell of ongoing lockdown. But we haven't gotten that and so that's been one of the things that I get the most frustrated about, is it's just shown, we can talk about it a lot, but we need to reform how we do public policy in this country, to actually make equity a core consideration, just like we think about risk management, and just like we think about equality, like balancing and making sure it's even what gets given to regions. But equity, the idea that we have to focus on the vulnerable. And that, in some areas where the need is greater, there must thus be a greater investment, that, for all the talk, has still not really landed in our governments and so that is one of the ways that I've seen this continued perpetuation of real gaps between folks, and I think it's not enough to talk about it and to have empathy. This is where structures and systems and

power actually needs to change, if we're actually going to see different outcomes, moving forward.

ED: If I could pick up on that?

RESH: Go ahead, Ed.

ED: Yeah, I just agree with everything Kofi just said, but I would add that our listeners should think in this context of the, of the role of ideology. Ideology matters in political life. Disputes exist between different policies. Yes, but what lies behind different policies, often are serious differences in ideology. For example, I think everything that Kofi's calling for is an application of social democratic values to society. And if we come back to the province that we're talking about right now which is Ontario, it is governed by party and a Premier, that has a totally different ideology. I think he is a hangover of the Neoliberal model. So he doesn't think instinctively, nor his government, when it's supplying the vaccine, for example, the way Kofi talks about, he doesn't instinctively have an egalitarian bone in his body. If he did, and if his government did, i.e. if they had a social democratic framework for the importance of human dignity for all our citizens, they would have moved in a different direction entirely in terms of distribution of the vaccine, and it would have been equitable, there would have been an effort to get into those more vulnerable parts of Toronto. So the fact that you have a Premier with a very small-c conservative ideological framework matters. If you have someone who has an inbuilt instinct for a more egalitarian society, in which everyone can live a life of dignity, then you're much more likely to get policies that are aimed at the more vulnerable people on a continuous basis, then we've seen here in Ontario. So my point is ideology matters.

KOFI: Yeah. And just to build on that, Ed, I agree and I think, you know, your ideology matters, but on top of that, we also have a political system where more and more power is being concentrated in the executive branch in all levels of government, which means that, you know, people's ideologies matter even more so because there is less and less room for civil servants to kind of make their own decisions. All roads lead to the Prime Minister's Office federally now. All roads lead to the Premier's office provincially. That's where policy is being generated. And so much of that is really being driven by, you know, what will help win us the next election, and what will feed to our base and our folks who share the same political viewpoints. And one of the examples, I'll give of that playing out, was in this province around the idea of, should we, can collect race-based data, around Covid. And you had this, kind of insane situation at the start of this crisis where, David Williams, who's Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, was saying no, no, we don't need race-based data. It's not that important. This is someone who, a couple years earlier, had written a paper about why it was so important to take race-based data in health. Now, he was one of many authors maybe, you know, maybe he didn't pay attention to that, but I doubt it. I think he understood the need. But why was he there saying, no, no, we're not going to do it. Well, I think that really had to have been driven from, you know, the political leadership, saying, no, no we don't want to talk

about race. That's not part of our politics. That's not critical right now. And, it then took advocacy from the community, from folks, but we need to know this; this is important. We're seeing the results, early results from the US, we're seeing that race matters here, and eventually people acquiesced and did it. I don't think we would have been in that situation, to what Ed's saying, if we'd had leadership that understood and equity lens, that understood racial justice matters, that understood it's not about identity politics, it's simply about common sense that says, we think about communities who are vulnerable, we think about where the greatest need is. That actually benefits everyone. But when you have folks who don't believe in those sorts of things, then, and we've seen the biggest example in the US, right, with the difference between Trump and Biden, when you have folks who it doesn't fit their ideology, suddenly all the civil servants start producing ideas around climate change around other issues, that match their kind of political overlords. And so I think we also, to get different there, we have to change our political system, and really start democratizing it more and fight against this concentration of so much power at the executive which, sure, we all celebrate, when it's a leader, we like in charge, but the downside is when it's someone from the other side, we see the dangers of one political leader and a small core around them, having so much control over our policy agenda in a province or in the nation.

RESH: Here we are Covid, a global pandemic, capitalism, a global economic system that has entrenched itself for over 500 years, we have a climate crisis that poses the greatest existential threat, we've ever faced. These are huge issues, especially in the convergence of all three. So I'm going to start with you, Ed. What do you say to people who want change, who want to shift the instinct of our political leaders, who want to be paid attention to, to have their voices heard when they're on the lower rungs of the social and economic pyramid, but they don't know where to start, they don't feel they have enough power. What do you say to people in the face of all of this, in terms of being able to be part of that change?

ED: Well, you know, I think they should start and it's easy to say, but I believe it, start where they're living and start working with activist organizations in the community. There is now, in my view, more civil society activism going on than probably ever before in our history. Every city across this country, has activist groups that are not only working, for example, on something that currently, appropriately, has a lot of headlines: racial inequality, but activist groups, on the social policy of dealing with it. Getting a tax system that puts a wealth tax, for example on the top 1%, and lifts, by definition, therefore, part of the burden off the rest of us. So getting involved in local civil society organizations that have as their agenda, the creation of a more democratic and egalitarian Canada is one option. And the other, I would say almost simultaneously, is to get involved in the partisan game of politics. I happened of course to be, being a social democrat, to favor the NDP, but I can respect these other parties of people that want to move and make change. For example, we see this in the United States where Biden, who was once a rather conservative senator, has risen to the occasion, is doing all kinds of innovative things. Well, he got there, because people in the US, got involved not only in civil

society, but in the politics of their country. And they worked hard and they defeated Trump, and everything he stood for, at least politically, and elected a progressive government. So it's a complicated process I'm talking about, but another way of looking at it, it's not so complicated. What I am saying is that we need a citizen activism that's active in the civil society sense, that will put pressure on government and deal with the kind of centralized power that Kofi has talked about, and we need work within political parties themselves, to make them more democratic and progressive. It's an ongoing struggle, there's no final answer to this. It's an ongoing struggle that democratic activism just must be a priority for all of us as citizens.

RESH: Kofi, I was listening to Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, the other day, speaking at the close of the George Floyd murder trial. And he said, nobody can do everything, but everyone can do something, and this reminded me of what you have to say about social power. So could you speak more to that, and very much what Ed was also saying, but could you talk about what is social power and why is it so important in times like this.

KOFI: Yeah, well, we can start with power and power is, you know, the ability to have impact on decisions that influence our material reality in the world. So, being really simple, power is the ability to decide how is money going to be spent in a nation, it's going to decide what are the priorities. It's the ability to help set the laws and the rules and the regulations, and as we've talked about, we have a society where more and more, power is being concentrated in a small group at the top, who just have this disproportionate amount of wealth, and many of these folks also have control of media companies, so they control the discourse and they have huge amounts of power to decide how our society is going to be structured. And if we think about social power or the power, kind of people's power, rather, that is when, exactly as Ed said, communities mobilize, work together collectively and say, well we may not have all the wealth, we have the numbers, right. And that is the power of you know, organized labor, workers movements, to say, you know, there's more workers than bosses, and our labor is essential to this system without us out. You know without those folks out there working in the factories, there are no Amazon deliveries. Without those folks at the fruit terminal sorting through food we don't have food on our table. And so the power of, even those who are seen to be low skilled, or low wage, or all these derogatory terms, and we've realized, they're actually, no, essential, and they're actually in the majority in our economy, folks like that. And so when we talk about social power, first it's recognizing the power that we have, those of us who aren't billionaires, who aren't in the 1%, that we actually do have critical power in society, and then using that through collective action to actually influence how decisions are made and what happens.

KOFI: I think the growing individualism we've seen in our Western societies, has really undermined that ability for us to recognize our collective power, you know, to even say our class power, that folks have in working class positions, other positions, but that that power we have when we come together as communities, and it's made it so many folks

are just not used to that. We're not used to being in meetings with other folks and coming up to collective decisions. We're not used to the organizational life because part of organizational life too, is recognizing, sometimes you can't always have it exactly your personalized, customized way. When you're in an organization or group, you have to sometimes compromise. You have to sometimes say this isn't exactly my position, this isn't exactly my approach, but I'm willing to live with it, because I know that being part of a movement of a group is we try to find a collective place of consensus to move forward. And so I think that is the power that will change our society and that can come from everyday people working together but it comes from coming together and acting collectively in movements. It comes from us at times, kind of restraining individualism, and there's great things that come from individualism, you know there's a reason that we moved in this direction because total collective and conformity-based societies can suppress a lot of folks, a lot of folks with different gender identities, a lot of folks who are more minorities, who have different positions. And so, we don't want to lose individualism, but I think we do have to say, hey you know what, if we're going to have big social change now, we've got to relearn that art of working collectively, compromising around common goals, coming up with some key collective values and then supporting each other, showing up for each other. And that is a very different way of working then, you know, how we do it many times on social media, where it's about hot takes and critiquing each other and tearing each other down and, you know, winning these rhetorical battles on Twitter, which is cool but at the end of the day, that's very different than sitting in in a church basement, or a union hall, or a campus with 40 other people with different opinions and saying let's come with a common statement here, and let's find a way to move forward on this practice. That takes time, that takes relationship-building, that takes hard work, but it's actually one of the best things you can do. My life has been one filled with organizing, building organizations being part of movements. And not only does it teach you about trust, but that's where some of the deepest and richest relationships I've formed with people have come from. And so I don't want to make it seem like coming together just means you compromise everything. No, it's actually a great way to break through loneliness and feel connected to your community, but it is something that we have to build. It's an instinct, it's a muscle we've got to flex, we've got to practice, and with our kids, we've got to get them engaged in collective action and collective life from early, so it seems like a normal thing to them as adults.

RESH: Right and it's moving from sort of that, not to get rid of individual rights, as you say, but putting more of a focus on social rights. And Ed, in the six Broadbent Principles for Canadian Social Democracy, that also really seems to be the focus, that it is moving towards, again a more social democracy, and more social rights and could you speak a bit more on that.

ED: Yes, absolutely. The goal for me, frankly is, if I wanted to give a label to it, is a kind of cooperative individualism, that is to say, a kind of individualism that embodies within it a cooperative enterprise, cooperative activity, as opposed to simply personal pleasures which are entirely legitimate, another part of our personality, but we have to build-in this

notion that we're part of a collective something called citizenship. And I think in this context actually of Franklin Roosevelt, who had a very radical wife, Eleanor Roosevelt was ideologically more progressive than he was and was always prodding him on to greater action. Well, then in his last great speech before he died, as president for the American people in 1944, he said that the American Bill of Rights which was and is an 18th century document that is focused exclusively on individual rights, as important as they are, Roosevelt said this is insufficient for a good life. And what he called for was the acceptance within their Bill of Rights, the additional component of social and economic rights. And, of course, that's what Kofi and I are talking about here in part, when we're talking about a collaborative, cooperative approach to life being very important to achieve certain social objectives. And it's just so fundamentally important. And yet, Roosevelt was the last President to openly call for the US adopting the Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights. And that is one of the differences that exists between Canada and the US. We have adopted a Covenant, that if implemented at the provincial and federal level, would embody a whole range of social and economic rights, and that can serve as a motivating factor for Canadians at this moment. Come back to less abstract talk, that means dealing with care for the elderly, as a right, for example, as an extension that all Canadian citizens get a Canada Pension or old age security, we can build on top of that, the requirement that they should have pharma care, as, as part of their social right, and that they can live in long term care residence at some point, in the end of their life, that provides conditions that enable a life of dignity. Well, these are the kinds of results of cooperative political pressure, political change that we could put in place that would make a civilized life for everyone. And by the way, I add that social rights themselves, go to all of us as individuals. They may be a social right for universal health care, but they're experienced by all of us as an individual. And if you have it, you have a greater degree of freedom in your life than the citizens in the country without universal right of health care. So collective and social rights ultimately, are lived by individuals, and we should keep that in mind as well.

KOFI: And, and I just wanted to add to that, I think, you know, we, in our conversation, and because it's been focused in Canada, we've very much been talking through kind of a Western paradigm, but I think when we're talking about these social rights and more communitarian approaches, here's where also we can take a lot of inspiration from our fellow Canadian citizens who draw from other cultural inspiration than just Western ideas and certainly there is that community tradition in the Western tradition but it's as rich and maybe even more present in other cultural approaches right. I think about, you know, Continental African traditions, this idea I love about Ubuntu, which you know Desmond Tutu and other leaders talk about. The idea: I am, because we are. Kind of in opposition to the traditional kind of Western approach of, you know, "I think, therefore I am." Right? And so I think, in our African traditions and folks who bring those here, there's more kind of community driven approaches. Our Indigenous people in Canada had a very different way of thinking about community, about resources, about wealth that was much more collective and orientation and there's much to be learned from that.

Even as a contemporary example, think about our South Asian communities here in Canada, and they have, many of them have a very different approach to care for the elderly. It's a very family centered approach that says we purposely try to get the biggest house we can, because we know that we want our parents to move in and live with us. And part of our obligation is kind of collective family care for the elders, not to say that's the approach for everyone, but I think there's a lot to be learned from that when we compare our current system of keeping, you know folks who are older, living in apartments isolated on their own as long as possible. And then when you know, we can't care for the more, we put them into these facilities where they're just with other people in their age group, kind of segregated from the rest of society. Well, Covid has shown that that system actually makes our elderly folks very vulnerable, but also is not a very humane system, and maybe we have something to learn from other Canadians who have different approaches to that and so part of us rekindling this kind of collective identity and collective approach, I think is also embracing, really people from racialized, from BIPOC communities who also have different approaches to thinking about family neighborhood and society, and I think there's a lot to learn from that, and I think we can adapt within our Canadian context.

RESH: and just going off of that and just in our last couple of moments, because this moment is such a game changer, it's changing so much about our world and the way we see, and the way we envision its possibilities. We're not going back to normal, but you know, hopefully, this can be a portal to a new normal, and this is what I hear the both of you saying. So if you were, just in the last minute or two, if you were to design a happiness index for our post pandemic world, starting with you Kofi, what would be one priority, you would want on that index.

KOFI: Hmm and I mean happiness indexes are interesting instruments, but if let's say it was perfect and we could really measure it, I mean, I think a key part of measuring on that happiness index would be people's feeling of connection to each other, right? And we have an epidemic of loneliness, that people have written about in Canadian society, in Western society. More people are living on their own, that anytime, maybe in human history. So many people are feeling isolated depressed, the lockdown has made that a million times worse. And so I think, as a society, we need to start measuring that and realizing that's core to human's mental health and our happiness, is how connected we feel. How many people do we have in our lives? How many people can call in a crisis that will look out for us? You know I think of my granny. She's almost 90 living in the Caribbean, such a different way of living. She's almost 90 years old on her 88th birthday, she had her entire street came up to celebrate that with her. She had a woman in her 20s bake her a birthday cake, wasn't even connected to the family, just because of that feeling of connection in a small island in the Caribbean, that folks have. In many of our areas, our suburban and urban areas in particular, we don't have that right now. People don't have that connection, and especially not cross-generation and other divides. And so I think we need to measure that and think about how do we foster deeper human relationships between people in our communities. And part of that has to

be giving us more time to make connection. We can't be just running from work, to childcare, to work, to this, to that. We need time to connect and to build in our communities.

RESH: Thank you, Kofi, and Ed, what do we need to be happy?

ED: Do you have another question you could ask? [Laughs]. What do we need to be happy? We do know, again, I like very much what Kofi had to say on this, and there is a remarkable couple in the United Kingdom that have been writing about inequality for a long time. And they have shown, by their studies, that the more equal society, you have, that is to say, in income, the more likely you're going to have happy individuals. And not only more likely to have happy individuals, you are more likely to have individuals that will be collaborative with each other. You'll have a society, whether it's a lower level of teenage pregnancies, a higher level of social trust. So high on my goal, if you like, for a happiness index or a society that is seeking to have a happiness outcome, is to work to achieve a more equal society and the accidental, if you like, not so accidental, benefit of a more equal society is going to be a society of more happy people. So happiness will be a consequence of the kind of relationship that Kofi's just talked about, but also a consequence of quite deliberate income policies in the country that work for a higher degree of equality. More equality, more happiness, is what I say.

RESH: Thank you Ed. And thank you, Kofi. It's been a pleasure.

ED: It's been a pleasure for me, too.

KOFI: Thanks for having us; great conversation.

ED: Take care.

RESH: That was thought leader, social entrepreneur and Toronto Star Columnist, Kofi Hope and Ed Broadbent, Chair of the Broadbent Institute, former leader of the NDP and author of the *Broadbent Principles for Canadian Social Democracy* which you can find at www.broadbentinstitute.ca.

You can also find out more about Kofi Hope's organization Monumental at monumentalprojects.ca

Please join us for our next episode, *Labour & Economic Security: Bread and Roses in a Post-Pandemic World* featuring anti-poverty activist and former organizer with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, John Clarke and Paul Meinema, National President of United Food and Commercial Workers. I'm Resh Budhu host of today's episode of the *Courage My Friends* podcast. Thanks for listening.

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Institute. With planning committee Ashley Booth, Chandra Budhu, John Caffery and Michael Long. For more information about the Tommy Douglas Institute and this series, please visit georgebrown.ca/TommyDouglasInstitute. Please join us next week for another episode of the *Courage My Friends* podcast on rabble.ca