

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
ASPEN IDEAS FESTIVAL 2018

Afternoon of Conversation

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27, 2018

BENEDICT MUSIC TENT, ASPEN MEADOWS CAMPUS

ASPEN, COLORADO

Participants:

David Brooks

Jonathan Capehart

Jelani Cobb

Katie Couric

Maria Hinojosa

John Kerry

Peter Marks

Andrea Mitchell

Alisa Solomon

Nadine Strossen

Jose Antonio Vargas

Kitty Boone:

Ready? Are you ready? Good afternoon everyone. For those of you that are just arriving, my name is Kitty Boone. I work for the The Aspen Institute and I welcome you to the Aspen Ideas Festival.

For some of you, this is your last event of the week. We hope your time here was as stimulating for you as it was for those of us, who spent a long time putting this all together, whether it was logistics or content. Ideally, this marks the beginning of even more interesting conversations to come. We hope you'll have jump started discussions that you can take home with you and share with your family, your friends and your colleagues. If you missed a session, so much will be offered on YouTube and our podcast that you can subscribe to that you really won't miss anything. I really want to thank you for your support, the feedback that we've gotten from so many of you on the past has been so fulfilling and makes us feel so good about the work that we do and your shared enthusiasm is just completely energizing and it's going to take us through the next three days. I can promise you.

For those of you joining, welcome. We have such a terrific lineup. Talks, debates, presentations ahead. I'm going to ask you to be really quiet as I introduce you to our first guest.

We have friends, Kin Quitugua and Sonora. You might be wondering why. The fact is birds are astonishingly intelligent creatures and as Kin will explain, at various times tomorrow, in his short lectures in Anderson Park, Sonora is a Harris's hawk, the smartest of all raptors. [Magiswa 00:02:34] is, as you can tell, a bald eagle. I've never been so close to one. It's going to make me cry. The bald eagle is the only eagle unique to North America, when flying, [Magiswa 00:02:51] rarely flaps her wings, but rather soars instead, holding her wings almost completely flat. We thought it was really appropriate that ideas soar.

According to revolutionary research, some birds rival primates and even humans in their remarkable forms of intelligence, which makes us ask, what does it mean, actually, to be intelligent. In the next few days, we're going to explore many topics among them, the genius of animals and this track was inspired by someone I hope is in the audience, Jennifer Ackerman, who's book I read in the fall called, "The Genius of Birds."

As we have learned these past several months, birds, dogs and the mighty octopus, we don't have one of those, they have unique genius of their own and the more we learn from them, the more we appreciate what is priceless and so critical to our appreciation for and understanding of our larger and very delicate ecosystem. Beyond the fascinating world of animals, we'll explore how technology affects our lives as humans, explore our unique relationship with music ... Are you making fun of me? She actually likes the audience. And, continue to parse the events even today, that shape our world, be they through the lens of globalization, geopolitics or our own domestic dilemmas, challenges

and opportunities. We promise, these next days will introduce you to new thinkers and ideas and we're so excited to continue the festival with all of you.

Now, some logistics that many of you already know about. You don't get in if you don't have this on. You have to wear your pass. I've even been asked to exit sessions when I haven't had it on and I'm so glad about that. We take security very seriously. It gets you into everything. If you're passionate about a subject or a speaker, all I ask is that you get there early.

I'd like to thank David Bradley, Jeff Goldberg, Margaret Low and everybody at the Atlantic, Noelle Rinner and her incredible team for all of your support, to all of our underwriters for making today and this week possible, our incredible patrons, who, as many of you heard already through your incredible generosity have made it possible for us to bring 300 scholars across the 10 days of the Aspen Ideas Festival from all over the world.

I'd like to thank, once again, our very special, long-standing relationship with the Bezos Family Foundation, who, every year, bring 12 remarkable students from across the country, high schools and their teachers but now, in addition ... Yay! We get to introduce you to the children that represent the Aspen Challenge winners from three high schools in Dallas and Philadelphia who are here to show you their incredible projects and work and have won the right to be at the Ideas Festival. Would you stand up. We also have six students from the African Leadership Academy, as again, some of you know.

On behalf of the incredible team I have, I welcome you to the Aspen Music Tent and it is now my great pleasure to introduce you to a gentleman that some of you have met but many of you haven't quite yet but you will by the end of this week, Dan Porterfield, the new CEO and President of The Aspen Institute. Thank you so much.

Dan Porterfield:

Well welcome. Please join me in thanking the falcon, the eagle, the incomparable Kitty Boone, Killeen Brettmann and their teams for their leadership and execution on another extraordinary Aspen Ideas Festival in partnership with the Atlantic.

My thanks to all of you for being here and my thanks to all of the people that have worked to prepare our meals, to set-up our community space, to organize our programs. There are hundreds and hundreds of people behind the scenes in every way making it possible. Please join me in thanking them.

Of course, my thanks to all of you for being here and supporting the Aspen Ideas Festival. It's inspiring to be gathered in such a majestic space to mark the midpoint of the 2018 Aspen Ideas Festival. Thank you to all who've attended our first day of sessions and to all of you know coming for the second session.

Since Sunday, we have dug deep into a wide range of critical topics from expanding college opportunity to the future of the #MeToo movement, from the crisis faced by families and children in the border to the renewals that we all can experience through art, nature, and community and there's so much more to come. This non-partisan convening space that we provide on our extraordinary campus and in this great city, not only offers the opportunity to gather up diverse voices from every walk of life for dialogue, but also provides a space and a place for the development of new solutions and real action towards finding the forward on our most pressing problems. That is a value that brings us all together. It's why I'm honored to have joined The Aspen Institute community, to build upon the remarkable achievement of Walter Isaacson. Please join me in thanking Walter for all that he has built.

Our Board Chair, Jim Crown, is here this evening, many members of the Aspen Board have joined us. This institute is a great global force for good that so many have helped to build. When it comes to change-making and improving the human condition, I am positive that our best days are still ahead of us.

Today's event, Quintessential Aspen Institute program. No other organization could possibly have come up with it. First, we'll bring to the stage one of the pre-eminent journalists in America to interview one of our most dedicated public leaders. Then, we'll get to experience scenes from great works like "The Crucible," "Angels in America," and "Hamilton," and see what reflections those scenes catalyze from big thinkers like Katie Couric, David Brooks, Alyssa Soliman, Jose Antonio Vargas and Jelani Cobb. Such inclusive, innovative, inspiring forward looking convenings are what the Aspen Ideas Festival is all about.

Thank you for being here. Now, it is my pleasure to welcome to the stage two distinguished Americans who need no introduction MSNBC's Andrea Mitchell, former Secretary of State, John Kerry.

Andrea Mitchell: Well, it's great to be here in Aspen and especially great to be here with Secretary of State, whom I traveled around the world with many times as NBC's Chief Foreign Affairs Correspondent, that's when correspondents traveled with Secretaries of State.

John Kerry: And when Secretaries of State traveled.

Andrea Mitchell: A lot has changed. And when Secretaries of State are going to begin to travel again. In fact, they've just announced that today.

But first, news of the day, we want to talk about the world, want to talk about democracy, about what you're doing, but the news of the day is clearly, the Supreme Court, the retirement of Justice Kennedy. You were 30 years in the Senate. We are now facing a political fight over this seat. It is a generational change 50 years of Supreme Court leadership. You're a lawyer and a former Senator. Mitch McConnell has announced today that he intends to push ahead

with a confirmation this fall before the midterm elections, before any possible change in the Senate and the argument is that this is not a Presidential election year, it's only a midterm election year, so he's not violating the precedent he established with Merrick Garland.

What's your opinion on that, first of all?

John Kerry: Well, the first really big news of the day is that Brazil beat Serbia and-

Andrea Mitchell: I missed that [crosstalk 00:12:32].

John Kerry: The second big news is that Germany got booted out of the tournament folks. Yeah. See, it is big news. I'm not kidding you. That's a shocker, Mexico.

Anyway, I'm really trying to make light of devastating news. The loss of Justice Kennedy is enormous, obviously, not just because of his experience, but also because of his balance. Because he was thoughtful and he was prepared to stand up and take a fight for the other way, rather than just have the court in this perennial five-four situation.

That is going to change. That's, as far as I'm concerned, unless some Republican is prepared to go the other way and I, given the current trend, would be very doubtful about that. But here's the real message from it folks and I want to emphasize this. We've got to stop the day-to-day bloviating over our dislike and the daily tweets on all the problems we see and start connecting to Americans, so that it's not just buzzwords out there, about the international order or the post World War II global structures, which are critical. But if we don't define to people how those make a difference to their lives, it's not going to matter. That's what's been missing.

I mean, I look at the voting turnout of 2016, 54.2% of Americans decided to vote. I mean, that's an astonishing figure. I've had privilege of being an election observer in Kenya, in Sudan, at South Sudan, in the Palestine and West Bank, in the Philippines, I've watched people stand out all day long to put their thumb on a piece of ink, purple and have the privilege of voting and they wait 12 hours and 13 hours and you have 75, 80, 90% of the people vote. We, in our democracy, folks, are costing ourselves our own democracy because we're not holding ourselves accountable.

What we really have to do is focus on the 2018 midterm election and recognize that we're in a new fight. That fight has begun, and we have to reconnect to the average life daily struggle of Americans who are finding that globalization doesn't work for them or that congress doesn't work for them. In fact, Congress is dysfunctional today, completely and totally. And, I say that sadly, after 28 years plus in the Congress because it's just not getting it done.

Mitch McConnell can stall a President who won by an overwhelming margin in 2012, and he nominates Merrick Garland and they stall it and now they announce they're going to have a vote within a matter of months, and they can pull it off under the rules. We have to strike a better balance of fairness in the minds of our fellow citizens and only when we do that in a way that is fair, fair on immigration, fair on trade, fair on taxes, fair on all of the issues that make up the body politic of our country, that's when we're going to earn the right to lead and win.

PART 1 OF 3 ENDS [00:16:04]

John Kerry: Our country, that's when we're going to earn the right to lead and win. That's what we have to do.

Andrea Mitchell: Now, let's look at some of those issues. You talk about immigration. The Supreme Court ruled on the Muslim ban. How does that affect people's lives here and how does that affect our standing around the world?

John Kerry: Well, it hurts us around the world and it affects us negatively here. The seven countries that are in the ban, Sudan, and Libya, and Iraq, and Iran, and so forth, I don't think, if I'm correct, and I question myself on this, but I don't believe one American has been killed in an act of terrorism by anybody from one of those countries. It's actually terrorists that have come from some of our allies and friends.

Andrea Mitchell: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

John Kerry: We need to be really thoughtful about this because it's an aberration in the American conscious, in our reputation and psyche. You know, it really doesn't make America great again, but also more importantly, I suppose, it doesn't solve the problem.

Let me just say a word about that. We've been fighting about immigration for years. Both parties are responsible for where we are, by-the-way. You have to call it the way it is. There are 12 million people here illegally. This didn't start yesterday. Donald Trump is absolutely correct when he says, "This didn't start on my watch." How did those 12 million people get here? What happened to us in dealing with this over a period of time? Why are these people coming? He is distorting the truth to America by saying MS-13 is coming over, when in fact people are running away from MS-13 to come over here for safety.

The way we solve the problem, folks, is with a comprehensive approach where Democrats, people on the left, whatever you want to call it, come to the table and say, "You know what? The law has to mean something. Borders have to mean something. Visas have to mean something." We are a rule-of-law nation and we have to prove it with respect to this issue. But we also understand,

ultimately, there has to be a path to citizenship. We have to resolve the differences on the border.

Most importantly, folks, here's what's missing. I was in the Senate when we did Plan Columbia. We put \$1 billion on the table and a 10-year plan. We saved Columbia from drug cartels, from assassinations, from complete and total disorder. What we need with real leadership today is to stand up and put a plan together for El Salvador, and Honduras, and for the south. They are our neighbors and we will not be safe until we fix our neighborhood. Simple.

Andrea Mitchell: How do you justify the morality of separating children from their parents?

John Kerry: Well, you don't. I was watching one of the reports on that the other day and listening to this poor child screaming. These are lifelong consequences on these children, on their lives. My daughter is a physician. She appeared recently on Morning Joe talking about this. She's a mother. She talked about this will cost those kids something tangible over the course of their lives as a result of the trauma of what is happening to them. Many of them may not be reunited.

Think of that. The United States of America, with those glorious words on the Statue of Liberty, we are separating children. In some cases, mothers have been told, "We're just taking your kid away for a bath," and they take the kid away for a bath. When have people been told, "We're just taking people away to do something else," and what happened? We cannot enter that stage of being. We have to change it.

But even worse, those parents are now being confronted by officials and being told, "If you sign away your right of asylum, we will reunite you with your child." In other words, "You can't get reunited unless you are signing away your rights to have your human rights protected." That is fundamentally un-American. Americans, I believe, I don't care what party you're in, or you're conservative/liberal, people know those fundamental values matter and they are what distinguish us as a nation. We have to stand up for that.

Andrea Mitchell: Does language matter, language from the Oval Office? When the president of the United States uses words like "infest" and "invade" to describe immigrants-

John Kerry: Of course, it matters.

Andrea Mitchell: And asylum-seekers.

John Kerry: You know, someone in your profession would say that's what you call a leading question.

Andrea Mitchell: Yeah.

John Kerry: But I'll take it. Let me just say to everybody, obviously language matters. Look at what has been said by our current president. I really don't spend time on the president. I think it's a waste of time to spend time.

I think what we need to do is spend time on those things that really make a difference to Americans, but one thing that makes a difference to Americans is whether you are inviting violence. When the president as a candidate stands up and says, "You know, I wish I had smashed him in the face," or, "Somebody should punch him out," or worse, says about another candidate for president of the United States, "Maybe the Second Amendment will take care of that problem," that is an incitement and that is unbecoming of anybody in high public office at any level whatsoever.

Language deeply matters. It also matters because you cannot build the consensus we need to build in our country. This is our great challenge in America today, folks. The increased polarization, obviously, the increased populism, the nativism, the nationalism, the urges towards authoritarianism, we have to push back against those, but they're coming on the right and the left. If we don't recognize the similarities in anxiety and disquiet between our citizens on both sides, we will not adequately fashion the kind of consensus necessary to pull the country back together again.

I think it's urgent for us to begin to talk a different language ourselves at the national level. You can't just talk about civility. You have to show the civility and set an example for civility. That means not getting involved. When the president was tweeting about me on the Iran deal, I did not respond on that. I would rather respond on the substance of the Iran deal, which is one of the worst decisions ever made by a president, and that will come home to roost.

Andrea Mitchell: I want to ask you about that, but first let me ask you about the decision to have a summit with Vladimir Putin. John Bolton was in Moscow today. They're announcing the summit. Some of our NATO allies are concerned that the president will freelance in a meeting the way he did in Singapore with Kim Jong-un and announce cancellation of military exercises without having notified South Korea or Secretary of Defense Mattis. What are the risks of a one-on-one with Vladimir Putin or is it good for them to be talking?

John Kerry: It depends entirely on how prepared he is, what his agenda is, what he hopes to get out of it, whether he knows what he wants to get out of it, and if whether he can explain-

Andrea Mitchell: That's what some people in your profession would call a leading answer.

John Kerry: Whether or not he can explain to people why it is that he praises Vladimir Putin while attacking our allies. That is why people are so much on the edge of their seats about this.

Now, in principle, I'm in favor of meeting with President Putin. I met with him more than anybody in the Obama Administration and for longer. We got things done. Russia cooperated with us on the Iran nuclear agreement, significantly, I might add. Russia cooperated on the Paris climate accord agreement. Russia cooperated on getting the chemical weapons, the declared chemical weapons, out of Syria. Russia cooperated, ultimately Putin gave up his 10-year objection to creating the largest marine-protected area in the world and we created the Ross Sea Marine Protected Area in Antarctica and they consented to do that. They worked with us in the Kigali Agreement on ozone. They worked with us on any number of other issues.

The history of dealings with Russia, even when it was the Soviet Union and there were huge tensions, has always been an ability to be able to compartmentalize and deal. What makes this different is the G7 meeting that just took place, the rancor within our allies, and the suspicions, the deep resentment they have for the secondary sanctions that they've decided to impose because we've pulled out of the Iran deal, but all the other countries are still in the deal. That extra territoriality and challenge to sovereignty is really angering Macron, Merkel, May, and the leaders of the region.

That is not the way to approach a summit with President Putin. The way you approach a summit is to have done your homework with those nations, build up an agenda, which they support and understand, and go in united in a way that doesn't play into the narrative that President Xi and President Putin have been working overtime to push, which is, "The liberal order of the West is coming apart, America is weak, and we are the future." The president has played into that narrative in very, very dangerous ways. We don't have time to go into all of the implications of it, but it's a very tricky moment for the world as a result of that.

Look, we usually lead. I can't remember a time as secretary or chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee when there was an international issue, a crisis of conscience, or of security, refugees in Syria, Ebola in West Africa, AIDS in Africa, you name it, I don't see Russia or China ever rush to the UN Security Council to be the first to bring nations together to deal with it. It's always the United States of America. We should be very, very proud of that. That's not happening now. That is not happening now.

When President Obama sent 3,000 troops to West Africa, and we worked with the French and the British to build the credibility, to build health care delivery capacity, we prevented the predicted million people from dying over the course of the next four months. I'm proud of that. I'm proud of the fact that in Africa, we are on the brink of the first generation of children being born AIDS-free. That's United States leadership and that is absent completely and wholly today. It's a mistake.

Andrea Mitchell: I want to talk about the Iran deal, but first about the North Korea deal, because he has created this contrast, the president, that he negotiates the best deals in the world, you negotiated the worst deal in the world. What have you seen come out of the North Korea summit, from what we know, that involves verification, inspection, denuclearization, or even the return of the remains?

John Kerry: It will be no surprise to anybody here that the truth is it's exactly the opposite. The Iran deal is the strongest nonproliferation nuclear agreement on this planet. It was until we pulled out.

When I sat down with the foreign minister of Iran, no secretary of state had sat with the foreign minister of Iran for 40 years, almost 40 years. On that day, Iran had 12,000 kilograms of enriched material, enough for 10 to 12 bombs. They'd mastered the nuclear fuel cycle. They had a plutonium reactor they were about to commission in a few months, which would have produced enough weapons-grade plutonium for two bombs a year. They were enriching at a high percentage and they had 27,000 centrifuges, 19,000 of which were spinning on a daily basis.

Today, even today with us having pulled out because the Iranians have not moved out, they have less than 5,000 centrifuges. They are limited to 3.67% enrichment, which you cannot make a bomb at that level. It's physically impossible. They are limited to a 300 kilogram stockpile for the next 15 years. They have a 25-year visual television tracking of every ounce of uranium they mine in the country. They have a lifetime, lifetime obligation, to live up to the additional protocol, which not a lot of nations have adopted, which allows us to inspect any facility we want if we suspect it is being abused.

That is what Donald Trump has walked away from and given up. In the doing of that, he's turned everything on its ear because now we no longer control our own security destiny. If the Israelis or the Saudis or somebody come to us and say, "Hey, you better bomb them now because they're abusing the situation," the pressure is going to build back up to what it was during the Obama Administration.

Prime Minister Netanyahu came to us several times and said, "You've got to let me bomb them." When I went to the king of Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah, he said, "The only thing you have to do is bomb." When I met with President Mubarak, he said, "You have to bomb." It was President Obama's courage to say, "You know, before we decide to bomb another Muslim country, and start another war in the Middle East, we're going to exhaust the possibilities of diplomacy." That's what we did.

Now we're back in a situation where other people may control what begins to evolve in the region, including the Iranians, sadly, who had not violated this agreement by everybody's understanding. There are real dangers here, folks, very real dangers of the potential of greater conflict in the region. If your house

is burning down, do you say to the fire department, "Don't put the fire out because it may burn down again in 15 years"? That's where we were with Iran. We put out the fire. Instead, Donald Trump has lit the fire again over something that might or might not happen way down the road, but which we know can't happen for at least those 15 years, and I believe could never happen because of the massive inspections and oversight that we have over an Iranian program.

But I'm not going to vouch for Iran. I'm just going to vouch for the process we put in place that says if they did try to break out, we're going to know it. We have every single option available to us then that we had available to us before we sat down. It's that simple.

Andrea Mitchell: Is it possible that this bold move, and arguably it's a lot better than fire and fury, and, "My nuclear button is bigger than yours," which was January's-

PART 2 OF 3 ENDS [00:32:04]

Andrea Mitchell: Fire and fury, and my nuclear button is bigger than yours, which was January second, a Tweet. So is it possible that sitting down with Kim Jong Un as the first American president to sit down with a North Korean leader is better than-

John Kerry: Well it's possible, you know what I'm saying, in principle. Now let me be very clear here. In principle, you want to try to be able to talk, and you want to have a rationale for meeting. But there's a reason that President George W. Bush, President Obama, President Reagan, President Herbert Walker Bush, nobody gave in on that process, because there were no guarantees on what Iran, on what North Korea was gonna do, and North Korea previously cheated on the framework that was created during the Clinton administration.

So here's the man who criticizes the Iran deal, which has unprecedented levels of inspection and accountability, and he goes and gives the lead of North Korea the very thing that his grandfather and father more than anything, which was a meeting with the President of the United States. And not only does he do that, but he does it without getting any agreement on inspectors going in, on verification, on the IAEA, on missiles, all of that. And we're told, we;; there's some sort of unwritten agreement.

Well folks, I have to tell you. If that's the greatest negotiation in the world, I got a couple of bridges you can buy somewhere. That does not ring. And in think most people who've dealt with ... Ambassador Chris Hill is here. Chris will tell you. He sat with these guys 38 times or something, and you can talk around and around. De nuclearization means something completely different to Kim Jong Un than it has meant to us. And that's why the message that came out, the communique after the meeting, is weaker than any other communique that has ever been issued with the North Koreans.

Andrea Mitchell: I want to ask you about diplomacy. The State Department has a lot of vacancies. We've seen turmoil and disaffections. Now there are leak investigations. It's a very different climate. You still talk to many of your former colleagues. What are you hearing? Does it matter?

John Kerry: Well of course it matters. It's a generational cost to America. In fact, I think it's fair to say to everybody here, and I say this with a heavy heart, that the lack of American leadership, the lack of the United States ... Take human rights. Today there's a story. I can't remember if it's the New York Times or the Washington Post. But there's a story about human rights being weakened at the United Nations, and Putin and Xi trying to rush, both taking advantage of the Trump administration, try to undo years of our efforts to hold people to standards.

I have to tell you folks. I've been in enough of these discussions in other countries, and I've visited prisons in other countries where people are being held under horrible circumstances. Think of the anonymity. You're in a country where you have no power. There is no due process, there's nothing. And you're plunked into a jail. And you may be tortured in any number of horrible ways, and nobody knows you're there, except your family. The anonymity of that kind of torture and abuse taking place daily, we were the bullock against that. The United States of America. And we have always stood up for human rights, Republicans and Democrats alike. And to see an administration retreat overtly and openly from his willingness to hold dictators and others accountable to that is a terrible scar on our long term interest, and we will pay a price for that.

Lives will be lost because of that. And we are going to have a much harder climb back up into that position. Now, I think the time frame is such that between 2018 and 2020, we can stem some of the damage. Take the TPP. TPP, you can be for it, against it-

Andrea Mitchell: The Trans Pacific Partnership. The trade deal with-

John Kerry: The Trans Pacific Partnership. We started that. We negotiated with those 11 other countries. We had a theory about creating rules of the road for the region, and you may not like parts of it. I think some of it could be renegotiated and strengthened. But it seems to me, if you're the greatest negotiator in the world, you say that to those countries. I'm not gonna abide by this, but I'm gonna change it in the following ways, and you gotta come onboard. No, no, no, no. He just walked away. Gave it up. And you know what's happened? The 11 countries have gone forward with the agreement, signed it themselves, but guess what?they gave up the provisions that we had fought to protect us. So American workers, American products now are going to be diminished in their capacity to be sold over there to the very 11 countries that we brought together and put into this kind of an agreement. Those are the losses.

Paris agreement. I went to China, and I negotiated with President Xi and his administration to get the Chinese to ... I'd been to every cop almost since 1992

in Rio, and have worked the issue climate change for years and years. And I knew, because of the failure of Copenhagen, we weren't going to get where we need to be without China.

So, we went to China. And we negotiated, and we got the Chinese to sign on so that President Xi and President Obama were the first two presidents to stand up in Beijing and say to the world, we together are announcing the amount we're gonna reduce our emissions. And that unleashed a torrent of participation that led to the success of Paris.

In Paris, I had the privilege of negotiating there, and of speaking at the very moment after we gave it into effect. And I said the beauty of what we've achieved in Paris is not that we have guaranteed that the earth's temperature will be kept to two degrees Centigrade. It is that we've sent a message to the marketplace that 196 countries are committed to trying to move to reduce their emissions and have an energy policy that deals with climate change.

So guess what, folks? Trump, without any scientific basis, without any rationale, simply pulls out, as a matter of a campaign promise ill made, and takes the United States away from the table. But here's what's happening. 38 of our 50 states have either ... 29 of them have a renewable portfolio law, eight of them have a voluntary renewable portfolio standard, 38 of them equaling 80% of the population of the United States of America remain committed to get the job done. They're all staying in Paris. So President Trump may have pulled out of Paris, but the American people are staying in Paris, and are committed to doing what they can to try to go forward.

Now the cost, the cost is that we lose our place at the table. We've taken what is the world's largest market in human history, the energy market, and we've written America out of the position of leadership. China's leading in the production of solar panels, wind, so forth. But last year, I'm proud to tell you, in the United States of America, 75% of the new energy that came online in electricity in our country came on line through solar. You know what coal was? 0.2%. So, Americans get it, I believe, and I think that's the kind of thing we need to talk to people about.

There are millions of jobs to be created. We don't even have an energy grid in America, did you know that? We have an east coast grid, west coast grid, little line goes across the Dakotas from Chicago, and then of course Texas has its own grid. But there's a huge hole in the middle of the country where you can't sell wind power from Minnesota or California to another part of the country. That's absurd in the nation that went to the moon and invented the internet. Those are the aspirations we ought to be offering, people, and I think Americans will buy into it.

Andrea Mitchell: Well, you talked, as we opened our conversation, about the need to connect to people where they live. Looking forward to 2020, how is the Democratic party going to do that?

John Kerry: Well, here's my take and you can kick me in the butt or whatever you want to paste on it, but-

Andrea Mitchell: Not right here.

John Kerry: You'd be surprised where people are willing to do it. But anyway, the point I'm making is that I think that we really don't have parties perse. And I know that hurts a lot of people. It grinds. At least right now we don't. Certainly not the parties I grew up with, with John Bailey the boss in Connecticut, and-

Andrea Mitchell: Could an independent run?

John Kerry: Well I don't know. It's possible. It's very, very difficult. But with enough time and energy and depending on what happens, it might be possible. What I do think we have to take note of is, we have this personality primary contest, and ultimately, you wind up with a nominee. And for a moment, you have a nominee and a party together. And then it goes through the election, and then it kind of dissipates into the next election.

I think what we ought to do is stop focusing on 2020. I don't think 2020 matters today. There's one thing that matters today. Winning control of the United States Congress 2018, and that's what everybody's energy ought to be dedicated towards. And you saw what happened yesterday. There were some stunning surprises in certain places.

Andrea Mitchell: There was certainly a big upset in New York City in a neighborhood I know well, in Queens and the Bronx, where Joe Crowley was a potential future speaker with an amazingly low turnout.

John Kerry: He's a good man, and there are dynamics at large here.

Andrea Mitchell: This is 28-year-old woman. She's a Latina, and she's brand new to politics Is that the direction-

John Kerry: Well I'll tell you what's happening. Let me tell you my theory of this. You didn't ask me, but I'll share this with you. I watched in the Senate, I was talking about this at a dinner last night here in Aspen with folks. In 1994, I watched the Gingrich revolution smack us, and that was the beginning of the change in the life of the Senate. Up until then, we'd have dinner at Ted Kennedy's house or somewhere, and you'd have Orrin Hatch there, and you'd have John Warner and Mac Mathias of Maryland and- bipartisan-

Andrea Mitchell: I was covering the Senate then.

John Kerry: And you'd talk about things, and you'd laugh and have a good time. And the next day, you'd work on it in the Senate. You'd get something done. And what began to happen was a vilification, a party orthodoxy, and ideological orthodoxy is a better way to put it, began to set in, that said, don't do that. You can't work with those guys. They're the enemy. We have to have power. We have to be the chairman. We have to control.

And the orthodoxy worked by promising people in the base, we're gonna lower your taxes. We're gonna have less regulation. We're gonna get rid of Roe v. Wade. We're gonna have a smaller government. We're gonna do all these things. But it didn't happen. And then you had the Tea Party that came along because that hadn't happened and people were pissed off. And then they didn't deliver. And then you had the Freedom Caucus come along, and that didn't deliver. And guess what, folks? Donald Trump represents a hostile takeover of the Republican party that came about because people are so angry and fed up on both sides of the aisle that they see the dysfunction of the system today.

And the test for all of us, everybody, nobody exempted, is whether we can put together the kind of door to door, grass roots, energized political effort that brings real solutions to real problems to people that will affect their lives in a way that begins to bring America back together again. I think, I believe that is doable. I can't tell you today one single major American infrastructure project similar to what we worked on years ago in the Big Dig in Boston, 'cause there isn't one.

Jerry Brown's struggling to do high speed rail in California, state project. New York's rebuilding La Guardia Airport, and it's a Port Authority project. But we're not doing what we need to do to build America. China's doing, a what, 60 country trillion dollar Belt Road program, rebuilding of the nation, investing. We're the richest country on the face of the planet, but we are not exciting people with a vision of how you strengthen our economy, create good jobs, build that future in a way that responds to our needs.

Andrea Mitchell: Can you think of a reason why Joe Biden shouldn't run?

John Kerry: No. I love Joe. Any number of people should run. But folks, come back, please Andrea, not 2020, 2018. That's the focus.

Andrea Mitchell: And what should the message be? We only have 30 seconds left.

John Kerry: Well I don't want to get in ... The message is how do you make ... Last night I shared with everyone at dinner, I'm sorry to repeat it here for those who were there, but most of you weren't so ... Sorry about ... It was a small Aspen-y dinner. What can I say.

Andrea Mitchell: Well, boil it down to 19 seconds or I'll get in trouble.

John Kerry: Fine. I had a professor at Yale University who told me that, in a lecture, that politics is a reaction to felt needs. Over my long years of public life, I have discovered what that really means. And if you don't respond adequately to those felt needs, you get kicked out, ultimately, or there's a revolution you don't like. It's a pretty simple stuff, folks. It's not rocket science. And Congress has not been responding to felt needs. Everybody has an interest in doing better on the border, doing better on immigration, having a solution. Everybody needs to make sure education system's working, health care's working.

Instead of just rattling off these polarizing positions, we have to go out and fight for a genuine agenda. And I tell you, when I first came back from Vietnam, I didn't protest the war immediately. I got involved in Earth Day. And 20 million Americans came out of their homes and then targeted the 12 worst votes in Congress. We defeated seven of the 12, and with that, Richard Nixon gave us the EPA. We didn't even have that. We had a Clean Air Act, Safe Drinking water Act, Marine Mammal Protection, Coastal Zone Management. Run the list. It happened because we made those needs voting issues. And that's exactly, in my judgment, the secret to gaining back our country and our future. Simple.

Andrea Mitchell: Thank you, thank you, John Kerry. We're all glad to hear you again. He's been working on a book. It's coming our September fourth. More from John Kerry to come.

John Kerry: I didn't hear that. September fourth.

Andrea Mitchell: September fourth.

John Kerry: The title of the book is Every Day is Extra, and I hope you'll all buy it. Thank you.

Andrea Mitchell: Thank you.

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [00:47:57]