

The following is a full transcript of Episode 3 of the 2020 season of the Praxis Radio podcast. You can also download it as a pdf [here](#) and listen/subscribe [here](#).

Praxis Radio 2020 Podcast

Episode 3: Chas Jewett, White Horse, SD

<orchestral music intro, “Praxis Theme” by Jason Cross continues to play under narration>

Taylor, the host of the show: “Welcome listeners—to a new installment of the 2020 season of Praxis. If you’re starting with this episode, you can go back and listen to the trailer or the first episodes for some more information on the show. If you’re subscribed, it’s super easy to do just that. If you aren’t subscribed, you should get on it! You can do that at all the places you listen to podcasts or by visiting praxisradio.com and clicking on Praxis.

This season is a return to a radio show road trip I took 5 years ago in the summer of 2015. Last week we were in Denver, and from there I drove north, along the edge of Wyoming and Nebraska, and eventually into the Black Hills of South Dakota. I was welcomed by a group of activists who were working on building a large black snake, a puppet that a line of people would operate at a protest the next weekend against pipelines in the state capital of Pierre. The group gathered was super hospitable, fed me bison burgers that evening, and let me camp out at this artistic home base for the night.

In the show notes, I have a link to another interview I took while in South Dakota that is referenced in today’s show, one with two of the large network of indigenous people who, in the summer before Standing Rock, were laying the groundwork for anti-pipeline direct action in defense of their land and water. There are also some further resources to learn about the current state of that activism—and indigenous-led campaigns around the country—in the show notes.

<music fades out>

I really enjoyed this conversation you’re about to hear, because we got to dig deep on crucial, deep ideas—like self care, mutual aid, and decolonization, ideas that sometimes in our rush to keep moving, can be degraded into simple slogans. I hope that you enjoy it too. Here is the beginning of my phone interview with Chas Jewett, an organizer, rancher, and member of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe, from August 26, 2020.”

<computer mouse clicks>

Chas Jewett (CJ): "...and I haven't been here for twenty years, so it's been kind of an adjustment as well. And I'm living on my family ranch and we've had this land, we've lived along this land since at least 1832, maybe 1823, we don't know for sure cause that I have lost in my memory. I think it's '23, but I always tell folks it's 1832 just to not be a liar.

<laughter>

Taylor Roseweeds (TRW): "Yeah, I mean, long enough, right? That's...

CJ: That's right *<laughs>*

TRW: That's a while, those twelve years compared to all that time.

CJ: Yeah, that's right. We've been here since before South Dakota was a state and since before we signed the Treaty of 1868 so, um, we outlasted both of those things. So that's interesting, when you think about it in the course of human events, a lot has changed since the Jewetts have been along this crick.

TRW: Yeah for sure, I should also just let you know that I'm recording now, I may not use it, I just forgot to tell you and I don't want you to sue me or anything for...

CJ: I assumed you were already, so that's why...

TRW: Good, good, alright. Well I don't think it matters too much that you didn't listen to the old one, it's really great, um, basically we talked about your history organizing, you were talking about doing anti-racist stuff in Rapid City, pipeline... supporting all the anti-pipeline stuff, we talked about climate change, we talked about indigenous leadership, we talked about...yeah, that's most of what we talked about. That's obviously glossing it over, but...

CJ: And when was it? What year was it?

TRW: This was summer 2015, so...

CJ: Wow!

TRW: So it's before Standing Rock, but y'all were doing all the preparation. Like I went out and met Leota Ironcloud at the Rosebud camp and this was before they broke ground at Standing Rock, so I mean a lot has happened so that's why I'm coming back to all of these."

CJ: That makes sense and I bet it will be interesting to listen to everyone. My life has changed 100% since then..."

<music fades in under narration>

TRW: “Rather than rely on my quick summary to Chas of our July 2015 conversation, here it is. Then, we’ll get into the ways her life has changed, as she says, 100%.”

<music fades out as audio from 2015 interview fades in with the sound of birds>

TRW: “So if you want to start just by introducing yourself and a little bit about who you are and how you ended up organizing?”

CJ: “Alright, my name is Chas Jewett, I’m a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe, I started organizing in around 2002 with the Sierra Club doing environmental organizing and, um, learned what an organizer was then. Before then I always have been organizing for a long time, I’ve been organizing my whole life, cause pretty much I like to visit and share information. That’s what I am.

TRW: What are you working on now?

CJ: Right now I’m working on— ooh Jeez—well, we’ve got a lot of like, race war kind of things happening in Rapid City, well and in the country, and so I got myself in the middle of a process that is a crisis intervention model—an indigenous crisis intervention model—so we’ve been using that to sort of engage folks in Rapid City. Pretty much the racist—most racist you know, place in western South Dakota. And, you know, there’s a lot of segregation— it’s pretty much two different worlds—Indian people and white people, we don’t know each other, we don’t mix. We tolerate each other as opposed to genuinely respecting and honoring each other and so that’s where we’re at.

And this is, you know, 200 years in the making, the colonists living in our sacred lands kind of situation and so it’s a huge... you know, it’s a huge thing. And as an organizer, you try to keep at least some distance from yourself and what you do and this has been, um, incredibly difficult for me to keep that distance and so it’s one of those things...you know, that we do. If we do this for a long time, I’ve been organizing for fifteen years or whatever... You sort of think if this is going to be the thing that makes you go to teaching

<laughter>

CJ: Or leave to do something else, or you know, go to farming. My dream whenever I think about not organizing anymore, I think about farming and like doing a goat farm and doing a whole big farm. And actually that’s something that I’ve been dreaming about for a long time. So maybe that will happen, but it seems like I get stuck up into what’s happening and issues, so, with the race stuff and the KXL stuff I’ve been doing that for a long time so I can’t really abandon it, you know. So I gotta stick with those kinds of—that stuff, the environmental stuff.

TRW: Mmm, yeah. Can you talk a little bit about the history with the pipeline and where everything’s at now?

CJ: Yeah. So, well you know I don't really pay attention to where it's at right now, you have to ask Sabrina for that, you know, the PUC stuff, everyday stuff, I'm not paying attention to that so much cause I really...in South Dakota, we granted TransCanada the permit already and in the processes of which I'm an intervener for, they've basically said that folks who are intervening now at this point have no standing. *<loud insect noise>* And y'know, the only people who really matter are the people who intervened in the first time and now we can't consider, you know, the differences in the environment since then so we can't consider climate change, so it's like there's been—so what they're saying, TransCanada, in reapplying for this permit is that nothing has changed at all in the years since they got their permit.

TRW: Which is...2010?

CJ: Right. So it's 2015 now and were in the midst of— you know last year, two years ago in Rapid City we had a blizzard called Atlas that shut down the town of Rapid City for several days and killed thousands of livestock across the prairie and had a huge impact. For them to deny that climate change exists... that came in October, that blizzard. That's totally strange and you know, there's— the ferocity of that blizzard was something that no one has seen before—I've never seen—I'm 43 years old. And you know things are different. The birds are singing earlier, later, the insects are bigger, I don't know, you know, it's here. It's changed and everyone knows it.

Five years ago or so, I was riding horseback at the ranch with my little niece and it was January and there was no snow on the ground and she, my niece and my little sister, they both sort of you know started talking about how weird it was and they both teared up and said 'there's supposed to be snow now'. And you know, things are supposed to be one way and things are totally in a different way and as indigenous people, we live so close to the earth, we have all these y'know, challenges with living in a dying world. And so a lot of our young kids choose not to live. They do suicide and they do things. They see the world around them and they choose not to live here, they choose to go back to, you know, wherever they came from cause this is a dying planet and they see that. Why would we all want to pretend it's not?

And yet, in order for us to be Americans and be you know, sane, we have to pretend that we're not killing the planet. And you know, a lot of people can't do that. A lot of people on the margins of our society can't do that. It's difficult. Being indigenous in this world is tough and we're doing what we can and we're rising now. On a huge level, we're doing what we can because we gotta step up. Our people, the Lakota, we signed a treaty with the federal government, we weren't conquered. We saw the writing on the wall was that we weren't going to, you know, be able to push them away because they would keep coming. So we did the best we could and we signed a great treaty with them— the Treaty of 1868, which was ratified with the federal government. They ratified that treaty, the treaty is the utmost law of the land of which we live. It's never been respected, it's never been honored and you know, as Lakota people, we always have to take the high road and...

TRW: And that puts you in a bad position when the people willing to take the low road are willing to take the lowest road that, y'know, kills everyone on the planet right? I mean, so where does that leave—so now there's obviously, I mean among the Lakota, but indigenous people around the world are leading on climate change and leading on addressing it, I think—

CJ: Yes

TRW: You know, cause some people never forgot how to do this a way that worked for thousands of years, right. So how does that play into that dynamic, that kind of high road dynamic when it...?

CJ: Well I think, you know, two years ago, last February we had a water meeting in Rapid City that sort of changed my perspective on a lot of stuff. We had our spiritual leaders, our political leaders, our revolutionary leaders, all in one room. And we heard the stories of the Fort McMurray Athabaskan peoples, and we heard the stories of the tar sands and all of that, and we rose up with ferocious language saying 'this is enough'. We're not going to let that pipeline through our country, cause that's the only thing we can say about this. That's the only thing we can say about that. We can say it's not coming through our land. And, you know, our land is all of western South Dakota—even if they don't recognize it. The federal government and the state government, even if they don't recognize it, that's our land. The aboriginal treaty lands of which we own. By law. And so if they don't want to respect that, they don't have to, but we're going to enforce it and I think that was the genuine kind of agreement with our people, in our people. To get our people to agree on anything is pretty amazing.

And also, our spiritual leaders told us, 'we have to tell our stories and we have to let people know who we are so that we can bring them around to our way of thinking'. We have to reach out, we have to make more relatives, we have to make more allies we have to, just really, y'know, allow ourselves to change the direction of the world by reaching out and— and doing the things and standing in unity. I think that's the point. We might not all agree on nothing—on a lot of stuff—but sure enough, we're all going to be standing there at Pierre on Sunday. You know, together. To let folks know that *< sigh >* it's gotta stop. We gotta stop it. And you know I think that it's a powerful time. On both sides, and you know they're going to continue to do all that they can in order to, you know, use all the resources and we're not going to be able to survive that need, and that greed. And so we're going to have to change the way we think about things, the way we live, the resources we use on a daily basis. There's a lot of...this is all personal, this waking up, this going forward, this choosing 'we' over 'I'. It's all personal and you have to do that, each of us has to do it, has to get to that place, has to do the work and figure it out...so it's a challenge. And organizing is difficult right now. But rewarding and fantastic and...

TRW: Super necessary!

<laughter>

CJ: Right, right, right! Critical! So it's a good time to be an organizer, it's a bad time to be an organizer. It's just, kind of, that kind of stuff, you know?

TRW: So how—I wanna kind of loop back around...you're doing environmental stuff and that's your background and you can't really look away from it when, y'know, a pipeline is going to come through the Black Hills, as you were saying, a sacred place, um...yeah a beautiful place I can attest now that I'm here, but then how does that loop back into work with racism and how are those—do you feel like they're connected? Do you feel people are making those connections?

CJ: You know, I made that connection I think for myself personally this last year. Which is, which makes me seem a little dimwitted having done this for so long, just figuring it out, but for me, with what's been happening with the Ferguson, and the minority disproportionate population in our prisons, and you know just the militarization of stuff, that we're reaching a crescendo. Where, you know, where people are resources and they're being treated badly. Our human resources are being depleted just like our environmental resources. So you know, that's something that I sort of knew. You know, I've been doing this peace and justice stuff, restorative justice... the very first political act I ever had when I came to Rapid City was on police brutality. A man was shot wielding a knife from twenty feet away, so I had to stand with my people and say that's not appropriate for our sick and our incapacitated people, our drunk people, to be dying on the streets.

You know, there's other ways to deal with these situations, and so you know it's all the same thing. The respect of the human, respect of the earth. We are the earth's people, and so all that we do the people and the earth are the same. We rape and exploit the people, and we rape and we exploit the earth and so until we stop that... which is huge, because it's ingrained and it's in our system and it's you know, it's intrinsic to our identity as Americans to believe that we... that we came up out of nothing, that we manifested destiny, that this was something that we created, this beautiful amazing country. And you know, there's so much wonderful amazing stuff about America that yeah, it is something like that. But there's some fundamental things that are wrong. And our wrong has been bleeding out to the rest of the world. You know, the wars of choice and for resources are ridiculous.

TRW: So how, have there been any ways in which working against the pipeline— cause I know across the country, there's kind of partnerships between Native people working on it, ranchers, all of these sort of seemingly unlikely partnerships. Is that happening here and is that helping kind of break down some of the barriers and start conversation around race?

CJ: Sure, you know, I think some of the more committed white allies, cowboys, or what have you— I don't like to say cowboys, cause there's a lot of Indian cowboys, too! And my people were cowboys, I grew up on a ranch. I'm a fifth-generation rancher—we're cowboys too, but cowboys and Indians is not...it doesn't, it's words that describe, you

know, a whole bunch of different people. But I think that there are some folks whose eyes and whose worlds have been opened to unlikely friendships and alliances and things like that and because of the pipeline, sure. Are those things translating to the other parts of the movements? It's one movement that we're doing. It's the people's movement. The people's movement is also the earth's movement. You know, the earth movement people don't get that, so they spend a lot of resources on the earth and yet really have a lot of disdain for the people. So you know, there's a lot of anger at what the people are doing—the stupid people who don't know, the stupid people who go to Walmart, the stupid people who use all these resources unknowingly.

Some of the folks in our movement in the environmental movement can live without using any—a very—like, non-exploitive world. They can live in situations that have them using no plastic or have them eating organic food or growing it, doing all this stuff, cause they have that privilege. There's a very privileged movement, the environmental movement is very privileged. They talk about you know, they ban GMO food from their parties, they do you know, they have, you know, catered local foods at their meetings and things like that. And it's like, then they have the Indian people here who are living on styrofoam and soaping up with buckets and living—having to do the necessities of living in a poverty kind of situation. Those two worlds—those two guys, are they talking more? Maybe?

You know maybe things are going, I do think that within each of the movements, even the reproductive justice movement of which I'm hugely a part of, I got to spend some time with Gloria Steinem earlier this summer, and you know I was a part of defeating two abortion bans in the state of South Dakota. I'm deeply entrenched in that movement as well. Are those women standing on the lines with us and protecting our children? About and racism kind of stuff? Some of them. Some of them, sure. And so that's a good thing. But all of the movements have to be decolonized. They have to understand how we got here and understand the harms and the wrongs that were done and be able to rectify that within themselves and then be able to work in a transformative way.

TRW: Yeah. How do you think that's done? Is it just talking about it? I mean these are so taboo. Being from a place that's not as extreme as Rapid City, but a lot of my family lives in kind of a similar area of segregation and they're over here and we're over here. Do you think it's just busting open those taboos and, you know, saying 'white supremacy' at the press conference...

CJ: Right, right...

TRW: ...and saying 'genocide' at the press conference, or what?

CJ: Right, well a little bit of both, a little bit of that. I do think there has to be brave, courageous people who are willing to have these conversations in a real way. You know, people like, yesterday, we had the Chamber of Commerce, we had the president of some banks and some businesses and some people who were standing up and saying, 'hey we don't want to be known as 'Racist City''. And we acknowledge that we're not

going to solve the problem, but we're engaged in real authentic talks, so you know, those people have to also have—and I did, cause I know all this stuff in all these movements, I said you guys, we're talking about the Keystone pipeline, you know. And I was like, 'how do you guys all feel about the Keystone pipeline?' And this woman was like, 'well, I don't know what the official Chamber position is...' and I said, 'well, what you need to know is all the Indians are opposed to it.' You know, that's the divide between your people and my people. We're all opposed to it.

My aunt, who's one of the most conservative women that I know, she said, 'my girl, when are you guys gonna stop that pipeline'. We gotta stop what's happening and we're trying to do that. But you know we're...racism is one thing, environmentalism is another one, women's rights is another thing, but we—all of us I think—organizers are starting to figure out 'hey this is kind of the same thing' and as soon as we get people from each of those movements ready to stand with each other, ready to share their networks, ready to share their resources, then things will change. And hopefully it's going in that direction but who knows?

TRW: Yeah...

CJ: Who knows... < sigh > I feel hopeful some days and some days I don't, you know. You do this work for a long time and you start to see the things that matter. And you know I told you yesterday that I—after this last election when we lost so badly and we didn't do anything and I put so much energy into it, I was done. I was gonna go to that goat farm and I was ready to be done with it. And then this stuff happened and I felt drawn to it and I felt like I had to do it. As someone whose been organizing in Rapid City for a long time, I knew I needed to be a part of this conversation, cause it was almost my responsibility. The first thing about being a Lakota is to be a good relative. It's our most important value. Is to be a good relative and you have to know that you're related to everything. The birds, and the bees, and you, and bears, and...and everything, you know. And so when this happened with our kids and with Alan Locke being shot, I knew I had to be a good relative and do the things I knew how to do, which is to talk to people. So now we're talking about racism you know. And so I can, with my experience in all these movements, see how it's all together and I can have all those conversations. So I think that as more organizers like me sort of get to that realization— that we're not in isolation, it's just one movement, or it's not segmented movements, it's not multiple movements, it's not the environmental movement, it's the people's movement. And the people's movement includes the earth because it includes indigenous people and we are of the earth, right?

TRW: Well we all are, it's just accepting it as a fact, right?

CJ: Right? Right, that's so true, humanity man, we're human beings and that's what we said yesterday, it's not hard for us to be human, it's not hard. We just have to remember how to do it.

TRW: < sigh > Yeah. Definitely. And I mean, time...the clock's ticking, but I think that as more people realize it, hopefully the infrastructure is still there. That's the thing about— I mean America is so wrong in so many ways, but the strength of it in some ways, I mean, is the strength of how short the project has been so far? You know a couple hundred years? We've done a ton of damage in a couple hundred years but there's... the portions of the indigenous population that are here—it's not very long ago. You know, and that's still...

CJ: No, 150 years! My grandfather was born in 1890. That was the year of Wounded Knee. My grandmother was born in 1902. So I span that...that...bit of history in one family. My dad was the tenth of ten children and he grew up going to the boarding schools and being stolen from his family as a five year old and beaten by priests for speaking his language. And the amazing thing about this movement, about what's happening right now is that there are Indian people who survived that and who can lead this. Imagine how amazing we are as human beings because we can overcome what colonization did to us. Just last year. It's ongoing! The genocide is continuing and we live with that and we know that. They told us to be educated and we got educated, and now we're angry.

<laughter>

CJ: You know its a two-edged sword. You know they want us to become Americans, well I am an American and I know the law! And it's not ok for what's happening! It's not ok. You know, for the industry to be running the Congress and to be making all the decisions, making all the decisions in the parties. The industry has taken over, for everything. It's all industry. You know we're not just workers. That's what they think we are, and buyers. They just want us to sit around and consume, you know, and that's not what America is. That's what America's been told that they are for the last ten, fifteen years. You can see it, you can see it since the Reagan administration, since the corporatization of things. Both parties are complicit in the destruction of our ideals as Americans. Both parties are giving themselves over to greed and glory and have left the people behind. So you know, the people are rising up. You get what you do—are we going to get it together before its too late? < sigh > Good question.

TRW: We'll see...

CJ: Yeah, good question...

TRW: I mean we will literally see...

CJ: Good question...

TRW: You and I are young enough...

CJ: Right

TRW: We're gonna find out...

CJ: right

TRW: If we win or not...I think. I'm pretty confident that we're going to see.

CJ: Yeah, well, and we gotta do a lot of work. That's the thing— it's so much work, it's so huge. Where do you start? You know?

TRW: Wherever you are, I think...

CJ: That's right

TRW: I mean, where do you think you start?

CJ: I started— I'm doing racism full time! That's what I'm doing now. And the good thing about me as an organizer, I've always learned, you know. Am I still being effective? Are they still hearing me? Am I still doing what the people want me to do? And this feels right. This feels like what's supposed to be happening. And you know, it's always like, it's always a tenuous place where you are in front of the people. And so, you gotta make sure that you don't go too far ahead, cause they won't follow you. So I'm not in any way saying that I'm a leader of the people or speaking for the people or speaking for anyone. I'm speaking from my own experience as an organizer and what I'm saying is resonating with a lot of people. A lot more people than were five years ago, that's for sure. I haven't changed one bit in my rhetoric, but now people are liking it and people are supporting it and people are joining with me and saying they agree, you know. So there's some kind of awareness, and some kind of awake-ness happening, so that's good

TRW: Is there anything else, just in the last couple minutes we have, that you want people to know, or learn about, or think about?

CJ: Well I think I've been pretty in depth with you, in all this, so I guess I couldn't really add to any of it, but I do think that women, and reproductive justice, and environmental justice, and racial justice, it's all the same thing. It's all the same tactics. It's all the same words that we have to be able to say to communicate better. And you know, we're real connected. We got the internet, we got, y'know, Twitter, we got all these things. So we're at the cusp of being able to create some— one big movement, but you know, I think folks are waiting for Martin Luther King to come out. But what it isn't it's not about Martin Luther King Jr., it's a bunch of them and they're— in different parts of our country, different leaders are going to emerge. And those folks, we have to congregate around, we have to support, and we have to let them, and we have to be comfortable with sharing—sharing the spotlight, sharing the media, sharing resources, sharing information.

I always step back from a movement where folks hoard information and they hoard people and they hoard all that kind of stuff because that separates the people. I'm an organizer that if you talk to me in five minutes, I tell you every single thing I know this last week. This is what I've been doing, this is what we're doing, this is what's happening, and that's just the kind of organizer I am. And I'm sharing information, all the information, what I honestly think about all the things, you know, authentically. And if I'm wrong about those things later, I'm wrong about those things. And I admit it and I move on and I learn and I grow and I— you know, if I make a judgment about people that turns out to not be true, I admit it and I grow from it and I move from it because we have to be able to be wrong about stuff and to be teachable, you know.

So many of us organizers, or people, humans, we sort of walk around thinking we know it all and we have to be self-assured and we have to be, you know, be a big success, and outward appearances and really what we are is just afraid, severely frightened human beings. All of us, because we feel that separation from each other and as a Lakota person, I know I'm connected to my siblings, I know I'm connected to my parents, I know I'm connected to my people, I know I'm connected to the earth. I know where I belong. So that's the reason why we are capable of leading these movements. It's why we're capable of going through what we've gone through in the last 150 years and still be able to, you know, sit nicely with white folks without, you know, going crazy. And you know it's because we know our place. And you know, everyone, America's got to figure out their place. We're not a superpower. We're a scary, scary place and we're on a path toward you know, leading the world toward devastation. We like to— you know, we're proud of ourselves and we like to be over-proud and that's dangerous. So you know, as Americans, as human beings we all have to be, we have to get humbled in order to be human.

TRW: Hmm...

CJ: And America needs to be humbled and the people need to humble it. We need to humble her. *<bird chirps>* We need to humble ourselves and then maybe we can, you know, rise from the ashes of what we've created and we can save it and start planting some trees and do some hemp and make some decisions that mean something more than, you know, some fat cat's, you know, banking pouch. We need to be sensible about stuff and we need to value stuff other than stuff. Right?

TRW: Yeah, I can be down with that.

CJ: Right?

TRW: Well, thank you so much for talking with me.

CJ: You're welcome.

TRW: And yeah... I hope we win."

CJ: We've got to. There's no other choice. Alright, we're done then, huh?"

<recorder clicks off>

<music fades in under audio from the 2020 interview heard at the top of the show>

CJ: "...I bet it will be interesting to listen to everyone. My life has changed 100% since then so...

<music fades out>

TRW: "Yeah, do you want to just start there?"

CJ: Sure

TRW: What are you up to now, what's changed?

CJ: Sure. 2015....I...well now, like I said I'm home on the Rez and since then— and I'm not really organizing anymore I know you're wanting to know some movement stuff, but I've really stepped back, you know. Probably been quarantining for a year pre-pandemic in a way, here on the Rez, just because I think after Standing Rock and then you know, what was happening in Rapid City, both of those things kind of just blew my mind, my expectations totally out of the water for success in both ways. Standing Rock and the work in Rapid City and—and they both forced me to stop organizing, so it's been really pretty tumultuous in the last few years since that happened.

But you know, the one thing that you can count on is that Keystone is coming back around, right? That's all so, yesterday and today, I know there's a lot of actions happening here on the Rez against the man camps that they're building down on the southwest corner of my Rez and you know, I'm still one of the litigants against the Keystone pipeline. I'm one of the Sierra Club litigants because I have a little bit of land down there by the Keystone pipeline path. You know, we won and yet still we're seeing a lot of activity down at the man camp area down there. So I think what's happening is that TransCanada thinks it's gonna be able to get the permits quickly and so continue to do work. You know, this is the administration for that to happen. Just think it's pre-Trump. I've been thinking in my head about 2015, what it was like and we had no idea then what would happen that the Trump administration would come, come to fruition, it wasn't in 2015 even a thought I don't think that he would win...

TRW: Mmhmm

CJ: So it's crazy, it's so crazy thinking about it now, and you know truly my perspective then has changed so much. I would have considered myself at least standing with the Democrats I guess, being for Standing Rock, but now I think I see them both as enemies of the people and the planet, right? I've come around that far, but also you know in leaving the Democratic Party for good, it was Standing Rock, right? That was

the Obama administration's pipeline that they fast tracked that— the Democrat, he bypassed permitting processes, the Obama administration, so that's why really, and plus the violence that came upon us. The state violence there at Standing Rock which really shocked me. And the reason why I left the work in Rapid City had a lot to do with that violence as well, because the night that the water was shot at the protestors? I don't know if you remember that, it was freezing temperatures, and below-zero temperatures, and they were spraying water cannons at human beings right?

TRW: Mmhmm, I do remember that.

CJ: Those folks were— the Pennington County Sheriff was in charge that night. And the Pennington County Sheriff was where I was doing the police brutality work in Rapid City, so it came round full circle. When I was up at Standing Rock, I was still working with the folks who were spraying water at us there and trying to work with them in good faith and I realized that I couldn't. I couldn't continue that work in any kind of way. So after Standing Rock, I really sort of was unable to go forward in a good way with the work that I was doing, with a good heart, because I saw that it was really pointless for us to engage in conversation with white folks, white supremacy, with police brutality right? I'm all—I'm totally down with where the Black Lives movement folks are today in burning down police stations right?

TRW: Yeah, sure.

CJ: I mean, we're yeah, that's... I'm there. We're at the point of violence and we have been, right? But it's that understated violence that we don't recognize as violence, that we've been letting go for so long because we're good people right?

TRW: Yeah, and that's, I mean, that's amazing to hear that story because back in 2015 when we talked, you were making these connections. We were discussing the connections between like state, *rayschist*, racist, *rayschist?*, racist violence and climate change, and degrading the earth and how it's all kind of part of this white supremacist project and I find it really interesting. I guess I'm wondering what do you think, you said it a little bit, but with Black Lives Matter and I think a lot of white, like, I don't know, progressive, liberal people are encountering some of these ideas for the first time amid these Black Lives Matter protests— ideas of abolishing state violence through the institution of police...

CJ: Right, but the history of policing, just go to that! I learned, you know I feel in some ways that I'm...I have been, I always am so naive as I walk in this life. I think my dad and mom did a great job of sort of protecting me from the ugliness, even though I did grow up with a lot of violence, you know, but still I had— the ugliness of the state violence I think that that's the reason why we've been able to have this state for 500 years right? This state of white supremacy, this state of white violence and white silence, you know, we're just good people, right? We don't want violence and yet that's the only thing really that's going to make any change, right? You know, we think that we've had these sort of half measures, the Ghandis and the MLKs and so we get, we

want to 'be the change' and so we try to be as peaceful and as loving and as thoughtful about our carbon intake, all of this, it's all so personal, right? When it's actually— the perpetrator of all the violence, all the bad stuff is the state violence, right? It's not the personal, it's the state.

And truly, we're dumbed down in this nation, so we don't have the ability to imagine another way of living, so many people, right? And not just white people, but everyone that has to live as a cog in capitalism, you know, they don't have time to really imagine other ways to live, imagine another way without policing, imagine a way even of living without violence. Violence is a direct result of rape culture right? It's 'if we don't get what we want, we're gonna take it', and that's how capitalism is. And so it's all you know, if you're not actively doing that violence, but you are through these subversive ways cause we've dumbed down our humanities to the point where they don't even recognize when they're being tortured, right? I mean we don't, we are bombarded on a daily basis of torture against women, torture against people of color, Black people, indigenous folks, we're erased and we're tortured in our psyche every day. And you know I just think it's so wonderful that folks are starting to really wake up about it. And that's the great thing, you know I do think this is a wonderful time, as always it is, of healing right? Healing is ugly and it's beautiful at the same time and so hopefully we can—those of us who are still, who are able— who can imagine and start to enact what the world's going to be like post 2020. Right?

<laughter>

CJ: We're going to continue, we're going to survive as indigenous peoples, we survive, we always survive.

TRW: Mmhmm

CJ: And what is our 2021 gonna look like and how are our communities going to have changed? Who have we lost in the pandemic? Who have we lost in those other pandemics, in the genocide pandemic, you know. Because we're in a post apocalyptic world, right? Indigenous folks on Turtle Island, we live in a place that's already been ravaged and yet we still live. And so we can help guide, I think, folks through what's coming next, we just have to have imagined what that is, right?

TRW: And that leads right into a couple things I want to talk about based on our last conversation. You know I think— like I was just saying about how this language around abolition is kind of working its way up through the consciousness into people who haven't thought about it before— so especially in the five years since we talked, I think the ideas of decolonizing have mainstreamed somewhat, mainstreamed as far as like into mainstream, white-dominated movement spaces, I think there's a...

CJ: Suuuure...

TRW: ... buzzword quality to this right now...

CJ: (*sarcastically*) Oh suuuuuure 'look, we have acknowledgements everybody'...

TRW: Exactly.

CJ: We are you know, that's, yeah...

TRW: I'm glad you know where I'm going with this.

CJ: Right

TRW: I worry, I worry as a white person that I have been guilty of this, I worry that other people are going to misunderstand and oversimplify this really complex process and idea so, I don't know, I guess what do you think about that? How do we actually do the work of decolonizing both like, the movement, and also just, the world, our society, this place we live together?

CJ: You know that is right, that we have to do it ourselves, right? We have to do the decolonization in ourselves and what does that mean? For each person it's a different question. First you have to ask yourself, 'how do you benefit from capitalism? How do you benefit from white supremacy?' And then you gotta imagine how to change that. Right? How do I —what do I want to do with these benefits? White people have money and they need to be giving it out. You know, I love the mutual aid stuff— that folks are really truly helping each other and things are being transformed by community as opposed to by the state, right? Because the state is such a failure, you know, it's a total failure and so we're realizing that community has and will step up and act as if, and create that world that we need to create.

We're already doing that you know, the people are on the street in Portland and Seattle, and all these places and they're throwing it down next to each other. I try not to watch it because my spirit is so...um, burdened a lot with all that so much anymore. I'm not desensitized anymore to the humanity that we see on video anymore, really, and so it bothers me a lot and so I try not to watch any of it, but I do right? I do, when Charlottesville happened, I literally was catatonic. I couldn't --I couldn't get off of my bed for three days and I watched it on my phone, I just watched it all, like all of the lead-up and then...you know what happened after that? I— That's when Creator stepped into my life and said, you can't. You can't just do it that way. You can't just sit there and be glued to it.

You know that media stuff, the social media stuff is so destructive in so many ways—so helpful in a lot of ways! But so destructive in so many ways for our society and you know our little egos are so wrapped up in our little phones and so it's a personal challenge we all have to overcome that ego. And once we do, and we spend some time in prayer or ceremony, then we're transformed into vessels of, you know, of Creator's—we can perform to our original instructions as indigenous folks. Our original ways of being, being in a relationship, grounded in prayer, and ceremony and you know,

relationship with the earth right? We're just watching the demise of our surroundings like it's a, like it's a movie, right? Like we shouldn't be having popcorn we're just watching the ice melt and the ice shelves you know. <laughs> I don't know if you do, but I do. I watch that stuff and there's nothing I can do and that takes so much out of my spirit so I try not to do it anymore.

TRW: Sure

CJ: I've been transformed by participating in Ojibwe ceremonies, the Nibi Walk. I started in 2017, right after Charlottesville happened, Creator said, really spoke to me in a way. I'd met Sharon Day just randomly at a political event. I was organizing, went to some kind of public policy conference or something, over in Minneapolis, was starting a new political action committee, and I was going to work on getting Native candidates, all this stuff. And then, you know, I met Sharon Day and she said, 'you should come on this Nibi Walk', and I was like 'ok, sure, whatever'. And I was like, yeah, I didn't even know what a Nibi Walk was and I was very dismissive and polite and 'thank you', you know and I moved on. And then two weeks later, I had been like catatonic for like three days and somehow Creator said, 'get up to North Dakota'. And I got up to the border of North Dakota and Sharon and her water walkers were carrying water from the source of the Missouri River. And I joined them and we carried it down to where the Mississippi is, which is over 2,000 miles and it transformed me.

And that's why I think I'm home now for real, is because, you know we walked the Red River. Again, I've walked three or four rivers since then with her, Sharon, and we walked the Red River and I realized that as myself, I didn't have to do anything more. I've been organizing for twenty years, you know, I could really step back, you know. So right after that walk I went and bought the chickens so I've been just wanting to really hunker down now for myself and so that was in 2017. I've really put myself into a different place — I have ducks now and I take care of ducks and I love that. It makes me really happy — and chickens— so I've been pretty much food sovereign for a while, cause we're a cattle ranch, we've been ranching here for a long time, but I brought some chickens and some ducks, we had some turkeys but they all died! I can't even believe it can't tell you what happened...

TRW: The turkeys?

CJ: I'm the worst turkey person in the whole land! I swear to god!

TRW: You gotta go to my old urban neighborhood where there were wild turkeys that nobody could get rid of

CJ: Oh no, the wild turkeys are here! The wild turkeys are here! I could go hunt one of those up if I wanted to be a hunter, girl!

TRW: Uh huh

CJ: But, I just, I was trying to raise those suckers and I just couldn't and I feel bad about it, but anyway. Yeah we have eggs and I'm trying to— thinking maybe I should get some pigs so I can have bacon as well, but if I don't have to buy stuff from the store then I'm not a capitalist or not participating in the system, right? So I'm trying to live in another way where I can feel free and not dependent on the system that's broken and that's breaking things, that needs to be reimagined. So like I said, the mutual aid and all those things, I think since 2015 that's what's changed you know, so much. And I jokingly said about all the [land] acknowledgments, that's too, something that's so amazing that has changed! Like all of the sudden we have a name again, you know, we're people again. There's a number you can call and find out whose sovereign land you're standing on. Right?

TRW: Yeah you can text them you don't even have to call...

<laughter>

CJ: Right right right right! Isn't that cool? Like, how cool is that? My girl, since 2015, so hey! we're—it's happening, it's happening so there's good stuff. Oh my god, you're making me feel so much more hopeful just even just having this conversation.

TRW: Yeah...It's funny, when we talked before, you talked about your desire to sometimes leave organizing and go start a goat farm... so you didn't mention goats

CJ: Shut—Was I, was I?

TRW: Yeah and you were saying then you couldn't leave yet and I gotta say, I just really applaud your decision to take care of yourself. Because I think especially women and especially women of color, and indigenous women, but all women, are really expected to sacrifice forever? And I think ...

CJ: Right, thank you! That's cool of you to say and you know, it's true. And I have, since my early 20's, since I decided I was going to continue to survive and live, you know, I made this choice and I have put myself first in every situation. You know my dad gave me this wonderful sense of pride in place and in being and that is associated with this place that I've come back to— this ranch that I'm living on, this Jewett crick. It's even named after my grandfather, Jewett crick and he gave me such a pride in that, that I didn't have to, you know, be anything else and so I would always feel comfortable in quitting jobs and leaving situations and doing everything and coming back to the ranch, I always had a home base. So I put myself first and whenever I felt like I couldn't do it anymore, I came on home. And I'm so fortunate, right ?

TRW: Mmhmm

CJ: And I recognize that I'm very, very fortunate I love my family, I'm really happy to be home right now at this time. These are holy times, right? These times of fear and panic. These are holy times and we have to bunch up. You bunch up with your people and my

dad always taught us that if things were wrong and people were sick, you bunch up with them and you pray and you do those things that you do to survive together, right?

TRW: Yeah, I love that and I'm glad you share that, because I think so much of the country... the opposite of that is happening right now and, a quote I pulled from when we talked before, you said, 'it's not hard to be human, we just have to remember how to do it' and I think that's what we've been talking about this time. But y'know, something I've really struggled with— both because it's in the region I'm living in, and I know it's in, you know, now that you're out of the city it's probably better... being on the Rez— but dealing with the ways that the right in this country has come to power and just how... inhuman and how that whole politic is just... just based on having an utter lack of empathy for people who aren't, not only who aren't like you, but who aren't literally you, um...that... Do you think those people *< sigh >* it's just so hard to me you know, cause I agree with you that it's not hard to be human and feel that connection. But like, do you think that these folks are going to remember that?

CJ: (*quietly*) Fuck, no.

TRW: And what do you think is going on there?

CJ: No... there's a sickness. There's a sickness, there's a sociopath, there's a deep mental illness that goes along with this greed. And also, so many folks are traumatized. The trauma that it takes to instill that white violence —on both sides— on both sides. You know we as people of color and indigenous folks, we feel the violence against us, but also you know the internal white violence to maintain and to support that violence, that's violence. You know, I think a lot of those folks are too fearful and too traumatized to really change and so we just gotta create without them.

TRW: Hmmm

CJ: We gotta create another world that doesn't let them in charge. You know they've been in charge in South Dakota my whole life, pretty much. I meant there was a little time when there were some sensible people but this capitalism... it's a monolith, you know. Our individual-ness, it's us versus them, humanity versus greed, so, you know that way of being has been the way. I mean we commodify everything. We commodify bodies, we commodify trees, and grasses, and bees, you know— everything's got a dollar amount in *Wašiču* culture, and rape culture, you'll take it—take what you need physically, violently and you know, in a dehumanizing way, right? Slavery, all of these things. And that's where the cops come from which is why we're at that place. You know now we have to really, you know, reimagine the system and I think we can. I think we can figure it out, I think there's a way of doing social work, of taking care of society and social work, and bringing out peacekeepers instead of these attack dogs right? I mean let's change...they're going to war; we're just living!

TRW: Yeah

CJ: That's what I said to the police chief in Rapid City, when I was there I said, 'you're going to war— we're just living!'. Y'know, we're not going to war with you, we're just frickin' having our own drama, it's nothing to do with you, you guys are always, you know, when you're called you're making it worse.

TRW: Yeah and that's something I've really admired just the past, even just this summer in South Dakota— in so-called South Dakota— across different groups of Sioux people, other indigenous people, both, two instances I'm thinking of—blocking the bikers who came to Sturgis during covid from, you know, setting up checkpoints to say 'you're not coming through here, we're trying to protect our people from this virus', and also the Black Hills land defenders whose trial starts today, who were trying to block access to Mount Rushmore during Trump's rally there, I believe?

CJ: Sure, sure I do know a little bit about it, but you know I've been off of social media so I know a little bit, but I know they raised a whole bunch of money to do the defense, so that's great. And I don't...Rapid City is a hard place. I bet they're going to get convicted, cause the trial, the people, they're not going to support these guys. But I— you know like I said, I didn't watch any of the live events. I've really been trying to step back in the organizing as an Indian person because I mix things up for myself personally. You know, the work had become... so... you know, we as Indian people, everyone, we're taught to be leaders or we have to be representatives of our race, we have to represent everyone every time we go. So we're thrust into leadership right away so in politics that happened to me and so I was, this whole time, for twenty years now since I started with Sierra club back in 2002 in Rapid City. I was all involved in that so I just really stepped back and I know it's not about me and myself but I don't know anything, so that's kind of my long way of saying I think what they did was awesome.

<laughter>

CJ: And I didn't even know it was happening or anything and I didn't watch, but I saw some, a little bit.

TRW: Sure, I think you still know a lot just for your own credit...

CJ: Sure... because my friend shared, that's the only way I know if my friends share stuff on Instagram and I check that every now and then and that's all. I'm only on Instagram and I unfollowed a bunch of people when I came back on. I was like, I don't want to know any organizing people, but then they all bled together so my life is organizing so there's no way I'm going to get away from it.

TRW: Yeah

CJ: But I spend most of my time gardening this summer and I'm looking into building a greenhouse this fall and wanting to really work on that whole food sovereignty stuff. Like I said before, I want to really put myself to use in that way. Now that I'm home on the Rez. We ran out of eggs at our local tribal grocery store during the covid stuff, right?

TRW: Mmhmm

CJ: That could get worse. Cause that hasn't gone away right, that's still a real thing, that folks are in hiding and like, you said that you're in hiding, so that's great I'm glad cause we all should be! If we just did that and had enough respect for each other, like I said before, they don't care that the planet's on fire and they don't give a shit about their neighbor during a pandemic, right?

TRW: Yeah, well the last couple things I want to ask you, you kind of touched on, but I'm curious who...who do you think, even if you're not looking at it every day, who do you think in general is articulating this other, better way for us to be? And live? Like 'the new world' as it were. Maybe it's an old world coming back. However you like to define that—who do you think is sharing that vision of something different most effectively right now? Like who's inspiring you?

CJ: See, that sucks because I'm totally like, out of the loop, but I do I have a lot of respect for what's coming out of the southwest— you know the Red Nation folks and all that stuff... but Standing Rock, the fiercest folks who I think came were the folks from Canada— the Canadian Indians. Those guys are always really on the frontline you know, Tiny House Warriors and all those guys up there. I think that everyone, as far as indigenous people, we're all trying to do what we can to help transform the planet. So you know everyone has a bunch of stuff to share. My friend Dr. Christina Castro of the Three Sisters Collective, the folks down in Santa Fe are doing good stuff with the city and all over the place. There's a bunch of different folks who are really transforming their communities. All those, that's a lot, but I'm not, like I said, I'm not really... I don't know all the tenets of everything.

I read somewhat and try to stay informed but I've really given myself permission to... and now I have chickens and ducks and you know would've had turkeys, but I'm still learning, still learning, but you know, we have cattle and horses and we've been here for a long time and now it's really about like being here for the future Jewetts. I'm sitting down today, because we have a pandemic, to do homeschooling of my nephews. That's my job now kind of in a way. *<laughs>* I take care of the ducks and I administer administration of the computer programs that are getting them going and it's been really, just a great little time here. So being forced to be at home and we're you know, doing what we always do which is thriving in our circumstances. We as indigenous folks we adapt, right? That's why we're still here right? So now we as a nation have to adapt to the reality that Black folks aren't going to put up with what they've been putting up with.

TRW: No

CJ: Right. And so what is that going to look like for us as indigenous people? What is that going to look like for us as Americans, that we call ourselves? So we're really at a critical time.

TRW: Yeah

CJ: And I'm really glad for that...

TRW: Yeah

CJ: And welcome and so glad that we can sit and not move around and not pollute the heck out of stuff and I'm happy for that. You know, there's other things, there's ways we can transform things further but you know baby steps,

TRW: Yeah...

CJ: hopefully! Hopefully you know, hopefully figure it out cause it's going to be tricky, tricky stuff you know?

TRW: I'm hopeful that it's going to help a lot of people find balance. You know, it's like you said, we're both lucky in that we can— we can do this and stay home and we're not having to go like, pick tomatoes right now in the fire smoke and the pandemic. And also you know, I'm hoping that this kind of forced slowdown is gonna click people in to something. I mean it's just, there's a lot of work to do for everybody. Like you said, but it looks all kind of different ways so it's been really good to talk to you and hear what you're doing.

CJ: As always, it's all over the place huh? Right? So that's the way it is. But usually it's entertaining. So thank you. I haven't done any, you know I'm not working at all, but you know, we talked before so I was like, 'shit yeah'.

And I have been working with folks in Ireland, too that's the other thing. I didn't mention it, but I've been to Ireland twice and was treated as a relative there by the Irish folks and I just really admire everyone and since have sort of learned a lot of their history and their organizing history. They've done some really great things to come to be as people who live under oppression as well, and that trauma of colonization is huge for those folks too. You know, all of us survivors have a way of surviving that we can really help share, guide us all into the future, right? Like how can we do it? Well a lot of people already do it—it's called mutual aid, it's called being good relatives, it's called sacrificing just a little bit of what you'll never, ever spend in your whole life, right?

I mean that's the other thing— the billionaires have gotten richer during this pandemic! So it's not like things have really changed, you know, theres a lot of violence happening, but things aren't changing um...so you know, we all just gotta bunch up and take care of each other, right? And if you gotta fight, you gotta fight. And so I understand what's happening with Black folks right now and if I was in a place where I could, you know make a difference and help them out I would, but you know <laughs> I live eight miles from a little town of forty-three people or something and we don't have no cops, so... but A-C-A-B right?

<laughter>

CJ: The whole system is really rigged.

TRW: Yeah

CJ: You know, and I've learned some about the history of policing also, too involves what they did to us! So I've heard some, read some, came upon some crazy history that we'll have to have in another conversation cause I'm talking too much!

TRW: Yeah, no its good!

CJ: But...

TRW: Yeah, that's a whole can of worms there...

CJ: It is, so...

TRW: Well, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me, it's really great to catch up with you and— yeah, I wish you the best in your...

CJ: Yeah, yeah

TRW: ...in your pickling and the next round of turkeys, whatever it is.

CJ: Who knows who knows, so take care."

TRW: You too."

<beep of the line disconnecting>

<music fades in under narration>

TRW: "Thanks again to Chas for talking with me, and also to everyone else who hosted, fed, and connected with me in South Dakota. I appreciate the reminder, and I hope you do too, that we're always allowed to change the form of the work we do, and allowed to care for ourselves as a way of expressing our deep care for the rest of the world.

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Next week, we head northeast, to Detroit and then to Montreal to talk anarchy, anarchy, anarchy. See you then.

<music fades out>

END