

Praxis Radio 2020 Podcast
Episode 1: Paul Messersmith-Glavin, Portland, OR

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

Taylor, the host of the show: Welcome, listeners everywhere—this is the first episode of a new series of this show. If you're subscribed, you can go back and listen to the preview trailer that explains a little bit more of what to expect and if you're not subscribed...you should subscribe! You can do that at all the places you listen to podcasts by going to praxisradio.com and clicking on Praxis.

Basically, from the time this started as a radio show in 2012, *Praxis* has been a project about radical social change, trying to better understand the HOW of how we take action in our communities. A lot of it comes from an anarchist perspective, but I've talked with all kinds of organizers and artists and academics and even candidates for office over the years. The series that you're listening to now is based on a road trip I took in the summer of 2015. It felt like a really intense time for social movements—one year after the uprising in Ferguson began... Black Lives Matter growing as a movement, just before the massive defense of land by indigenous water protectors at Standing Rock, in the middle of an ongoing struggle for immigrant rights against a rise in deportations, all against the backdrop of the earliest days of the 2016 presidential election season.

<music fades out>

It was, at the time, the hottest summer on record worldwide.

I wanted to talk to street-level activists, people involved in interesting projects to build a different future, and really, whoever I could find who wanted to talk with me about this moment.

I started in Spokane, Washington and headed first to Portland, Oregon. This podcast is not going to be a literal recreation of that trip in linear time, but I did think it would be cool to start with the very first person I interviewed there, Paul Messersmith-Glavin. He was also coincidentally the first new interview I recorded remotely this past summer. Paul is an anarchist, part of the publishing collective at the Institute for Anarchist Studies, a dad, a popular educator on climate change issues, among other roles you'll hear about during the interview. I want to start back in 2015, where we talked about the work happening in his world at his kitchen table. I had just driven across the big desert part of Eastern Washington and through the exposed Columbia River Gorge, in July, in temperatures consistently above 100 degrees Fahrenheit, so it seems right to drop in to the middle of our discussion on the climate, which was at the time his main organizing focus.

<static burst, transition to interview from 2015>

Taylor Roseweeds (TRW)—So what, with all this, something I've been focused on, that I will be focusing on this tour is the pretty stark news, scientifically, coming out in the last couple years. It's been stark for a long time for people who are paying attention, but the paper coming out of Stanford about the 6th mass extinction, just the evident heat this summer —you were saying this is the second over 90 degree week in Portland— over 100 on my drive today, people are aware of it on a visceral level. What...do you think we can adapt in time and how? What do you think is going to happen in terms of...and if we can't should we still try?

Paul Messersmith-Glavin (PMG)—I think this question is a question of adaptation because even if we were to stop putting CO₂ in the atmosphere today, the climate change that we've already experienced will continue to happen and the fluctuations in the climate will continue for hundreds of years due to the CO₂ we already put into the atmosphere. Until recently, the goal of the political elites in the world along with the scientific elite seems to be to try to limit the increase in global temp to 2 degrees Celsius or about 3.6 Fahrenheit. And at this point it looks like we're going to exceed that quite considerably.

Something I do, I've given talks around the country on climate change and capitalism and I've pointed out that this is the best case scenario we're confronted with is a 2 degree increase in temperature. But in fact with the rate of emissions we're at now, which are not being reduced in any way, we're actually on course for a worst case scenario. So what we really need to do is look at what the worst case scenario is because that's the scenario we're living in. Which is potentially discouraging news, but also indicates the gravity of the situation cause we're basically looking at a 10 degree increase by the end of the century which would be devastating. Right now we have about 1 degree increase and we see like, the droughts and the heat waves and the typhoons and the hurricanes and everything that are happening with this rather minor increase in temperature compared to what will happen. And what was the second part of your question?

TRW—Oh, should we still try?

PMG—Yeah, um, yes.

<laughter>

TRW—Kind of a loaded question, obviously you think so cause you are trying...

PMG—I think we have an obligation in a sense to the future, to future generations, to try. We're living in a very historically significant period because what happens in our lifetimes will determine the future of human civilization for the next hundred or longer years, hundreds of years, and I think if we don't really radically change direction in terms of our economic organization really in the next say, 5-20 years, things are going

to be very bleak for the future. The future will increasingly resemble the worst dystopian sci-fi stories that we've read. I just think that as things get more extreme in terms of the type of heatwaves that have been going on, the more likely it is that more authoritarian solutions will be proposed by the government and by the state and by corporations which will curtail people's freedoms and people's ability to enjoy life. And I think that the population will be more sympathetic to more authoritarian solutions as things get more and more disrupted and crazy. So I think what we need now is more anti authoritarian movements to take the momentum away from any top-down authoritarian solutions. But I think it's essential that we do whatever we can in our lifetimes to make this change. That's something else I said in my last talk up in Seattle is we really need to dedicate our lives to this because this is the time when those changes need to happen. If it happens when we're much older it could be too late, so...

TRW—And it's also dramatic. I was having lunch with a longtime organizer in Spokane who just turned 79, he just had his birthday, and he said he was "sure hoping to miss all this and it doesn't look like he's going to", which is kind of dark but true, so...do you think, I really like hearing that story about St Johns and working class people kind of getting it and being behind anti-authoritarian solutions. What do you think the last straw is for people, what common traits or events have you noticed that really push people to devote their lives to this kind of work?

PMG—I think food prices. I think as climate change starts impacting food prices and we start seeing increases in basic commodity prices, that should motivate people. I think things like Katrina and Sandy, at least the impacts they had on local people, certainly motivated people to do things like Occupy Sandy and the center in New Orleans that was the common ground that came out of Katrina. Things like that. I think when it starts impacting people's basic standard of living and ability to get by and survive that people will become more motivated and I think people pretty widely seem to think things are not right. It's becoming almost kind of passé to make a joke about the weather and how it's changing cause it's different. It's constantly different these days and in a sense we're living in the future now, the future that was talked about 20-30 years ago when scientists first started warning us about climate change and the indications for climate change. And so now we're living in the future that was talked about 20-30 years ago.

TRW—What... have you found any good strategies for...the hope is always you get people to understand before something like that happens to them personally...it's difficult in this kind of society, I guess you mentioned education work which is really important when it's a lot more comforting emotionally to believe it's not happening and enough people say so, that it works, but what do you think we can do as organizers or storytellers or anyone along that spectrum to push people in that direction without using...I don't know...what emotional strategy do you think works for that?

PMG—I think one thing that's really good is to use climate change as an argument for basically working to fundamentally change society and make society the type of society we actually want to live in. It becomes an argument that the current society as

it's organized economically is changing the climate and basically what we need to do is fundamentally reorganize society so that our everyday lives and global activities don't have such an impact on the planet. So basically using the climate crisis as an opportunity to argue for a new society and inviting people to think about what type of society they really want to have. What type of society do we really want to live in? And inviting people to envision that and talk about that and begin to dream again about the type of world that we want to live in and to say "this is what we need to do", and actually we have to because if we don't the future is going to be increasingly grim. It's going to be more and more grim. There's an old slogan from the 60's: "socialism or barbarism" and it's kind of back to that again. It's really either we create a good society, one we really want to live in, or we're faced with a really kind of barbarous future.

<static burst, transition to narration>

TRW—At the end of our conversation, I asked Paul the two questions I intended to ask both my formal interviewees on this trip and also random people on the street—what frustrates you about the world? And what gives you hope?

<static burst, transition back to 2015>

PMG—What most frustrates me is the lack of a mass militant movement against climate change, just the fact that people might complain or joke about it but not enough people— not no one, many people are— but not enough people at this point are dedicating themselves to organizing to transform society. I don't know what it's going to take to motivate people to actually dedicate a significant amount of time to doing this. But that is one of my biggest frustrations. The lack of hundreds of thousands of people really doing that although it's starting, but so far <chuckles> it's not where it should be.

TRW—Which leads into, you said it's starting, what makes you most hopeful? When are those moments?

PMG—What makes me most hopeful is meeting the people who are doing that work. Like, Lara and I went up and spoke in Seattle a few weeks ago on climate, capital, and change and you know there's like 25 people that showed up on a beautiful Saturday afternoon when the naked bike ride was going on. We thought no one would show up, you know, cause they'd be out on the bikes, but people showed up and a lot of them there were involved in the efforts against the Shell oil rig that was stationed in Seattle getting outfitted to go to the Arctic to drill for more oil— as if the oil companies don't have enough oil. And so just meeting these people who had dedicated such time and energy to trying to stop this behemoth in the water from going to where it was going to go to do what it was planning to do... both understanding the importance of trying to stop that and then dedicating themselves to getting up at 3 in the morning and getting in a kayak and confronting this giant monstrosity of an oil rig. That was very encouraging and even though they were very skeptical and cynical because they had failed to stop it, which you know, you have to understand this is only one battle, and it's

going to be a long war to bring about a fundamentally different society. But just meeting those kinds of people and seeing people around the world dedicating themselves to organizing, trying to change it and make a better world, that gives me hope.

TRW—Right on, I can get behind that, let's do it. What else would you like to add? Is there anything you specifically want people to know, to research, to get involved in? Aside from what you shared already?

PMG—Yeah, just look into what local groups are organizing, whatever issue you feel drawn to, doesn't have to be climate change, if you're interested in the struggle against police brutality or the police per se, you can get involved in organizing against the police wherever you live, or you know anti-racist organizing or anti-sexist work or whatever it is that you most resonate with, that's what you should seek out and get involved with and devote some of your time to. Ramona Africa always says that whatever you can do is important. No one should be turned away because all they can do is stuff envelopes one night a week. If that's all you can do, then do that, cause that will make a difference. So just get involved and do something and, you know, read, and educate yourself about the issues and talk to your coworkers and family and neighbors about what's going on. And, you know, get involved don't just sit back and watch.

TRW—It's very easy to sit back and watch right now. We have all kinds of ways to do it. Which is what people are ironically doing right now, but hopefully they're about to jump up when the interview's done.

<Interview fades out as music fades in under narration, present day>

TRW—I have loved revisiting these conversations in working on this project. Now that we're like, further in to the barbarous future, it's really comforting to hear voices who were already preparing for this, who have wisdom and perspective to offer. I hope it's useful and interesting for you, too.

If you're listening to this from outside of the Pacific Northwest, I sort of assume that Portland as a city is more on your political radar than it was 5 years ago. The interview you're about to hear was recorded on August 19, 2020, about 80 days into sustained street protest there. Just a note, the next section does contain discussions of both right-wing vigilante violence and police brutality, about 7 minutes from now. There's also a wee bit of strong language. In our discussion, Paul also drops a wealth of great reading references, resources, and names. Don't worry about catching them all, they are listed in the show notes below with links for your follow up pleasure.

<music fades out, sound of a phone ringing once and then connecting>

TRW—if you're ready, if you don't mind just introducing yourself, however you want to be credited and just talking about what you're up to now, what your life is like?

PMG—This is Paul Messersmith-Glavin, I live in Portland, Oregon and I'm an acupuncturist and I work with the Institute for Anarchist Studies (IAS) and the Perspectives collective that puts out *Perspectives in Anarchist Theory* journal, and I'm a father of an 8 year old and I've got a partner and I like to ride my bike and play softball and see people when that's possible. So that's a little bit about myself. Five years ago when we talked, we talked about Hello 503 which was a political collective I was part of at the time and the Parasol Climate Collective and IAS so I guess I can start by updating you a little bit about those organizations. Hello 503, just to remind, you grew out of Occupy Portland and that was in 2011 so that's almost 10 years ago now and it was a political collective that grew out of Occupy Portland with an affinity around street militancy and anti-capitalism, anti-statism, an anti-patriarchy orientation. So we came together in the streets and we ended up staying together in different permutations over 5 years doing all sorts of different work together, but that group broke up maybe a couple years ago. Subsequently all the comrades, there were about 30 or 40 people who came through, and now a lot of the comrades we had in that collective are doing things like Burgerville Workers Union organizing and IWW stuff also the General Defense Committee that's doing a lot of prison support work and talking about repression and helping the movements deal with political repression.

Also some of us were involved in starting a group called PopMob, popular mobilization which is an organization against the far right, Trump supporters, Proud Boys, groups like Patriot Prayer, that have been coming to Portland to start brawls with people. Trying to get a broader cross section of people in the streets and get people to mobilize to stand up to the right. So that's pretty much where that went. The Parasol [Climate] Collective also no longer exists, we were doing self education, popular education around climate issues and now you know basically that just devolved into us giving talks and writing and things like that. We're still in touch informally.

Then IAS and *Perspectives* is doing very well. My partner Lara and I are both part of that— both of those collectives. Institute for Anarchist Studies has just added a couple comrades to the *Perspectives* collective and we're working with Kai Borrow of Gallery of the Streets, someone I know from New York City from organizing around Mumia issues, she's in New Orleans now working with a Black absurdist organization that's doing theater interventions and trying to represent Black lives, Black power, Black resistance in ways that are not typical and sort of stereotyped. In innovative creative ways. So she's curating a photo essay about their street interventions and observations and a Black absurdist orientation and that will be in the next *Perspectives* issue on the issue of power. *Perspectives* collective since we talked has put out...I don't know if anarchy-feminisms was out when we talked...

TRW—I think it was just about to come out

PMG—That was our most popular issue in 27 years of publishing *Perspectives* and we did a second print run of that because it sold out and then we did ‘Beyond the Crisis’ looking at long term organizing beyond the crisis of Trump being elected in 2016 and the rise of the right and then we did an issue on imaginations after that and now we’re working on a power issue.

TRW—Awesome and where can, while we’re there, how can folks find *Perspectives* if they are interested in reading?

PMG—Yeah, the three most recent are available from AK Press, if you go to AK and search for *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*, that will take you to a page where you can get any of those three and then the power issue will be available from them early next year. You can get them online and they’ll send them to you. The other thing I should say is we’ve added a couple comrades to the collective so there’s five of us now, plus Kai doing the artwork.

And we responded to the pandemic with a series called “Pandemics from the Bottom Up” and published nine essays online about the pandemic. So that’s part of what we’re trying to do is do a print issue and respond online and feeling challenged in this time because things are moving so fast, so much happens in a day it’s hard to plan a print issue in advance and know what’s going to happen six months or a year from now when the issue finally comes out, so were trying to be more responsive to what’s happening now by doing a lot of online publishing. So at the IAS website (anarchiststudies.com OR [.org](http://anarchiststudies.org)), you can see all the essays from *Perspectives* posted on the site. So we published nine on the theme of pandemic including ‘pandemic communalism vs COVID capitalism’ an article about organizing around SROs in San Francisco; something called ‘Mutual Aid Dispatch’, a first person account of being involved in mutual aid frontline efforts; something by a bridge operator called “COVID-19 and *Catch 22*” comparing what it’s like to work for a city in the midst of a pandemic and how similar that is to *Catch 22* and several other different essays, that’s all up online.

The final thing concerning *Perspectives* and IAS is that we also posted a report on the organized protest zone in Seattle which lasted a few weeks by Michael Reagan and it’s both an account of what happened in Seattle and a critique of its shortcomings and why it failed. But also then Michael Reagan is an activist, organizer, and historian up in Seattle and in addition to publishing *Perspectives*, IAS is publishing books so we have a new book coming out by Michael Reagan called “Intersectional Class Struggle: Theory and Practice” and that’s based on his organizing work in Seattle around housing issues and job issues that’s kind of a Wobbly approach but it’s more community-based, so more direct action, but mobilizing the community as opposed to strictly being workplace-oriented. He’s writing a whole book on that subject, out next year hopefully. Another book is “The Tilted Scales”, on popular legal defense and law collectives and how we need to defend movements against political repression using charges and courts and all that kind of thing, so kind of a 101 legal defense strategy kind of book. And then the third book that’s in the pipes is —Shane Burley, an

antifascist organizer and researcher and writer— is doing a collection of essays called “No Pasaran: Fascism and Antifascism”, a collection of about 15 different writers, a whole diverse group of people who are writing about these subjects, trying to broaden the discussion beyond the limited sort of white male kind of discussion that’s kind of been dominated up until this point. So that book should be out, probably not until 2022, but it should be ready to go by early next year.

TRW—Cool. So wow, good, I’m glad all that’s coming out. We’re going to be well read and also well acted. I think that’s a good balance that, you personally, but this broader community seems to have. I wonder if we could start in terms of the street side with PopMob because that’s something that wasn’t happening yet five years ago. Being from the Northwest, I’ve always had connections to Portland, always known about what’s going there, but I think Portland has emerged in the popular political consciousness during the Trump years. Can you just share a little bit as someone who’s been organizing there for along time and who’s now doing some of this work, just a condensed version? Like what’s up with Portland in terms of the alt-right targeting it as a place and just the density of radical action and the ways you’ve all been made an example of by the federal government the last couple months?

PMG—Yeah, ok. I mean after Trump was elected, Joey Gibson and Patriot Prayer targeted Portland to be a place where they would come and provoke street fights and try to generate support for the right and for Trump by trying to get video of street fights with antifascists and anarchists and stuff like that in the streets. So that started happening just after Trump was elected. I mean when Trump was elected, there were huge demonstrations here and mass mobilization against that for the first week or 10 days, and Portland has a long history of a protest culture and a left wing culture. There’s generations of organizers and activists and people who are used to being in the streets here. Literally generations of that, so that sort of creates a culture that’s very oriented toward street protest and supportive for that. So Joey started coming here, and street fights were happening continuously, it got down to the point where it was more “us against them” and the narrative getting spread was like “both sides are bad, they’re just two gangs fighting in the streets” kind of thing and I don’t think the broader population in Portland understood the stakes that were going on and what was really at stake in these street fights.

Portland is dominated by kind of a white, middle-class liberalism and progressivism and we felt that we needed to like— if fascists show up in Portland, there should be 10,000 people in the streets opposing them rather than 300 ready to fight. And we just thought that we can win better by having... outnumbering them and scaring them away like they did in Boston where like 40,000 people showed up to confront 100 Nazis and the Nazis had to run away because they were so badly outnumbered and that’s really what should happen every time these people show their faces. They should be afraid to come to Portland, but they weren’t— they were very provocative. So PopMob kind of came to be because we wanted to mobilize the people that were feeling like they might to be against fascism and right-wingers, but they felt intimidated by going out cause they didn’t want to fight or they didn’t know it was going on, or whatever reason

it was people weren't showing up to confront the right. We set about to try to mobilize those people by bringing in labor and just like mobilizing people and creating a space where people felt welcome so they could come out and stand up to these assholes. And that worked pretty well.

The first action we had, we had like a rally in front of City Hall that was a coalition event that a lot of different organizations participated in. DSA turned out like 200 people for that and a lot of people felt there was a space they could come out and express their opposition to Patriot Prayer and the Proud Boys without necessarily having to get into a fist fight. And so we had hundreds of people show up for that and then the anarchists and antifa and everyone else with experience standing up to these guys were also there, so it was kind of a multi-tendency, diversity of tactics kind of demonstration and we ended up having like 1500 people stand up to them. And it was beautiful because the black bloc came and everyone filed in behind the black bloc so it was like a 1500 person march led by a black bloc confronting the Nazis. And that's really kinda more a European model, where you've got like tens of thousands of people in the street ideally to confront the right and the black bloc plays a role in defending the movement and people are not like, divided, people are united around opposition to Patriot Prayer and the Proud Boys. So that was successful up to a point.

And then the cops in Portland, who side with white supremacists, and who are a white supremacist institution, opened fire with like six different types of munitions on the antifascists who were just standing in the street in order to give the Proud Boys and Patriot Prayer space to like roam around downtown and [the police] really hurt a lot of people. They shot concussion grenades at people's heads and rubber bullets and, you know, people were wearing helmets and had them penetrated by teargas canisters and concussion grenades, people almost died, and then the chief of police at the time, [Danielle] Outlaw, got on the radio and bragged about kicking peoples asses, you know, and now she's doing the same thing in Philadelphia. So it was a success in terms of the numbers of people who showed up and people felt emboldened and encouraged to stand up to these people, but then the cops were really very vicious in their attacks, unprovoked attacks, as documented by Oregonian reporters, and you know we've been mobilizing ever since then. And people are continuing to turn out large numbers in opposition every time Patriot Prayer or Proud Boys show up, a lot of people show up in the streets and have parties and create a space in which people feel supported and encouraged to come out and defy the right. So that's been a really important development in Portland.

TRW—And it's good to hear especially for people who might be listening and who aren't from the area and who don't know that. If you just learned a month and a half ago when the Feds came through during these Black Lives Matter protests and protests against actions of Portland police and that full context, it's like, the Portland police had already been behaving outrageously— for really like 100 years at least but we don't need to get into 100 years of Oregon history and there are a lot of resources out there for people who do want to know about that and white supremacist state violence there —but... I think that full context is just so missed when people are

seeing, like, “wow these people [protestors] are showing up like armed for a war” and that somehow justifies them getting treated this way. It’s like, y’all are showing up that way because you have years of history with just the police tactics locally, let alone like Border Patrol agents snatching people into vans.

PMG— Yes I would refer people to Walidah [Imarisha] on the racist history of Oregon, but yeah it’s true there were like three years of this street warfare going on and police violence even before, you know, the current uprising so that’s important background to understand why things are so you know developed here, shall we say. But you’re right because the police shoot at people’s heads, they beat people up, so wearing shield and helmets and body armor is a way to protect your physical being from being sent to the hospital— which a lot of people have been by the Portland police and they were very vicious to protestors before the Feds showed up. And the feds showed up and were very vicious toward protestors and now the Feds are hiding, the police are back to their old beating-the-crap-out-of-people routine, which they’ve been doing every night in Portland for over 80 days straight. And that’s only the most recent example of police violence in Portland.

TRW—We could talk for probably hours about just the police violence aspect, but just in the service of revisiting this interview, before we talked a lot about your work on climate change and climate in general and we talked a lot about this idea of “what is the last straw for people?”. What really pushes people from maybe being quietly concerned into like, taking action? You were expressing some discontent with how long that was taking, we were both kind of impatient, but you said, “you never know what’s going to happen, you never know what’s going to push people into action”. Then of course we got a lot: we got the Trump election right after that, we got more police killings of Black people around the country, the intensification of the Black Lives Matter movement, now we’ve had a new chaotic thing every day of the Trump administration and you said then, “I’m always open to being surprised”. I’ll play that part...

<static burst, transition to audio from 2015 interview>

PMG— ... I’d also caution we don’t know where the next upsurge will come from. I think it’s silly to identify a particular issue or something that is going to be “The One” that’s going to make all the difference cause we just don’t know where its going to come from. We may have ideas about where it may come from or what’s most strategic or most important but suddenly something happens and it’s like, everyone is talking about it. So we don’t know what is going to happen and I’m always open to being surprised and thankful when I’m surprised, like with the Black Lives Matter movement which is been outstanding...

<static burst, transition back to 2020 interview>

TRW— but do you still feel that way? Are you, like, over being surprised at this point? Has anything really like shocked you as someone who had been a radical before the Trump years?

PMG— Yeah... I meant that's... I've just learned from being an organizer for a long time that you always have to expect the unexpected. So, like the Zapatista uprising took me by surprise, Occupy took me by surprise, the WTO almost— basically— getting shut down was a surprise, just because I was on the east coast and didn't know all the organizing leading up to it. So that's a lesson I've learned— you don't know where the next spark is going to come from or where the big initiative for fundamental change is going to start, so it's good not to sort of put all your eggs in one basket. So I was very surprised by Ferguson, that Ferguson happened the way it did, that it spread around the country the way it did, and now with George Floyd's murder and the response to that, it's just like on a whole different level. That's surprising and what's surprising is how sustained it is and how determined and perseverant people are. That's really amazing and inspiring and sort of justifies my optimism and my sense of hope in people— that people can change and people can rise up and people can change the world and that's the lesson I'm taking from what's happening right now is that people are not necessarily always docile and obedient and going along with it. There's always discontent going on and sometimes it takes one thing, and you never know where its going to be, but it starts a huge prairie fire to use an old metaphor.

TRW— Yeah... and then I guess the flip side of that, being as someone who's been involved in radical activism and publishing and theory and all these things, I think a lot of people just showed up over the last five years, broadly, especially a lot of white people— people who might have been quiet liberals before are just showing up in this moment around George Floyd to anti-racist work and before that in response to the Trump election. And, like, they're getting tired and understandably. I think that people who don't have that longer term perspective really are struggling with this idea of like "we thought we were going to win already" or like "we're really burnt out" so what's your take on that? Especially as we're in these multiple escalating emergency situations, just like how do you personally sustain through that and what would you point others to around just like sustaining your energy as being part of the movement?

PMG— I think like youthful energy is essential and youth should be leading the way, right? So if you're young and you have a lot of energy and enthusiasm, definitely take advantage of that. That's what I did in my 20s and I think that's a good thing but its also important to keep in mind that this is a marathon, not a sprint. There's periods we need to sprint and I think right now is one of them, but also to recognize it's going to take a long time. This is a lifelong dedication. That if you've just become radicalized politically, understand that you're making a commitment to spending the rest of your life working to change the world. Recognizing that there's periods like now when things move very quickly, but there's also periods in which things don't seem to be changing very much on the surface level, but it's important at that time — when the social movements recede and people get tired and go back to more daily routines that don't involve meetings and street protest and public agitation and things like this— that it's

important to do the work to prepare for the next uprising and the next round of speedy change, right?

So like creating organizations, institutions, learning about history, learning about ideas, educating yourself, getting together with other people to read books in study groups and talk about ideas and develop your understanding of how change happens and what happened historically. Those are the kinds of things you can do once movements inevitably recede, which they will unfortunately, but like right now it's fine, go for it. I think that's good but also recognizing that it's a long term thing. Murray Bookchin, this anarchist, said to me when I was young and said to all of us, "the thing to do is make change in the world your job and think of it as your primary directive and then think of what you can do to support yourself in terms of making a living so that you can dedicate yourself to changing the world". And I was very inspired by that and I think that's a healthy orientation for young people or people newly organized to think about. What job can you get that will help you make your primary focus changing the world?

TRW—And that can be being a server at a restaurant and just paying your bills rather than working at a giant NGO or whatever...

PMG—Yeah, whatever it is...and I think self care is very important too. Like you know there's a lot of people being traumatized in Portland right now and a lot of harsh things happening and we're going to have a lot of work on our hands caring for people and dealing with a lot of PTSD and physical injuries and psychological trauma. Developing routines to take care of yourself and recognizing that you don't have to do it all yourself that you can rely on other people and that working collectively is better than trying to do it all yourself. And doing things —like I do tai chi and qi gong and meditation and things like that— it gives me a grounded-ness so I can continue to do political organizing and work in the world. So I think developing something like that and Foucault wrote an essay called "Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom" and that had a big influence on me at an early age. It's really important to take care of yourself and people close to you in order to sustain us all in the struggle cause it's going to get harder, not easier. We have to be ready for that.

TRW—And just to avoid replicating the ethic of capitalism, like "you have to grind every single day and you have to suffer" and like, that's what we're trying to get over, right?

PMG—Like, IAS published this book "Joyful Militancy" by Carla Bergman and Nick Montgomery and I think that kind of orientation is important, too. It shouldn't be drudgery, don't spend all your time criticizing the people close to you, like keep your eyes on the prize and focus on the overall power structure that needs to change and give people the benefit of the doubt and be forgiving and compassionate to the people close to you, cause it can get really nasty out there. Be good to each other.

TRW—You talked a second ago about youthful energy. When we met and talked your kid was 3 and now is therefore 8 if math works the way I think it does. We talked and I've talked to other people, I have friends who are radical parents and it's something I think about a lot. Even at age 3, you said you were sharing you know, here's what's happening on tv, this is who the police are, talking about climate change in a 3 year old appropriate way, what's that look like now and how does being a dad play in to your life politically?

PMG—Yeah, well our kid is very anti-police and very anti-Trump. I try not to chalk that up to socialization, but they really don't like the cops or Trump and they also—because of the pandemic— miss their friends. But they're doing remarkably well despite the isolation. My partner is immune-compromised so we've been very strict about distancing and mask wearing and staying home as much as possible so that gets to them a little bit, so we're trying to figure out how to get them to be able to socialize with peers in a way that doesn't just involve screens so that's been challenging for them. And just like, having a kid, your priorities shift and you begin to necessarily prioritize your child so that becomes part of your calculus when you decide how you're going to live your life, what you're going to do in the streets, what have you.

And it's also very challenging as an anti-authoritarian to raise a child in an anti-authoritarian fashion, because as you're a parent, a child forces you to confront your own psychology and your own upbringing and your own very deep psychological mechanisms and brings a lot of stuff to the surface. It's important to work through and confront in yourself and a lot of whatever behavior you see reflected in your child is coming from yourself, so it's a dialectical relationship between parent and child and trying to struggle with them in an anti-authoritarian fashion, to raise them in a way where they understand the way of the world, but they also teach you and lead the way. So kids need both a sense of recognition and a sense of belonging and trying to give as much as possible I've found is very important.

TRW—I just think about school and this argument folks are having right now about sending kids back to school when things are as dire as they are...do you see this, the pandemic, as an opening to starting to reimagine some of these systems kids are in— regarding school and other early forms of authoritarian structures?

PMG—Yeah, definitely, I think it's a lesson for all of us, really. In terms of the modern way of life in capitalist America, on a capitalist planet, we don't need to travel so much, drive so much, go to an office so much or what have you. But in terms of school, we homeschooled our kid for three or four months every day from 9 AM to 3 PM and took turns doing about three hours a day and they got a lot more out of that than they did going to public school and doing all the routine stuff you do at public school. What they're not getting is socializing with their friends and learning Spanish. So what we're trying to do is now meet the requirements for Portland public schools, in terms of distance learning, they have to do a certain amount of online work in order to qualify for moving to the next grade, but most of the education we're doing is really rich and really great and they're much more into it than they are going to school, so I don't

know, we're talking about maybe going to a homeschool model— which is a whole bureaucratic process we'd have to go through— or maybe just trying to supplement their schooling with more at-home learning, which they already were doing. They read all the time, they go through books every day and we keep them engaged with things at a higher level than they typical second grade education they were getting. I do think the pandemic and having kids at home and so many people unemployed and having modern life disrupted so much gives us something to draw from in terms of creating a different world, I hope. I hope things don't go back to normal.

TRW—I don't see how they could, but, that's a perfect segue into you know I think that on the left we do a good job saying no to things and obviously there's a lot to say "no" to, but also anarchism specifically and radical work is about articulating a different "yes" also, so who do you think... what do you find inspiring right now? What people or movements are doing that well, showing us a different way forward? Not just a, like, fuck Trump, but a "then what?"

PMG—I think some of the visionary fiction stuff Walidah [Imarisha] and Adrienne [Maree Brown] are doing, "Octavias Brood" is a good example of that, envisioning a different future through speculative fiction and science fiction, visionary fiction, stuff like that. Walidah likes to say that to her ancestors who were slaves, she herself is like a sci-fi person, because they could never imagine someone that would be in her position under the conditions they were living under at that time. Having that kind of vision is important. So I think those two are very good. Harsha Walia up in Canada, doing anti immigrant organizing— *against* anti-immigrant stuff, and she's very articulate. Kai [Barrow] with the Gallery of the Streets, all the Black absurdist stuff she's doing is really brilliant. That's some of the stuff that really inspires me. Just like seeing general assemblies, seeing people— the mutual aid projects growing out of the pandemic— seeing medics in the streets taking care of people, all these things are very, very inspiring.

TRW—So when we talked before I was asking everyone I interviewed five years ago, so without sharing what you said before, I think it will be kind of similar, but what makes you the most frustrated currently?

PMG—Um... I guess the ongoing police violence and the lack of like a real broad-ranging popular response to that. Like every night the cops beat the shit out of people and hurt people and it's always like only a few hundred people who come out to the demonstration. I think when the Feds were in Portland, what happened was what needed to be happening. Which was like a whole bunch of people showed up to oppose them, the wall of moms, the dad bloc, you had bartenders, you had thousands and thousands of people in the streets from all walks of life coming out to stand up to this authoritarian violence that was being perpetrated downtown and that's what should happen. But it should still be happening because the police department are just as bad as the Feds and they've been here for longer and doing this stuff for years and years and now it's back to just a few hundred people standing up to them in the streets every day. So I guess, you know, just being frustrated by the lack of a popular

response to this. I think there should be like 10,000 people in the streets marching against the police department and the violence they're perpetrating every night. So it would be nice if that happened.

TRW—The flip side, I think you covered talking about sci-fi and speculative fiction and kind of these other visions, I wonder if there's a secondary answer also, what is giving you hope amidst all of...this?

PMG—Yeah well that's just it. All the people in the streets give me hope. And the perseverance of people showing up night after night gives me hope and the people all around this country showing up in the streets in favor of Black lives and against the police and white supremacy gives me hope. And just this like huge movement that's unprecedented in American history gives me hope. The fact that basically the problematic nature of the police in U.S. society has become a new common sense. Ideas about police abolition that used to be part of a fringe, far-left kind of subcultural thing is now popularly discussed. So a lot of what were previously marginal ideas are now becoming mainstream discussions and that's a good sign.

My friend Christian Williams said that it's good that we're winning politically, cause we're not winning militarily. Even though the police are in the streets beating the crap out of people all the time— in Chicago, in Louisville, in Seattle, in Portland, in New York City— politically, we're winning the war of ideas and that's really significant. So that gives me hope. To the point where the Democratic Party has to give lip service to Black Lives Matter, not any substantive changes, but at least they're giving lip service to it. It seems you hear discussions in the mainstream that were radical discussions just a couple years ago and now you're hearing them everywhere, so that's a good sign, too. That gives me hope. All the people doing mutual aid projects, taking care of each other, working together, being so committed and so perseverant. And my kid gives me hope and my friends and comrades. Just that everyone's still working together despite the situation we find ourselves in, which is also unprecedented.

TRW—Thank you for sharing that. I guess just at the end, if there's anything you want to share, specifically any resources for people who—the audience being people who are already involved or who are looking to get out of the idea stage and into the action, looking for something to do—what resources would you want to point people to or is there any last things you want to plug?

PMG—I would say check in to your local Black Lives Matter organizing and protests and stuff and get out in the streets and talk to people and see for yourself what's going on. Also the General Defense Committee around the country is doing important work in terms of supporting people that are being arrested and people being surveilled and repressed, so support the General Defense Committee in different cities. Check out PopMob cause I think that model of inclusiveness and broad-ranging support for oppositional politics is very important, so check out that they're doing. And check out the Institute for Anarchist Studies and *Perspectives* journal and stuff like that.

TRW—I'll link to everything you mentioned and more in the show notes. Thank you so much for all the work you do, first of all, and for your time and being willing to talk about this.

PMG—Thanks for your work too and thanks for talking.

<music fades in under narration, present day>

TRW—So thanks again to Paul for that interview, I had such a good time revisiting it, editing it, transcribing it, if you're into that I'm doing that now this season. Thanks to all of you for listening out there, for sharing, for making connections through the show. Really hoping to have scooped up some of you long time radio listeners into this podcast audience and hope to meet some new people through this project too. You can tune in every Monday for a new show through the end of the year.

Next week we are going to be in Colorado, going to be a very exciting show talking about exploring people's history through theater theater. Going to be super great, very excited. To make sure you hear it, you should subscribe to the show wherever you're listening now. You can find links to subscribe anywhere, to support the work— working on a Patreon, not quite ready yet— you can contact me, you can find old shows, all of it is at praxisradio.com that's p-r-a-x-i-s-r-a-d-i-o, then click on Praxis. Thanks for listening, see you next week.

<music fades, audio from 2015 interview briefly fades in at last notes>

PMG—We'll see what happens. It could be a long summer.

<radio static bursts>

END