[Intro Music: “You are listening to Sandy and Nora's Podcast”.]

Nora: Heeey Sandy.

Sandy: Hello Nora. So what's up? What's going on?

Nora: Well we're recording this on the weekend but by the time this gets released it will, it will probably be the 29 of January, which is a really important date. Um, it's not the topic of this episode but I, I do want to start out by reminding folks that January 29 2017 was the night that a gunman walked into the Islamic Cultural Centre in Sainte Foix, Québec City and, ah, we're two years away from that, um, horrific event. And I hope that, I hope that you're marking it some how or that you marked it somehow, depending on when you're, when you're listening to this because it's, ah, it's hard for me to see how it goes for the rest of the country, it's kind of like the big issue that's going on here but I suspect that it's not, it's not getting remembered as much as it perhaps should be. Maybe I'm wrong.

Sandy: I don't think that you're wrong. I don't think that you're wrong. So I think that it is important for folks to, as you say mark, you know I don't know what the best word to use here is, but mark this day and to not forget that it's something that happened or erase it from Canada's, Canada's cultural memory as the kind of cultural machine that operates the existence of this place would have us do.

Nora: Mhmm, mhmm. Yeah, so that's, that's what's been going on for me. How are you?

Sandy: I'm OK. I've been like (laughs) marvelling at the idea that an entire, uh, federal operation can just shut down (both laugh) in the United States. It just seems like a weird thing to just build into the way a country works. You know?

Nora: Totally.

Sandy: But we, Canada has, you know one upped the U.S. on this by making sure that federal workers don't get paid without a shut down, so there's that.

Nora: (Laughing.) I know. I, I haven't been trolled (Sandy laughs) I've been trolled like intensely in the couple of weeks for consistently making that connection between the Phoenix payroll scandal, and of course the height of it was 2016, you know.

Sandy: Oh wait you did! You made that connection too? I didn't know that you did!

Nora: Oh yeah.

Sandy: I just, I totally thought I was being clever just now.

Nora: No, it's so good.

Sandy: And nobody else had ever thought about it. (Laughs.)

Nora: No, no it's so good, because, like I (Sandy laughs) like two weekends in a row it was like non-stop Liberals being like "you're fucked, that's fucked up, that's not right, that's not what happened, that was Harper's fault, that wasn't Trudeau's fault." And it was just like can you people go read a fucking newspaper (laughs).

Sandy: Oh, so they're going to argue that it's Harper's fault even though Trudeau's had how much time to fix it even if that was the case?

Nora: Yeah, but also Trudeau was the one that implemented it. So..... (laughs).

Sandy: Ohhhh god.

Nora: (Laughing) It was, it had been, the ball had been rolling but he, he was the one that actually implemented the program despite all of the red flags and all of the warnings.

Sandy: Womp, womp.

Nora: So, sorry, (Sandy laughs) Trudeau.

Sandy: I've also been thinking a lot about, and this is what we are going to be talking about today, about these Covington, Covington Boys.

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy: Ughhhhh, ughhhh. And the idea that some youth don't... get to be considered youth, get to be considered kids and don't experience, experience any consequences for things that they do. (Laughs.)

Nora: Mhmm, mhmm.

Sandy: And we must apologize to them because we (sigh) we've just, you know, we're not thinking about them as kids, we don't have the full picture, and do not believe what you are seeing because there is a whole other story here. Disregard the MAGA hats, blah, blah, blah. (Both laugh.) All of that, so that's kind of been on my mind and I guess we're just going to talk about that. Let's just talk about that.

Nora: Yeah, before we do, I want to mention that I was talking to, uh, someone on another podcast, Canadaland, and he mentioned that folks in Edmonton, a lot of young women in Edmonton listen to the podcast so I wanted to say...

Sandy: Oh! Hey Edmonton!

Nora: Hey Edmonton!

Sandy: Sup? (Nora laughs.) What is up? I have never been to Edmonton.

Nora: You've never been?

Sandy: No.

Nora: Oh my gosh.

Sandy: No, I've never been to Edmonton.

Nora: It's, ahhhh, it's, I don't know, it's like a place.

Sandy: I've never been to Alberta actually. I've never been to Alberta.

Nora: Edmonton is not my, on the top of my cities that I love to visit (Sandy laughs), there's there's a lot of great people in Edmonton and I like going.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: My sister-in-law's brother has a really great set of restaurants for Korean fried chicken. (Laughing.) So that's really great.

Sandy: Ooooo, cool. (Laughs.)

Nora: Yeah, but Edmonton is full of a lot of really good people, so that's pretty much its, its big charm. And there's a big river valley, but I think the people are better than than the river valley.

Sandy: Well hello Edmonton! Thanks for listening to us. We love you.

Nora: Totally. Um, Covington. So those, those smug fucking racist mocking pieces of shit. (Laughs.)

Sandy: Yeah, so if you've been living a rug and haven't been on the social media at all, then maybe you don't know about this story and so we'll give you a little, a little synopsis of what has gone down. So on the, what day, what day was that? It was a couple Saturdays ago, a Saturday, a couple of Saturdays ago, by the time you listen to this podcast. There was a few things going down on the Washington Mall, one was the Women's March, which took place all over the globe, one was the Indigenous Peoples March, March on Washington, and one was like a, like I guess an anti-choice march. Probably in response to the Women's March. And all of these things had a bit of an interaction I suppose on the Washington Mall...

Nora: Mhmm.

Sandy: In which, which culminated in an Indigenous man, Nathan Phillips, who was drumming and singing with a number of other Indigenous people alongside him, ah, being confronted by dozens of young white boys, or older white boys, who were mocking him, ah, making some pretty clearly racist like dancing and singing along, you know just mocking what Nathan Phillips was doing, ah, in addition to one boy in particular who was standing very, very, very, very close to him and just smirking the entire time. And of course this was picked up by a number of people on Twitter as something that was, um, extremely disrespectful, entirely racist and it went viral and people rightfully called out that this was an awful thing. And thennnnn, the internet did it's whole internet thing. Nora.

Nora: Yeah, it started with an article from *Reason.com* which is like a whacky, a whacky Libertarian online magazine and, um, and it published like the longer cut of the video and made the argument that everything that you thought you saw you didn't see because actually there was some Black men who were menacing and they were not in the original video and they're like a cult called the Black Hebrew Israelites... (Laughs.)

Sandy: (Laughs sadly.)

Nora: And through this, like, through this torked story of what actually happened according to the guy from *Reason*, whose last name I believe is Sauve (both laugh).

Sandy: Wow.

Nora: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Or maybe it's not pronounced that way but I believe that's how it's spelled. He managed to, that plus the army of right wing internet trolls that exist, they managed to get enough credibility and enough, ah, people talking about that frame of what happened for the entire story to get flipped on its head and a lot of mainstream journalists publishing that "woah, we got this whole video wrong, actually Nathan Phillips put himself into this crowd of racists. These racists were just being racist without him before we showed up." (Sandy laughs.) Then...you can see how that would be totally different.

Sandy: (Deep breath.) Mhmm, mhmm. (Nora laughs.) Absolutely. And then it became even weirder in that one of the, the kids, Sandmann or whatever his name is gets his really expensive PR firm to put out a statement, and Sandmann's the kid who was like smirking at the front and to put out a statement about how he was actually the most altruistic person there...

Nora: (Laughing). Yeahhhh.

Sandy: ... he was just trying to, you know, as the hero kid that he is, he was just trying to de-escalate everything that was on, he was, you know, he was trying to save the Indigenous people and his friends from the evil Black people and you know, we, you just couldn't see in the video with him and his MAGA hat and all of his friends and the smirk, but he was really just trying to be, to save everyone from what have been a violent confrontation.

Nora: (Laughing.) Well didn't he actually say he was praying? (Laughing.) That he was...

Sandy: In the release?! I don't think so. Did it say that? (Laughs.)

Nora: Yeah, at some point he, he was literally praying to try and de-escalate the situation, so he was saying a prayer.

Sandy: Oh god.

Nora: It's like, the fuck you were.

Sandy: Oh god.

Nora: So, of course, NBC interviews this cat and he, and he, I didn't watch the interview.

Sandy: I watched it! (Laughs.)

Nora: But I did see that he didn't blink in something like (laughing)... apparently he didn't blink in like 25 seconds or something. (Both laugh.) I just think that that's amazing that you could sit on national television and not fucking blink. Like. There are bright lights there.

Sandy: It was a, it was like a, it was very obviously rehearsed. Um, the, and not that that's bad, like everyone should rehearse when they go on media but it was just like not just rehearsed but so disingenuous (both laugh). Like when you're watching it you're like "whaattt? Like he doesn't even believe the words that are coming out of his mouth. This is very strange.” Uh, but yeah so the Today Show, I think it was the Today Show...

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy: Interviews the kid.

Nora: Yup.

Sandy: And he's like, you know, I am good, everyone else was bad but I didn't know it and I don't hate anyone. I would love to have a conversation with Nathan Phillips who I really disrespected...No he didn't say that part, sorry, that was my own editorializing (Nora chuckles). I'd love to have a, a, a meeting with Nathan Phillips so we can just chat.

Nora: Uhuh.

Sandy: Because I was just there trying to de-escalate him and whatever he was going to do. He was a frightened little child. (Deep sigh.) So, this whole story makes me so annoyed and I barely want to talk about this (both laugh) because I just, it's like been so oversaturated, but there's like a few things to consider. One is that the fact that this is a story at all and the way that the media treated it in, you know like talking about this thing that went viral and then reversing, um, kind of like the, the, the mass agreed upon opinion because of the organizing of right wing entities on the internet and a PR firm (laughing) is one thing.

Nora: Yup.

Sandy: But before we even get there I think that one of the more important things to discuss is who gets this shot at redemption? Especially as young, young, boys. Who, who, which type of young kids, or, I guess they are older kids. Which type of young people, which type of young people get this shot at redemption. And that is a, that is an important thing to consider coming out of this. And it's an important thing to consider coming out of what happened at, ah, St. Michael's College School.

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy: Ooop! In Toronto. (Nora laughs.) Ooop! Earlier this year. Oppp!

Nora: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sandy: What happened at St. Michael's College earlier this year Nora?

Nora: Well, St., St. Mike's has been under the radar for several instances of sexual assault allegations.

Sandy: Mhmm. And so if you haven't heard about St. Michael's College it's a private high school in Toronto.

Nora: Yeah, and it's one of, it's, it's a school that you go to if you're well to do.

Sandy: Yeah! Tuition is $19, 500 at this school. In total with everything, um, it is $21, 000 a year.

Nora: Right, right. So, so, like a lot of people boiled down the, the Covington situation into, you know young white kid, racist towards old Indigenous man and this is, there's a lot of America and North America going on, really all settler colonial states going on in this picture. But the, the ability to purchase your way into the upper class for young white men, is I think at the heart of this. And that really does have that connection to the, to the private school system in Toronto where...

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: The same thing is, you're able to purchase your access to the upper class or the ruling class or the elites. Covington is I guess a school that, um, well it's a private school, it's known for its racism, the, the boys in the same video were harassing a woman or a older teen girl on the street. So these guys are, they're living in a world of, of fucking filth I guess (laughing).

Sandy: Mhmm, mhmm.

Nora: The chief priest or the head chief of the, of the Covington school, he's online being all ultra right wing and shitty as well so, but again it's one of these schools where you purchase your way into the upper classes and, and of course because our class system is deeply racist as well it's not just anybody that can purchase their way into the upper classes and so the fact that Sandmann also purchased his way though, into redemption and found his way onto the Today Show through redemption, was not a coincidence obviously. These people, that's what they live to do, they live to purchase their success, and pretty much that’s how (laughs) that's how people get into power is they purchase their success. But there was something that happened at the Covington thing that made me think of St. Mike's instantly, which is how the mothers responded.

Sandy: Mhmmmm. Mmmmm. Say more.

Nora: Well, the mothers from Covington were, were like the voices defending their kids, which I guess is not too surprising but defending their kids in a very, like, specific way where it's like, again they're the ones that are signing the cheques for them to even go to these schools...

Sandy: Yup.

Nora: They're signing their cheques for the PR firms. They're the ones saying that they could go on the air.

Sandy: Yup.

Nora: It was really fucked up too because you have this situation where they're, they're still kids...

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: So on the Today Show thing I was like, "man you're still interviewing a fucking kid" and then it's like but it's like...

Sandy: Yeah.

Nora: But it's not a normal kid. (Laughs.)

Sandy: Yeah.

Nora: This is a kid that doesn't blink. (Both laugh.)

Sandy: He's a kid who doesn't blink and has access to tonnes of wealth and power. (Chuckles.)

Nora: Right, and so there was a video that was, that made the news in Toronto right after the first set of allegations came out about sexual assault at St. Mike's...

Sandy: Mhmm. That's right.

Nora: Where two women, and two mothers, were like screaming at the media "shame at you, shame on you, these are just kids." And all this kind of shit. And it's like, wow, you folks are all like related or something aren't you. (Laughs.) Cut from the same cloth.

Sandy: Mhmm. Mhmm. It's just so interested that, uh, there's like an automatic consideration for people of this class that there, that there, like there's an openness in our society to like having a re-examination based on things that they tell us about whether they or not they are truly deserving of any sort of criticism or critique. Because you know I, I think the, the response after the response. (Laughs.) The response to the right wing saying you know "these boys are just boys and we just didn't understand and here is longer video, um, that shows that they are still wearing MAGA hats and are idiots but look, Nathan Phillip walked up to them.” Like what the fuck? And then the whole world is like (laughing) “oh my god so sorry, so sorry.” Sorry for what? Like this is a, a pretty awful thing that's happened but I don't know about y'all but I remember as a kid having like consequences and like (laughing) critique when I did shitty stupid thing, and I, I just think it's really baffling that we're, we allow ourselves to, well we, (laughs) the culture allows itself to, to reconsider what we know to be true, what we know to be, uh, right and moral in the case of you know these, these, very wealthy kids. Because that doesn't happen for everybody. You know there's countless examples of people who've been tried as adults for example in the court of law or you know, which happened just this week in Canada, kids who are charged with terrorism. What children get to be considered children and how does that happen vs. what children get to buy their way out of ever having to experience any sort of, ah, um, consequences for anything they do. And, um, you know I went to U of T. I know a thousand versions (laughs) of some of these guys and what that does to them and what it does is that is results in government that we have in Ontario (laughs). You know, when there's zero consequence and you know that you can just purchase your way... One of the videos, uh, that I didn't see a lot of people talking about this particular thing. Actually I didn't see anyone talking about this, I didn't watch all of the videos in all of their um entirety because you don't need to and what a waste of time. But there was one video where, ah, the boys are like jumping and singing along, "singing along", mocking Nathan Phillips and doing a lot of jumping...

Nora: Mhmm.

Sandy: And Nathan Phillips’s kind of moving and, uh, there's a point where one of the boys, you know they're so close to him...

Nora: Yup.

Sandy: They're like getting closer and closer because they're jumping towards him, and then he moved a little bit and one of the boys yells out "don't touch him! Don't you dare touch him!” And it was just like, you know they're doing that because they know that they can force consequences. Even though they're the ones getting so close. They know that if he touches them first they are the ones that can force consequences upon him, they know the power that they have, (laughs) it's, Nick Sandmann can stand so close and just smirk the entire time because he knows that he's the one who's powerful in this situation. That he can go to mum and say “hey I need you to buy me out of this.” And quite frankly that's a kid who understands the world and doesn't deserve any sort of fucking remorse from me. (Laughs.) Jesus.

Nora: No.

Sandy: Or an apology from the rest of the world for recognizing a highly immoral situation. Guys they were wearing Making America Great Again hats.

Nora: At a fucking anti-choice rally (both laugh).

Sandy: At an anti-choice rally that happened on the same day as the Women's March. Like beyond all of the other videos that people found of them doing and saying other things, beyond anything else they're already in dick territory (laughing), OK? Like there is nothing, and like you can tell me that they've been brainwashed or whatever or blah blah. It doesn't, that's not (laughs) people need consequences, there needs to be consequences when something so heinous is being done and they understand what they're doing. There was a, there was an option to just stand around and do nothing, even if this was a ridiculously contrived school trip by whatever priests or whatever happened to be at their school that decided that this was the thing to do that day. There was no requirement for them to do all of the things that they're doing. So, bun that.

Nora: Well, and you zoom out even more that our, we have a psychopathic class of decision makers in both Canada and the United States and it's because these people haven't actually lived in the real world, they've they've never actually had to deal with their own actions, right? So when that happens over and over and over again...

Sandy: Mhmm. Mhmm.

Nora: You literally live in a different world than most people, most average people, if your parents did not have the money to buy you a PR firm, you're probably like an average person. And, and we get glimpses of average people breaking into certain jobs, or certain fields from time to time but the reality is is that the power structures that exist in Canada and in the United States are power structures that enable people like these boys to live that kind of unbelievable privileged existence and find themselves right up into the, the halls of power. A lot of people were making connections between the, the, the stuff Brett Kavanaugh was saying during his, during the hearings around his past and it was the exact same thing, no consequences, complete ability to do whatever you want, and when you're the person that becomes the lawmaker, or in charge of the district courts or, or cops, or um what the fuck ever in the press then that's, that's actually what helps to sew the widespread disenfranchisement of like average people.

Sandy: Mhmm, mhmm.

Nora: Because you can feel, you feel that Doug Ford's a fucking spoiled piece of shit that has never ever had to clean up his own mess.

Sandy: Mhmm. And just imagine, like for someone like me it's like unimaginable what it would be like to like live a life (laughs) where you're not constantly trying to think to yourself like what is the consequence of this action. Like I'm going to go to this rally and say this thing...

Nora: Yeah!

Sandy: And who's going to see me, and what's going to be written about it, and how's it's going to be seen, and how do I protect myself in the future? Knowing that, that anyone can say anything about me and people will imagine all sorts of reasons for it or imagine it to be true when it's not. There's, there's all sort of examples, truly about that with me right now, all over the internet (laughing) and it's like wow, what would it be like to be someone who could know that you could be a complete total utter piece of shit for no reason at all other than it just felt good to do that that day, knowing that there are cameras on you, and knowing that you are going to be able to buy yourself out of that situation. What does it do to you to be that type of person? Or to grow up in that kind of world as a young person? What does it say to you if you go to St. Michael's College, and you know that these fucking heinous acts that these kids, the sexual assault that these kids were engaging in against their fellow peers. Like they know that that shit's awful. Like what is going on in the heads of someone in the minds of people who know that they never have to experience consequences (laughing) it's just (sighs) it's such a dangerous situation, for any sort of a community and just boradly for society.

Nora: Yeah, yeah. And then of course the question that I immediately think of is what's the kind of person that then jumps to their defence. (Sandy laughs.) Like there's so many people in the press right, the first major journalist that kind of jumped to their defence was Jake Tapper of CNN and then there were connections between the PR firm and the owner's roles that he's held at CNN.

Sandy: Which he's still hasn't had to answer for.

Nora: Of course not. Because at the end of the day, these folks are all part of the same class and then in Canada like um the, The Current they had an unbelievably shitty segment on this where they...

Sandy: Oh yeah, how many Indigenous people were on that segment?

Nora: Oh, like pretty much zero! 100% zero.

Sandy: (Laughs.) Uhuh.

Nora: Or even like they had the fucking *Reason* guy talking about how nothing that the boys were doing was racist and that it was the Black Hebrew Israelites that were calling them racists, and how dare they?

Sandy: It's always so convenient to have some Black people around to blame, you know? It's great.

Nora: It was fully great. (Sandy laughs.) That was the exact way the conversation was set up.

Sandy: Ohhhhh, it was Black people. Got it. We...

Nora: Yeah!

Sandy: And no second guessing there obviously? No due diligence, no whatever, it's cool, there were Black people there, we've figured it out, that was the real culprit, they forced these kids to wear the MAGA hats, they forced them to end up on the Washington Mall, they forced them to mock (laughs) Nathan Phillips, and in the end, you know, they were just trying to de-escalate a situation where they were being forced to do all kinds of bullshit.

Nora: The, the, the discussion as well of and you, you started this of who is allowed to, to have redemption and who is not given that redemption again this is sewn through every, every aspect of how power exists in this, in this, in this world, in the Western world. Whereas you know we even, there's it's just so common to see in the press for example that a young Black boy or teen is called man.

Sandy: MHMM.

Nora: And how adult traits are ascribed to young Black kids.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: Boys and girls. All the time and, and, the media never does the mea culpa thing where they're like "holy woah we didn't realize that you know she was only 15". Right?

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: There's none of that shit.

Sandy: No.

Nora: And instead you get Robyn Urback being like "whoa, whoa, whoa, we totally misread the whole Covington thing wrong" (Sandy laughs). I am a fucking class collaborator and fucking Conrad Black himself called me and I have to put this tweet out and I don't know why the CBC pays her salary!!!

Sandy: (Laughs big. Groans.) I also have feelings about her. (Both laugh.) Yeah, but then there's like another story, story there about how the media did respond. So the tweet that describes or the video that was contained in the tweet where this happened goes viral so then it becomes a story, that the media takes and talks about. And I should say that some of the things that I’m about to say is inspired by a *New Yorker* article that I read that we'll put in the description for this show. A lot of people, like this, this video goes viral so it becomes a news story, the news has to report on the fact that it's viral and what's happening, the, the discussion around it. And then the story switches to saying, you know, like “we've, we've wronged these boys and, ah, you know we've they're just youth and the story's completely wrong, we got it all wrong” because the right wing was able to make another story go viral, a contrived story, but they made it go viral. Which begs the question, what the hell is news right now? (Laughs.) So if I were able to make an entirely other story go viral, about, I don't know, Nick Sandmann's father is actually, I don't know, uh, a lizard or something (both laugh) are we, would the news, if we just like made something else go viral. Oh actually there was another group of people there, a group of, of I don't know Trump impersonators who encouraged the Black Hebrew Israelites (laughing) to, to ah ramp up frustrations among, like would that then go viral and would that then become the news story?

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy: Like in a world where literally the, ah, Presidency of one of the most powerful states on planet earth was impacted through the, impacted by the ability to make certain things go viral on the internet, is this really how we should be making news? Because what all that means is that OK so whoever can pay for it - and it's always kind of been this way - but in a, in a whole other type of reality, like whoever can pay for it can just pay for the type of story that they want. Which is kind of how it's always been, but it's just like, it's just like, it's it's just another it's just a whole other level of that happening of that in this digital media, social media space, and that's really fucked up and we are in a place where we need the media to be able to cut through some of this bullshit with at least a little bit of know how and I just feel like oof we are just not there. I don't know one media outlet that didn't in their, their official stories didn't say like "oop we didn't really get the story right last time, here's a broader a zoom out look, it may have looked a little different, we have to consider that these are young boys also" all impacted by a PR firm and right wing trolls.

Nora: Yeah, yeah. The implications that this has on everything cannot be overstated.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: Cannot be overstated. Yeah. I always get over and understated wrong. (Both laugh.) Um, I mean like, all of the discussions around Russia meddling in the United States election and in politics is kind of the place holder for what is really happening here, which is that news is being manufactured, opinion is being manufactured by the right wing troll-sphere.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: And this isn't, this is, this is the case with everything. Every single thing. Nothing, like the fact that we commonly collectively don't understand that nothing goes viral on it's own.

Sandy: (Sandy laughs.) Nothing goes viral! Things are made viral.

Nora: Everything that goes viral is made to go viral and the question is who and how. Here, I'll give you can interesting example. So this past week, um, the Canadian Association of Labour Media, which is the group that I work with, um, we posted, a, a, a an update of a landslide that happened in Alberta many years ago and killed many workers, it's called the Frank Slide. It's interesting, it's a piece of labour history. And we had higher than normal engagement. And, and once we got into whatever the fuck echelon it was of higher than normal, trolls got into it.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: And it wasn't nefarious. These were trolls saying, "wow what a story", "wow I can't believe this" and then we started to get bombarded with messages but the messages didn't make any sense so there's like weird spelling issues or they weren't actually referring to what the text of the post was about.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: And so it was like Lynn from fucking Staten Island telling me that "I wish those boys could live" and I was like well that's a weird thing to say about a piece of labour history. (Both laugh.)

Sandy: Uhuh.

Nora: And I go to her page and her page is all right wing conspiracy stuff.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: And this was the case. This was replicated over and over and over and our engagements went up like 4, 000% from what they normally are. And so it's like there are, there is, we know that all of this stuff is being manipulated. We know that, that, that trolls exist just to amplify certain things. Right? Is Ontario Proud actually as popular as it is or is it a little bit more popular than other pages and then there's just this massive troll army that always has to feed into this because the, the accounts need to look real for their power to be intact?

Sandy: For journalists to pay attention.

Nora: Right? And then for something to go viral, then it's like, so then, so then what are those forces? Is this literally just an algorithm gone wrong? Is this AI that's trying to kill us? Is this the Russians trying to make sure that Donald Trump stays President or is it what's more likely the case, agencies from who the fuck know where, whether it's in Canada or somewhere else in the world with tons of Facebook accounts just completely inventing popularity? And it's just like journalists, they're, they're, you know they're looking at the story and they're just following it and it's going over here and their eyes are following are following the shiniest fucking part of it and it's like can you look behind the fucking curtain?

Sandy: Mhmm. Mhmm. Tell us a little bit more about what's going on here. Please, instead of just regurgitating whatever these people are putting out. This is such a problem in, you know it's a problem of fast journalism, it's a problem of lazy journalism and it's a big, big problem when there's a whole sector of our society that can pay for, you know, exploiting this problem that soooo clearly exists. And so these youth, you know before we, we actually started recording, like Nora was like "hey, what do you want to talk about" and I was like "uh, this has been on my mind but it just makes me so uchh" and it makes me so uchh because it's just such (pause) it's such a terrible, you know, thing to have to confront over, and over, and over again that the things that people think matter in our society, the voices who matter the most, who get redemption, who has consequences and so on, is so hard to penetrate because all it takes is, is some access, some money, and for the vast majority of us we'll never be able to experience that and for a very small sliver of this population (laughing) they will never have to experience any sort of even threat to that like iron clad protection that their social class, their wealth, their whiteness, their manhood will get them. And fuck that.

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy: That makes me uchh.

Nora: Oh yea, we are (Sandy groans) like things are getting obviously weirder in pretty much every aspect of, ah, society like the earth is fucking accelerating towards destruction and it was like 50 degrees in Australia and the United States is organizing a fucking coups in Venezuela and Canada apparently has also played an active role in this and journalists can't even report on a viral story without looking at the act of going viral.

Sandy: Yeah, yeah.

Nora: That is soooo bad.

Sandy: It's so bad.

Nora: (Laughing.) We are so fucked.

Sandy: It's so bad, it's so bad. So (sighs) yeah, happy, happy Tuesday. Um (both laugh).

Nora: The other thing that I think I, I really want folks to think about with this stuff too is you know the, the video itself was compelling for reason's we've already stated but it's replicated also time and time again in various other videos that go viral. And we also, like we're not, we individually cannot come up against these forces that are manipulating everything that exists online but we also have to be really smart and sharp about what we're, what we're sharing, how we're sharing it, how we're framing certain things. Um, in that case it was like, just so horrible to see these boys being so racist and so terrible towards Nathan Phillips that I think a lot of people were quick to share it to say "holy, holy fuck look at this." But in our sharing everything we are also continuing to, to, to, to make the conditions possible that these fake accounts can push things to go viral.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: And it's not good enough for me to say stop sharing stuff because I, noone is going to, I'm not going to...

Sandy: I'm not going to. (Laughs.)

Nora: And at the end of the day it's not our fault.

Sandy: No.

Nora: It's not like the collective fault of how we, of how we do things. But, we do have to be really sharp about what we are sharing because the next time that a video comes out that could ruin someone's life because the video was completely taken out of context or it was doctored or it didn't actually happen or whatever the fuck, we have to be, we have to be really like critical in thinking what are the forces that made this go viral? And obviously this is pretty close to me because like I have gone viral, um, thanks to people working very hard for it to go viral and a number of good people who were just like "well it was just because of what you said or did" it's like no literally I like (laughs) I got stuck in a machine.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: Ah, these things are going to get worse. If you're political, if you're in a movement, and you're building things, like we have to get really, ah, good at identifying what something looks like as it's going viral and keeping track of when we see fake accounts or, or when we know about a bad Reddit channel, like metacanada, a lot of bullshit comes out of metacanada. Um, and actually able to see “oh look, this is being discussed on 4chan like we've gotta wait like five seconds and it's going to smoke us all in the face very soon.” 'Cause if journalists aren't going to do that work, unfortunately, like we need to make sure that they do, but waiting for them is also not the best idea.

Sandy: (Laughs. Groans.) And we also have to be aware of like what it means, like what does it mean that we are willing to take a look at Nick Sandmann again and again and again and again and try to really understand where's he coming from? Who is he really? How old is he? Do we give him the benefit of the doubt? But have automatic suspicion about Nathan Phillips, about Black people (laughs) who are present that we know nothing about. Right like there's an, there's an automatic suspicion that is OK in the mainstream media, that is OK in the way that ah these trolls are trying to make these things go viral, in the way that this PR firm is operating that wants us to investigate: is Nathan Phillips a truthful person? Are these Black Hebrew Israelites, like, who are they really? And let's all be suspicious of these people. And whether we should or not is not my point. My point is that these people are there's an auto-suspicion that happens there.

Nora: Mhmm.

Sandy: And because of who Nick Sandmann is and all of his buddies there's an auto let's reexamine, let's make really sure that we get this right, let's take another look and see if we can see this from another angle? And we need to understand how our society is created in such a way that that is the default position that we're in allll the time. Where we need to look at someone who's Indigenous or Black with intense suspicion and scrutiny with the assumption that there's something untoward going on here and look at someone who's a young, white, person and say is there really something untoward going on here? Can't we look at this another way? Isn't this explainable? And there's such dire consequences, as can be seen with the U.S. presidency, the Premier of Ontario, um, you know people who are the leaders of Québec, of New Brunswick and on and on and on. Like it goes on (both laugh) the consequences are big. St. Michael's College, the consequences are really big. So we gotta, we just have to have this social media, digital age literacy to really unpack what we're looking at and why it looks the way that it looks.

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy: And why we're being fed it in the way that we're being fed it.

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy: Don't just trust Robyn Urback, she ain’t trustworthy.

[Outro music.]