

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:12	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:19	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Raoul Peck is a Haitian filmmaker. He’s actually the first Haitian filmmaker ever to have a feature film shown in the US. He had a kind of tough upbringing. When he was eight years old, he and his family fled Haiti for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His father feared for his safety. The younger Peck bounced around schools all over the world, growing up—in places like Brooklyn, Kinshasa, and Berlin. In 2016, he directed a film called <i>I Am Not Your Negro</i> . It was a documentary about the American writer James Baldwin. It was nominated for best documentary at the Oscars and was acclaimed by critics more or less universally.
			These days, Raoul Peck has a new documentary series on HBO. <i>Exterminate All the Brutes</i> ; it’s about genocide and colonialism—a scholarly look at American and European history and the bodies they have left in their wake. You can stream it now, on HBO. When we talked in 2018, he’d just made a very different film from either of those: a biopic called <i>The Young Karl Marx</i> . As the title suggests, <i>The Young Karl Marx</i> focuses on the German philosopher in his mid-20s, when he met Friedrich Engels. It documents their friendship, their hardships, their relationships, but it’s more than just a movie about a man or two men. <i>The Young Karl Marx</i> tells the origin story of one of the most consequential philosophies in history.
			Let’s take a listen to a little bit of the film. This takes place in London, after Marx—who’s played by August Diehl—was exiled from Paris. In this scene, he’s talking with a business owner. He runs a factory that employs child laborers. And, you know, it’s Karl Marx. He’s got something to say about that.
00:02:05	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:06	Clip	Clip	Speaker (<i>The Young Karl Marx</i>): You know very well that without child labor, we’d price ourselves out of the market.
			Karl Marx: Meaning you would have paid a fair price to your worker’s labor, right?
			Speaker: But I don’t set the prices, young man. The market does.
			Karl: Of course.
			Speaker: If I stopped hiring children, others would. And I’d go bankrupt. That’s what society does.

Karl: No, sir. This is how the existing relations of production work, not society. Society's not you. *[Chuckles.]*

Speaker: Now, I don't know what you mean by "relations of production". All sounds Hebrew to me. *[Aside.]* Thank you, James! If labor costs more, there'd be no more profits, therefore no more economy, therefore no more society. Perhaps that's what you want, hm? Hm?

Karl: *[Chuckling.]* Is that right? We are not speaking the same language. What you call profits, I call exploitation. Music swells and fades.

00:03:07 Sound Effect Transition

00:03:09 Jesse Host Raoul Peck, welcome to *Bullseye*. It's great to have you on the show!

00:03:12 Raoul Peck Guest Well, thank you!

00:03:13 Jesse Host So, a lot of this film is about sort of the creation of the—the creation of a theory and the path that led to a book, but it's also about a friendship and a romance and I wonder how you came to not just the theoretical part of Marx's life, but the personal part of Marx's life—the story of him as a person.

00:03:42 Raoul Guest Uh, it was a long—a long story with this project. First of all, it took ten years to make. Ten years, because we had to find a way to write this story—which is, indeed—had to be a personal story. As you can imagine, the project could not be to try to explain all the historical failure and murderous regime that have used Marx's thinking to—as a justification of their murders. So, how do you tell a story for today's cinema and for a younger audience in order to understand this incredible idea of changing the world? And that Marx, Engels, and Jenny, and Mary were young people of their century who were fed up about the inequality of that time and the political repression of that time.

So, it took us time—you know, to—how do you tell the story of the evolution of an idea? And so, it—the film tells the story of these multiple beginnings.

00:05:09 Jesse Host Is that different from the job of a biopic, generally? I mean, you—among other things, you made a really powerful movie about Patrice Lumumba. Or you made two powerful movies about Patrice Lumumba, but one of them was a scripted, narrative feature. Is it different to make a movie that ultimately is about a super, super important idea than it is to make a movie about—you know, Brian Wilson making *Pet Sounds* or something like that?

00:05:41 Raoul Guest *[Chuckles.]* Well, the thing is we are attacking the most important thinker of modern history. You know? There is nothing beyond Marx. You know? After the industrial revolution, you know, Marx's works was on the capitalistic society and since Marx, there have been nothing as major as what he did. So—and Marx is a personality that comes once every 200 years. He was a contemporance of Darwin. By the way, they exchanged letters, you know? Marx and Darwin. And Marx was so central that he could then write to Abraham Lincoln. You know, congratulating him for his new election, etc., etc.. So, tackling a film like this—you know, and there is a reason why there haven't been any film on Karl Marx in

the western world until now. You know? Because it's very sensitive. It's politically—or at least it was politically dangerous. It was taboo as well. But we couldn't tell this story like this because it's not the story of a few characters who are in love with each other and the stories about that love and the conflict in that love. No. Their private life is just part of the story, but it is not the story.

00:07:22	Jesse	Host	So, we had to come up with a way to deconstruct the usual approach of biopic in order to create something totally different.
00:07:25	Raoul	Guest	What was the way that you came up with? Well, the first choice was to—as I did for my previous film, <i>I Am Not Your Negro</i> , where I tried to go directly to Baldwin. I eliminated any talking heads. I eliminated any biographer. I eliminated any interpreter. With Marx, that would have been even worse because there are so many misuses of his work in the history of the modern world. So, I couldn't get into that field. I needed to go straight to Marx and his surroundings. So, what we did in the writing of the screenplay was to rely almost exclusively on the correspondence. And when you read those letters that—you know, all these letters have been published. You know. Even his work when he was a 12-year-old boy in school. And they are phenomenally human. You know? It's about their daily life. It's about their relationship. It's about jokes they've made about fellow journalists or fellow scientists.
00:08:55	Jesse	Host	But still, it's always about their engagement and about their ambition to change the world. So, it's the best way to stay close to those characters. You know? And make them human, because that's the important part. I wanna play another clip from <i>Young Karl Marx</i> , which is the movie by my guest, Raoul Peck. And the film is about Marx. It's also about Friedrich Engels, who was his partner in writing <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> . And Engels' father was a capitalist. He was a factory owner in industrial revolution England, although he was not English.
00:09:25	Raoul	Guest	Yeah, well, and very wealthy—he had factories in Germany as well. And he had a factory in Manchester.
00:09:33	Jesse	Host	And, you know, there is a—there is a scene where Friedrich rebels against his father—albeit, you know, not too aggressively in—you know, on the factory floor. And Engels walks out, and he ends up walking into a pub that is full of Irish laborers, some of whom are the folks who were just fired from his father's factory in the—in the kerfuffle that had just happened.
00:10:05	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:10:06	Clip	Clip	Friedrich Engels: Please, stop calling me a gentleman. I'm neither English nor a gentleman.

Speaker 1: [Chuckles.] You don't say?

Friedrich: I hate and despise gentlemen. They are swine who grow fat on the sweat of laborers.

Speaker 1: He's making fun of us. You know what I think, fellas? I think he came in here to have a good laugh at us.

Speaker 2: He's got nerves.

Friedrich: I've come here to enlist your help. That's why I'm here.

Speaker 3: He wants to enlist us?

Speaker 2: What sort of list would that be, then?

Friedrich: I'm working on a book. And I need first-hand accounts.

Speaker 1: A book! Is he writing a book?

[Scattered laughter.]

Friedrich: About the condition of the working class in Manchester and Leeds.

00:10:47 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:10:48 Jesse Host

There's this series of scenes throughout the film of Marx and Engels talking about money—not on a grand, economic scale, but on a personal scale.

[Raoul confirms.]

00:11:16 Raoul Guest

And I wonder why you—why you included those scenes, where Marx basically says to Engels, "I have to feed my kids. I'm broke." Well, because it's part of the reality of their reality. Those young guys—don't forget, they are in their 20s at the time. Marx is a young married man, and he already has one, a girl, and he's basically living in poverty because whatever he's writing is not bringing much money. So, it's a constant problem almost on the daily basis. And later in his year in London, in the exile in London, Marx—when he started working on *Das Kapital* and he was very sick most of the time and suffering from all sort of sickness, he wrote—well, nobody ever wrote so much about money while having so less of it. You know? That's the story of his life.

00:12:12 Jesse Host

I was born and raised in California and the idea of violent overthrow of the government is pretty abstract to me.

[Raoul hums in understanding.]

You lived, until you were eight years old, in Haiti when your father and your family were forced to flee because of the Duvalier regime, which was a historically brutal regime.

[Raoul confirms.]

00:12:54 Raoul Guest

What do you remember about having to leave Haiti?

Well, this was a very vivid time. I was young, but I remember every part of it, especially because my father was arrested very shortly after Duvalier came to his presidency. And I always kept a vivid allergy to any abuse of power and any injustice. And that's—you know—the same way, after we left to go to Congo. My father had a

contract with the UN to go to work in Congo and I encountered another story of injustice. When I arrived, I was very young. Lumumba had—was already killed and Mobutu was the next dictator in the block.

00:13:46 Jesse Host

We'll have even more of my conversation with Raoul Peck, including my idea for a wacky family friendly TV show about Karl Marx, *[chuckling]* which I—look, I hereby cede the intellectual property rights to you, Mr. Peck. You can go ahead and pitch that to TBS. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:14:07 Promo Clip

Speaker: This message comes from NPR sponsor Fidelity Wealth Management. VP Dylan Sanders shares why it's important to understand clients' values.

Dylan Sanders: People quantify dreams differently. So, it's essential to be able to sit with a client and listen and ask questions and just begin to understand what it is in their life that they wanna pursue and help them create a roadmap to get there.

00:14:40 Promo Clip

Speaker: To learn more, go to Fidelity.com/wealth. Fidelity Brokerage Services LLC, member NYSESIPC.

Yowei Shaw: I'm Yowei Shaw.

Kia Miakka Natisse: I'm Kia Miakka Natisse.

Yowei: We're the hosts of the NPR podcast *Invisibilia*.

Kia: You can think of *Invisibilia* kind of like a sonic blacklight.

[Thoughtful music fades in.]

Yowei: When you switch us on, you will hear surprising and intimate stories.

Kia: Stories that help you notice things in your world that maybe you didn't see before.

00:15:03 Jesse Host

Yowei: Listen to the *Invisibilia* podcast, from NPR. Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is filmmaker Raoul Peck. He directed the Academy Award nominated documentary *I Am Not Your Negro*, which was about the writer James Baldwin. He also directed the new *Exterminate All the Brutes*, which is a four-part docuseries about colonialism and genocide, which is streaming now on HBO.

When Peck and I talked in 2018, he'd just directed a film called *The Young Karl Marx*, which—as you might have reasonably surmised—is a biopic about the German philosopher's young adulthood.

Your father was not a political activist. He was an agronomist.

[Raoul confirms several times.]

Who taught, you know, farming techniques in a university in Haiti. Were you aware, when you were a child, that he and your family were in danger?

00:15:57 Raoul Guest Not at all. And that's the aspect of dictatorship and in particular the Duvalier dictatorship. It was not about, you know, being involved politically. You know, dictatorships are pretty blind. It's about instilling terror. Meaning, you know, you—it doesn't matter if there is a reason or not. You install a regime of terror where every citizen is afraid that something can happen to you. You're never safe. So, that's the way to keep you in check. So, no. I was not at all. And I start seeing after the first arrestation of my father. And he was freed very rapidly before he could be sent to one of those death prisons. Because the regime there was a still the military, they were not all subjected to the—to the president and some of those officers recognize him. So, he could be freed quite rapidly. And it happened a second time and that's when he decided he had to leave.

And, at the time, the UN came to Haiti. Haiti was one of the few Black republics existing with a very important middle class of people who, you know, were doctors, engineers, and teachers. And the UN came and offered 400 contracts to Haitians to go work in Congo, because the Belgians had left the Congo. And so, at that time, my father and many of his colleagues just decided to leave, because they didn't see a future for them, in Haiti. And a lot of them went to Canada, to Quebec, and also to the United States and became teachers, professors, or doctors.

00:17:55 Jesse Host For a while, when I was a teenager, my mom worked on this project in Haiti that was digitizing books from the 17th and 18th centuries and these books had been saved when Duvalier came to power by these Jesuit priests who essentially took libraries of these hundreds of year old books and like put them in boxes and buried them in their backyards and things like that.

00:18:27 Raoul Guest Uh-huh. Yeah. Well, in fact, I probably—I was in that school that was Le Petit Séminaire, that's the—one of the two Jesuit schools and they had one of the most phenomenal libraries. And that still exists today. It's in bad shape, but it still exists, yeah.

00:18:45 Jesse Host And these books, you know, they were things like—you know, transaction ledgers of the Caribbean slave trade and things like this, histories of—histories of the slave rebellion in Haiti that were—that was, you know, one of the only successful slave rebellions in the new world.

And—but like a lot of these books, it wasn't even about—it wasn't even about political content. It was really just that this was a regime that was dedicated to destroying books. Just knowledge!

[Raoul agrees.]

00:19:24 Raoul Guest Just knowing things! Anything.

Yes. And again, it's the typical method of terror. You know? And there was this joke of people, of Tonton Macoute, who had the militia of the president, of Duvalier, who could—you know—come to your house if you were suspected and they would inspect your library, your bookshelves. And if they find, you know, a book like

The Black and—The Red and the Black, you know, the Stendhal book—you know, you could be in trouble. Although, that of course had nothing to do with communism. But again, that was a game that Duvalier knew very well to exploit with the Americans, because at the time, every American administration was just hellbent scared against any communist movement. Anything red was suspect, even when it is a romantic book.

00:20:27 Jesse Host

When you've had financial success making art, are you able to feel good and proud about that?

00:20:39 Raoul Guest

Uh, well, feel good and proud? Those are not really terms that I use in my life.

[Jesse chuckles.]

Because it's—it doesn't help. *[Chuckles.]* Simply as that. And it's—you know, the thing we do as artists is really—you never can be satisfied. You know? I think it's almost the contrary. I just look at myself and my work, you know, and look back and say, "Oh my god, I did survive." You know? It's more *[chuckling]*—much more, you know—you don't know what's in front. You know? You just took the decisions to eventually not to make compromise, because that's a choice I had to make when I started. It was never to make money. Of course, I would be happy if I could live from my art. Which, ultimately, I did. But I paid a huge price for that, you know, in order not to go do anything else, not to go teach instead of making films, you know, to have the discipline and to live with little money. And those are the choice I took very early, in my life. Especially because, again, the first ambition was to go back to Haiti—meaning put your life in danger. You know?

So, when you have that as a—as a goal, you don't see life the same way. You don't—you know, you don't accumulate. You don't think of having a big house. You don't think of having a car, because you know you might have to leave all that behind. So—and I think I benefited from that discipline to take risks in my life, as a filmmaker.

00:22:36 Jesse Host

Raoul, I have a pitch for you, before you go.

00:22:38 Raoul Guest

Yeah? Go ahead.

00:22:39 Jesse Host

You already made the film *Young Karl Marx* that's about the sort of the developing of the theoretical basis and ideology of communism. Let's make a TV show called *Young Karl Marx* that's sort of like—

[Raoul laughs.]

It's sort of like in the vein of *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* or *Young Sherlock Holmes*, where he's like having cool adventures. Like maybe he gets stuck in like one of those like carts that's in a mine. Or maybe he could travel the world on one of those train things, where you pump the handle up and down to make it go.

00:23:20 Raoul Guest

[Chuckles.] Well, you know, by the way—we wrote seven hours of screenplay. You know?

[Jesse laughs.]

00:23:39	Jesse	Host	On—you know, the first—some of the draft, we started in Marx meeting Jenny in the street, in Trier, when they are 12. You know—
00:23:42	Raoul	Guest	The working title, Raoul, was <i>Berlin Alexanderplatz 2</i> . Well, exactly. I would love to do that, you know? By the way, there is a book— <i>Love and Capital</i> —by an American writer and I think they are trying to make a miniseries out of it. So, no. They are—you know, I could make a ten hour limited series with what we have, because it's an incredible story.
00:24:06	Jesse	Host	Maybe they could have a van and they could solve mysteries?
00:24:09	Raoul	Guest	Uh, well, that's [<i>chuckling</i>] still a possibility.
00:24:13	Jesse	Host	[<i>Laughs.</i>] Raoul Peck, I am so grateful to you for taking this time to talk to me on <i>Bullseye</i> , it was a—
00:24:18	Raoul	Guest	Well, thank you for the invitation. Yes.
00:24:20	Jesse	Host	—a tremendous honor. Thank you so much. I hope I'll talk to you again.
00:24:24	Raoul	Guest	Thank you. Yes. Sure.
00:24:26	Jesse	Host	Raoul Peck, from 2018. His new docuseries, <i>Exterminate All the Brutes</i> , is streaming now on HBO. And if you haven't seen <i>I Am Not Your Negro</i> , his documentary about James Baldwin, it's absolutely incredible.
00:24:39	Music	Transition	Relaxed piano music.
00:24:41	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is created out of the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California—where I recently acquired a bench thanks to the good people at Abell Auction Company. Thanks for that bench. It's a good bench. Paid a fair price.
			The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio and Jordan Kauwling are our associate producers. We get help from Casey O'Brien. Production fellows at Maximum Fun are Richard Robey and Valerie Moffat. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. Thanks very much to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it. They've got a new single out, by the way. So, you know, google The Go! Team, get to jamming.
			You can also keep up with our show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post our interviews in all of those places. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.
00:25:42	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

[*Music fades out.*]