

Still Buffering 414: Election 2024

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[theme music, "Baby You Change Your Mind" by Nouvellas plays]

Sydnee: Hello, and welcome to *Still Buffering*, a cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Well, I could come up with some adorable story or anecdote to— [chuckles] to share or to open our episode, but that feels disingenuous, Teylor.

Taylor: Yeah, no no no, no wacky hijinks to share?

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: That's fair.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: Or just the wacky hijinks, I guess that's one way to explain.

Sydnee: Wacky hijinks?

Taylor: Just— Yeah. [chuckles] The wackiest! And the highest of jinks. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah. That's— That is the textbook definition of fascism. [chuckles] The wackiest and highest of jinks.

Taylor: [laughs] Yeah.

Sydnee: Well.

Taylor: That's what I learned in school.

Sydnee: So we're recording this several days after the election.

Taylor: Yeah, we were supposed to record the day after.

Sydnee: And we just couldn't.

Taylor: No, that was not gonna happen.

Sydnee: I— And I will say, like... it feels like it's been 100 years since the election, but also it's still happening in some way? I don't know.
[scoffs] Like it is—

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: It defies time and space in that it is continuously happening to me at all points in time. This week has been the longest week of my entire life.

Taylor: And it's not even like the whole week.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: Like these three days have felt— they've aged me at least a year.

Sydnee: Yeah. I have felt every emotion that humans are capable of feeling. There's like 80 some or something.

Taylor: What?

Sydnee: Someone did a study. Yeah, there's—

Taylor: I do not have 80, I think I have five.

Sydnee: That— Listen, they did a study. There's— [chuckles]

Taylor: Sad, mad, happy.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Three. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Afraid.

Taylor: Afraid. Oh yeah.

Sydnee: [chuckles] If you've watched *Inside Out*, you know what the feelings are, „cause they're cute little characters.

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah, that's true. I don't know.

Sydnee: Then you know all the feelings you—

Taylor: I—

Sydnee: No, scientists did a study, there's like— there's dozens of— I don't know, I feel like there's 80 some. Anyway, there's lots of emotions you can have. [chuckles]

Taylor: Alright, I might've missed the boat on some of those, but I'll take your word for it.

Sydnee: They're like nuanced. You know how like there are all kinds of things that we don't the words for the exact things in English. And we'll be like—

Taylor: Right, but Germany does, somehow, yeah.

Sydnee: Exactly, that's what I was gonna say, but for some reason Germany has a word in German that means "that thing that takes me like an hour to explain." That. It's like that with emotions.

Taylor: Does German have a word for like... waking up in an unreal existence... that you have no ability to accept as the new reality?

Sydnee: I— Listen, if any of our listeners can tell us, if you speak German, if you're from Germany, if you are German, or if you just know, please share if that— if there is a word for that.

Taylor: Like a state of permanent absurdity. Is there a word for that? [chuckles]

Sydnee: Or if there isn't, may I propose "America?"

Taylor: [laughs] Oh no.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: That is a country of permanent absurdity.

Sydnee: I don't— I mean, I don't know that like we ever explicitly said on this podcast that we didn't want Donald Trump to be President. But I hope you probably knew that.

Taylor: I would've— Yeah, I would hope so too.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I feel like, you know. Although I don't know, you know what? I think it is fair, especially if you're from certain demographics, to need [chuckles] every white person to say that out loud.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Honestly.

Sydnee: Yeah, I absolutely would never vote for Donald Trump. I am—

Taylor: Nor would I.

Sydnee: No. I am sad and angry... And I understand if scared is an emotion you're feeling. I— I would—

Taylor: [wheezes]

Sydnee: I think that as well—

Taylor: Are you not scared? [chuckles] Your anger has overtaken your fear?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: I was scared initially, but I'm also— Like I'm trying to be really careful, like my... my fears for myself, personally, are not the most important. Like those are not the most important fears.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: That people are having right now. I have— There— I have more fear for people around me. And I don't wanna center— You know, I don't wanna center my fear.

Taylor: Same. And I—

Sydnee: Or my sadness, really.

Taylor: I gave myself a day to be like a miserable piece of crap and feel really self-pitying, and now I'm just— I don't know, I— You know like how some people when you're watching a horror movie and there's like the really brutal scene where somebody's just getting butchered?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And some people scream, and some people cover their eyes, and then some people laugh?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I'm one of the people that laughs, and it's not like a— I'm not enjoying it, it's just that is the, whatever, the psychological response I have to insane levels of violence is just to laugh, so I'll laugh.

Sydnee: Which some people do. I mean, and that is— You know, it's interesting you say that.

[siren goes off in the distance]

Sydnee: When Cooper has done something like really like behaviorally that we did not want her to do. She's made a bad choice.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: That's what you say as a parent. You don't say you did something bad or good, you say, "That was a good choice or that was not a good choice." [chuckles]

Taylor: That's fair.

Sydnee: That's how we say it, I'm trying. I'm trying to be the gentlest of parents. I'm trying not to say like—

Taylor: "You're a bad person."

Sydnee: — "What the heck did you do?" No, I would never say that, I don't think that, but like sometimes you just wanna go "Why are you doing this?!"

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] As a parent, and instead I'm trying to say like, "Let's talk about the choices we made."

Taylor: That's fair.

Sydnee: No, I don't mean like— I am not— I don't have any boomer instincts, where I wanna like make my child feel terrible.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But there are times where I just wanna look at them and say, "I don't understand you."

Taylor: [chuckles] "You made the worst choice, in fact."

Sydnee: Yes, some— Well and I've told— I literally looked at my children the other day and said, "Do you understand how powerful you could be if you worked together against your father and I? If you worked as a team."

Taylor: You shouldn't tell them that.

Sydnee: "To thwart us, you would be so powerful."

Teylor: Why would you tell them that?

Sydnee: Because they won't. „Cause they— „Cause they're gonna fight each other, „cause they're gonna pull each other's hair instead.

Teylor: Was this some sort of reverse psychology to try to get them to not fight each other?

Sydnee: Yes.

Teylor: Oh, well that's gonna work—

Sydnee: I thought if I told them— [chuckles]

Teylor: — out badly for you.

Sydnee: "You would be so much more powerful as a unit against your parents than you are fighting each other."

Teylor: [chuckles] Ah, the problem with the left. I see how this parallels.

Sydnee: Ahhh, there we go. [chuckles] But anyway, Cooper said when she gets in trouble and it's really serious, she can't help but laugh.

Teylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And she keeps— And she'll tell me that, like, "I'm going to laugh now, and I understand that this is serious, but I am gonna laugh now."

Teylor: [sighs] Yeah.

Sydnee: It's very interesting to see that play out.

Teylor: It's— I don't know, I don't know exactly what that— where that feeling comes from, but I understand it.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Teylor: „Cause that's just how I feel, like I'm at— I don't know how to respond to it, but just be like, "Ha ha! Alright! Ha ha, here we are now!"

Sydnee: Well.

Taylor: "Okay!"

Sydnee: And I think a lot of us probably— I mean I would— Tey, you can— You know, I don't wanna speak for your experience, but I for months now— Gosh, longer than— I don't know. For all of the last four years. [chuckles] Have done, on some level, some preparation for this... reality. Like I am not 2016 shocked.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I'm not shocked. I'm... I'm angry, and I really— I think there was a part of me that hoped. But I also, simultaneously now, like I look at me from last week. [chuckles] Me from Monday, and I think, "How naïve."

Taylor: Right. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Because why— I mean... You don't turn around the tides of hatred and isolationism and nationalism and fascism and bigotry and everything. You don't turn it around in four years. You don't—

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: You know, that is not the— how history... arcs, you know?

Taylor: Well, I mean, the travelling companion of hate is indifference, and that's what we met this with, by and large. You know, you would need a reaction equal to the action to cancel it out, and we did not manifest that.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: And I mean I— You know, it's funny, „cause we talked the day of the election, and I was like, "No, I feel good about this. I've been on my own journey, „cause I have cynical tendencies."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: "I have the tendency to think everybody's actually a monster, everybody's bad, everybody's gonna hurt me, nobody wants my happiness."

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: And as somebody that's been working to kind remove that from my system, [chuckles] I went into this being like, "No, humanity's gonna show up for each other in this. This is gonna be the thing that cements that I will pursue a path of positivity."

And you know, I'm not gonna not do that because of it „cause that would be a childish reaction, but it did kinda feel like, "Well this is what I get! This is what I get for having faith!"

Sydnee: [chuckles] I know.

Taylor: "This is what I get for thinking [in a goofy voice] the best out of my fellow man."

Sydnee: Well, but okay, is there not a little bit of... I have been... I mean I hope that you all listening have had people in your life that you can talk to and process this with.

Because I really think it's important to be able to talk through all these things that we're feeling with other people, in like a safe space, like with people who are safe to talk to. So I hope— I would not advise trying to ride this out alone in your own head.

Taylor: Mm-mm.

Sydnee: I don't think that is a great way to cope with this. And that kind of help and talking and processing may just look like friends and family, or it may look like talking to a professional to help you process this. Whatever that is for you, please seek that out.

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: But as I've been trying to process this with people around me, what a lot of us are kind of arriving at is that I felt like after 2016— And

this is— And please understand, this is coming from someone who lives in a very red state, one of the blood reddiest states.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And—

Taylor: The second state called for him.

Sydnee: It's the what?

Taylor: You were the second state called for him.

Sydnee: Yes, yes. And immediately, with 0% of precincts reporting.
[chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah. [chuckles] It was just an assumption.

Sydnee: Our— Yeah, and I mean if you haven't paid attention to what happened in West Virginia, I don't blame you, like that's fine. There's, I don't know, there's a hundred of us here. That's not true, but like our population's shrinking, there's not a lot of us. [chuckles]

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: But if you didn't pay attention, we elected a governor who isn't from West Virginia, and who is partially responsible, in many ways, for the opioid crisis that has killed so many people in our state, and in Appalachia, and in parts of the country at large.

Taylor: [mutters] Jesus Christ.

Sydnee: We elected him our governor, and our senator, Jim Justice, you may remember the guy with the dog, the baby dog.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: That's our senator. He was— I mean, he is such a grifter, like coal baron. I don't even know how to explain this. So anyway, so things are bad here and things have been bad for a while, and so I think like

anything I'm saying it coming from people who have been living in this kind of like dystopian red nightmare.

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: To some extent, for a while. And after 2016, I had this impulse, like, "I need to build bridges. There are people around me who voted for this man" that, in 2016, we all knew, I feel like we knew was bad, but maybe we didn't know how bad. Maybe we didn't know how bad yet? Maybe we didn't know. Maybe we thought it was more of a joke than a— than evil.

And so I thought, "I will build bridges with these people, I will try to understand them. I will try to figure out how could we have connected better on the left with these people who are not going to be served by this liar, by this criminal. How can we connect?" I don't feel that way anymore.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: I will not build any bridges. [chuckles]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I will burn them. [chuckles] I am done. You knew. You knew. You weren't confused. And don't tell me it's about eggs. I don't— You knew, and that's what you got, and I'm done.

I don't think we need to build bridges, I think we need to work on knitting our community, those of us who are on this side, together more closely. That is what I'm— That is— I will knit, I will not build.

Taylor: [chuckles] I think that's a fair way to feel.

Sydnee: I don't— And maybe, you know, maybe I'm wrong.

Taylor: That— Well.

Sydnee: I'm not— [chuckles]

Taylor: I don't know, I don't know.

[pause]

Taylor: I mean that's— It sucks, and I've seen— I feel, I think, a very understandable reaction from people that did do everything they could, this anger that's like, "Enjoy what's about to happen." And I think, you know, a lot of very smart people have been repeating the phrase "This is not our lesson to learn."

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: When things get bad, people will realize what a mistake they made by not participating, or by voting the way they did. It's just— It's hard for me to really revel in that too much because it's going to be— it's still gonna be lives on the line.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: I mean like I could li— Like yeah, these tariffs are gonna ruin— They were— I saw people bemoaning like yesterday that they all— like companies cancelling Christmas bonuses because they're gonna buy so much product now to try to avoid the tariffs.

Sydnee: Mm.

Taylor: So their companies cannot afford their bonuses.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like.

Sydnee: I didn't— I saw that post too. I was trying— I didn't chase it down to see if it was true, is it true?

Taylor: I mean I was— There was a person claiming that—

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like the first person to claim it was the author of that complaint, it was not somebody saying "This happened to a friend of mine."

Sydnee: Yeah, that's—

Taylor: Or the person's making it up, it's hard to say. It's the internet, who knows.

Sydnee: This is something that I am sure everyone listening to the show already knows this, but like I feel like I have to be constantly explaining to you.

I wanna say older generations, but it's my generation too, people my age don't always do this. If you see something like that on the internet that confirms, like, "That's exactly what we said would happen, and look it's already happening." Make sure it's true. [chuckles]

Taylor: That's true, that's very true.

Sydnee: Make sure it's true. I don't— I saw it too, and that's why I wondered like, "Is that real? Is that real?" I— But I mean... Yeah, I mean that is what's gonna happen.

Taylor: Well I, you know, I think like the idea— There's a reason— Any time like a businessperson comes out, like somebody who just like business, that is their job, they are a businessman, and they come out in favor of left leaning politics, I think you need to look up why. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like the guy who runs Total Wine and Spirits coming out on the left, it's not because he's some bleeding-heart liberal, it's because wine and spi— As somebody that works, that comes from the bar world, like it's a massively import market.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Like you can have as many wonderful American made bourbons as you want, but at the end of the day, your customers are gonna want tequila, and they're gonna want scotch, and they're gonna want, I don't know, champagne, and everything that comes from something else is gonna get more expensive. And not by a little bit, by a lot.

Sydnee: And—

Taylor: So it will crash the bar industry. Which is already struggling, it is already almost impossible to stay in business.

Sydney: The financial impact, the economic impact, of this, I mean, absolutely immoral, hideous mass deportation plan.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydney: I mean— And I don't— I mean, let me be clear, I don't care about the economic impact in that— of that as much as I care about the human impact of that.

Taylor: Right.

Sydney: But again, like I would not be surprised if you see more people who you would expect to be, and who probably historically voted Republican, who are opposed to some of these things because of they— maybe they don't care about the humans, but they do care about the dollars.

I don't know, I've seen— To kind of stick with what we tend to talk about on the show, watching— At first I could not engage with any social media about it. Honestly, once I— once the eventuality of Tuesday night was clear to me, I just— I turned it off.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydney: I watched it so I— Like I watched, and I'm not saying like, "I just can't, I won't engage." No I engaged, I knew what was happening. I didn't need to see all the hot takes right away.

Taylor: No.

Sydney: I didn't need to see all of the— And I don't wanna read any articles about why we lost, „cause I know. „Cause I know. I think we all know. I think like if we search our souls, we know.

We didn't want it to be true, but we know what's true. But now that I've started to engage again, it's interesting to see like I don't know if you are ever on BookTok, Taylor.

Taylor: Um, not close enough that I get it regularly. I did see some drama, I don't— It feels— It seems like it's too big to just call it "drama," but I did see some BookTok...

Sydnee: Some discourse?

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: "Discourse" is the word that we use, right?

Taylor: It's—

Sydnee: Like it's not just us, it's what we all say. Come on, you say it too. You say "discourse" when you mean "drama," but you don't want to belittle it.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Because "drama" always sounds like you're belittling something.

Taylor: That's true, so yes.

Sydnee: So it's like elevated drama is discourse. [chuckles]

Taylor: Discourse.

Sydnee: There's been discourse. I— With people saying like, "Don't put politics on BookTok." And like pointing out that like if we are looking at a fascist regime that may indeed burn books, I think reading has become a political act.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And has always been, but.

Taylor: Well I don't—

Sydnee: But must be. [chuckles]

Teylor: It's just I don't know, the— a million of the same comparison has been drawn, where it's like you like *The Hunger Games*, but you voted for the Capitol. You like *Star Wars*, but you voted for the Empire.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Teylor: Like what— You like the fantasy, but you didn't apply it to reality. Isn't that... Did we not educate ourselves, or did we just entertain ourselves? [chuckles]

Sydnee: It— That disconnect, I don't know. But again— And I, what— See, what you're pointin' at is somethin' that I spent a lot of time, after 2016, trying to figure out how I could help fix. Like help explain. Like I understand it. And I mean let's be honest, a lot of these people I'm talkin' about, they look like me, they're white women.

Teylor: Mm.

Sydnee: And I felt like I can talk to these white women and explain to them. Like I can— "I am also a white woman, let me explain to you why you're wrong here. Here's where you've missed it. Here's what you're not seeing." I thought that too, but I don't— Do you really believe that they don't see now?

Teylor: I don't know how— I mean being a woman, with everything that's been— I mean this whole new trend of "Your body, my choice" is disgusting. How you can't feel like you have become a political object just by existing in a woman's body.

Because that was something that I really had to confront when I started transitioning, when I came out as trans, is I... perhaps, you know, ignorantly would've thought of myself as, you know, "I keep abreast on politics, I vote, but I don't really think of myself as a political person. Like I have my politics, but I'm not that engaged," or I used to not be. And feeling like no matter what I do, I— my body is politicized against my will.

Sydnee: Yes.

Teylor: I don't think it should be. I don't think the fact that I'm trans tells you anything about me except for a personal experience of how I go through the world.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Doesn't tell you if I'm a good person or a bad person, it's the least interesting thing about me, as far as I'm concerned. I'm a whole person outside of my trans-ness. But the moment I came out, my entire existence became a political question mark, and that sucks.

Sydnee: It does suck.

Taylor: But now I have to be engaged, because I— You know, "Why doesn't it— Why the trans things?" because you made it this way. You made it a political thing.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: So now I have to show up, and I think now every single woman, or every single person with a uterus, has been dragged into this same feeling of your existence, just like— [chuckles] Women, books. Women and books, your existence is political.

Sydnee: Yes. You—

Taylor: I'm sorry.

Sydnee: Yes. Your existence is radical, and the right made it that way, and it is not... I— I don't think— I mean I agree with you 100%, and I know that that is exactly the same experience that Black people and people of color have been having in this country, and of course other places around the world, but especially this country for a long time. Your existence, your continued existence, is a political statement and is radical.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And it's the same, you know, as somebody who works in healthcare. To— Certain areas of healthcare have become political and radical, and there are a lot of people in scientific fields who say like science is not political, science is apoli— It shouldn't be, it is not, it is unbiased, it is always centrist. That is science, it is just truth.

Nope, sorry. There are parts of science that I didn't want „em to be. Reproductive healthcare should have no— It should be the realm of medical professional and patients, and there should be no excess government involvement in any of it.

I don't understand why you get to make any laws about what I do, other than that I can get in trouble if I'm, you know, intentionally doing it wrong. [chuckles] Like I feel like everything else you stay away from it, you don't understand it.

But that's not the reality. And so I can rage against reality all I want, but it doesn't change it unless I actually engage with it.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: This is a weird moment that we have to take a break.

Taylor: [wheezes] [chuckles] Yeah, alright. You know what? Just— It's a lot of weird moments.

Sydnee: Well yeah.

Taylor: We're just gonna roll with it, „cause we have to.

Sydnee: Well yeah. We need to— We need to take a quick break, and we won't be angry the whole show, I promise. There's some more— I think there's some more we can talk about with like what's going on, around that, how we're feeling. But like also some of the stuff we talk about on the show, media and social media and that kind of stuff.

Taylor: Alright, you speak for yourself about that not angry thing, but. [wheezes]

Sydnee: Yeah, well.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: I told you before, Tey, I'm always angry.

Taylor: Sydnee is the Hulk.

Sydnee: I am the Hulk, I am always angry. But first, we're gonna check the group message.

[pause]

Sydnee: So here's the thing, we are— And this is a joyous thing to remember, we are moving into the holiday season. It is okay to still find joy and celebrate this time of year with many people, we'll be getting together with loved ones, and found and true family, and maybe buying each other presents.

And you know, it can be hard sometimes to know like what is the best gift to get people, and especially as we're moving into like the Black Friday time where it's very exciting to like, "What deals could I get?" And you know, the best gift that you could buy a loved one this holiday season is Raycon.

With Raycon, here's the great thing, you don't have to wait for Black Friday, you don't have to wait for those deals. You can get an amazing deal every day of the year, that's their guarantee. And right now, they're doubling down on that by offering up to 30% sitewide for Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

So you already have a great deal with Raycon, but coming up soon you can get a up to 30% sitewide deal on Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Raycon's everyday earbuds now feature 32-hour battery life and multi-point connectivity, that lets you pair with two devices at one time.

That's awesome, so no more having to switch back and forth quickly, you can pair with two already. And then they come with active noise cancellation. That is always so great for me, especially in airplanes.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I don't know, I am somebody who white noise is really bothersome to me. So like the hum of an airplane I find very unpleasant.

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: And I love poppin' in my Raycons and they actively cancel out all of that, and it's like just soothing, and then what I wanna hear, my

favorite music or whatever podcast Justin and I are sharing at the moment.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydney: I can just check it out without hearing all that background noise. There are, you know, Raycon has rivals that some are the biggest names in premium audio, but Raycon starts at just half the price of those other bigger names. So you're getting a great deal for that some high quality.

And again, even before you get to Black Friday or Cyber Monday, it's already an incredible deal. But if you do wait 'til then, you have up to 30% off sitewide on their products. So this is the perfect time, get some Raycons. Like I said, I love the noise cancellation feature, I love that they fit.

That's the other thing about Raycon, they really fit in your ears. My ears are weird and a lot of earbuds will just fall right out. That's not true with Raycons, they fit really nicely, they're comfortable, they're not gonna pop off, fall between the plane seats, and get lost forever. Which has happened to me with other products.

And if you're not impressed, Raycon offers a 30-day happiness guarantee, so you can't lose. Tey, if our listeners wanna check out Raycon, what should they do?

Taylor: Well, it's time to save big for Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Go to buyraycon.com/buffering today, to get up to 30% off sitewide. That's right, you get up to 30% off everything on Raycon's website when you go to buyraycon.com/buffering.

[pause]

Sydney: So Tey, I think— this is nothing— I don't wanna say anything about this is light. [chuckles]

Taylor: No.

Sydney: That's— I think that would be— I don't know, that undermines the seriousness of the moment. I do think it is okay to continue to experience happiness and joy, despite what's going on.

I think if you are doing the work and you are trying your best to fight back, you do not have to deprive yourself of joy forever, I feel that. And so I think it is okay for us to still engage with things that we like to watch or listen to or do with our free time.

Taylor: No absolutely. You know, I think I— There was a clip I saw of Henry Rolands, of course the lead singer for Black Flag, talkin’ about this, and he said, “These aren’t times for despair, these are punk rock times,” you know? Your joy is an act of rebellion. Your—

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Your happiness, your allowing yourself to survive, to find ways to thrive is in their face and exactly what a lot of people don’t wanna see.

Sydnee: I think it is very instructive that if you watched coverage of the campaigns up until the election, one of the things that... the right criticized Kamala for a lot was her laughter.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And her smile.

Taylor: How you gonna get mad at women for not smiling, then get mad at a woman for smiling?

Sydnee: Because they hate our joy.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: Because they want us despondent. Because... Despite all of the inherent challenges and barriers that this— that our system has created for women, and especially for Black women and women of color, because she smiled and laughed anyway.

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: And they hated her for it. And I think we have to remember that. They hate when we are happy, and so... we will find happiness

amongst this sadness despite that. I will say, another discourse I've seen on social media has to do with blue bracelets.

Taylor: How do we feel about those?

Sydnee: Ugh.

Taylor: I have my opinions, but I'm trying to— I've tried to take the lead on what I see specifically from people of color responding to this concept.

Sydnee: That is exactly what I have tried to do, Taylor.

Taylor: Yeah!

Sydnee: Because I'm gonna be honest, when I first saw people talking about— And if you haven't seen it, there is a lot of I think specifically white women, white cis women, who are talking about can we have some sort of visible symbol that shows people who are more oppressed and marginalized than us, specifically I think they're targeting like, "Can we show Black women that we are allies?"

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: "And that we are not part of the majority of white women who voted for Donald Trump." And I understand the impulse to want to like quickly show someone like, "I'm safe, you can talk to me," like I understand that.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I work in a field of medicine where the people that I take care of have been harmed severely by the healthcare industrial complex for a long time, and are very wary of trusting anyone who, you know, is a healthcare professional, especially doctors. And so I work really hard to try to make myself approachable in how I— And I don't have a special symbol or anything I wear.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: But like— [chuckles] But like I try to like move through my— move through the healthcare world in a way that shows people "I'm safe,

you're safe with me, you can trust me, you'll be— it'll be okay. I'm not like other doctors you may have hung out with," so I understand that impulse. Like I get— Okay, I get where that— It came from a place of wanting to help.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: However. [chuckles]

Taylor: Well, I mean that's the thing, if it... Maybe at best it's kind of a like, "yes and" situation, like that's nice.

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: You know, I've seen a lot of people almost go in the opposite direction, like, "I'm going to proudly display my pride flag."

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Or my, you know, "Sew a patch onto my jacket that makes it clear what I represent." Almost to like tell the other side like, "Whatever, I'm still here, I'm still takin' up space."

But when it comes to making yourself a safe space for people that might feel, rightfully so, distrustful of you, the best way to do that I think is with your actions.

Sydnee: I— That is— Yes.

Taylor: And I know it's not as easy, it's— It's feels like a shortcut to be just like, "Don't worry! Look it, look! Here, I got it!" Are you listening to them? Are you giving them space? Are you really looking at your actions and the way you interact with people, and making a concerted effort, you know?

Sydnee: I— Yes.

Taylor: That's harder, but I think that goes a lot farther.

Sydnee: That is exactly— I think, Tey, that's kind of where... [sighs] I've come down on it. Partially that, which is if you are wearing that bracelet

but also doing a lot of hard work that needs to be done, I guess as long as you're doing that too, I don't—

I don't know why the bracelet is bad, per say. My fear though is that the... the blue bracelet will be the like, "Look at what I did, I wore a blue bracelet."

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydney: I fear that that will be, like people will feel like— I mean honestly, like it's kinda like voting. Voting is great, and yes, you should do it.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydney: But that can't be all you do, right? Like voting is like the easiest, basic thing. Yeah vote, but then also what else do you do? And I worry that the blue bracelet will sort of be like that, like, "I did it."

Taylor: Uh-huh.

Sydney: "I did it," and I— And then I saw like at least some people were quickly saying like, "But make sure if you're gonna buy them. If you're not gonna make them, if you're gonna buy them, make sure you buy them from a Black woman owned business, a Black woman, you know, producer of this product."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydney: Okay. Yes, that's good, that's good, but like also it can't just be that. And I also really worry that what you're gonna see then is a lot of white women like making social media posts and TikToks, and talking about proudly like, "Look at me with my blue bracelet."

Taylor: Right.

Sydney: And centering... their solidarity instead of centering the people who are most harmed by what has happened. And that is— it feels— And I— And again, as I'm saying this, I don't think that people who suggested this were— had malicious intent.

Taylor: I don't know.

Sydnee: I don't think anybody thought— No-one ever thinks consciously "How can—" Well actually, some people do.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: We just made him President again.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: "How can I make this all about me?"

Taylor: Uh-huh.

Sydnee: Narcissists think that constantly. But I don't think that most people who suggest this are thinking like, "How can I make this about me?" But it does kind of make it about you.

Taylor: Well, it does. And I think there's a— I think we have this big problem on the left, and I think specifically with white leftists, where like we want to be able to check a box that we're a good person.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: We want to just get that head pat, get that cookie, and be like, "Okay, I'm a good person now," and I feel like, again it's harder, but goodness is not a state of being, it is the actions you take. It's kind of like what you were saying with your kids. Instead of saying "That was bad, or that was good. You made a bad choice, or you made a good choice."

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: You see, when you allow yourself to just have the preconceived notion like, "I'm a good person," it kinda defaults to your base impulses, you won't question. "Well I'm a good person, I do good things. I'm a good person, so this judgment that I'm making is probably fine."

I feel like, I don't know, I try to hold myself, and this sounds bad but I know my own damage, I'm very open about it. I don't think my base reactions are those of a good person, honestly. I'm paranoid, I'm

distrustful, like I said, I'm cynical. I will see the worst in people and I will only see that.

And for a long time I thought "That's just who I'm predestined to be, kind of a crappy person. Sorry, the world did this to me, that's who I am." But if I make good choices, even when my base nature says not to, my actions will be good. I can never take my eye off the ball. [chuckles] Because my impulses will always be a crappy person. And I think—

Sydnee: I don't—

Taylor: I think maybe questioning our inherent goodness and trying to pursue a course of good actions, instead of viewing it as a state of being. Take this from somebody who's a pre-programmed bad guy. Your actions make you good, not your state of being.

Sydnee: I agree with you, I would also go on to say I would not chalk those impulses up to you being a crappy person.

Taylor: Well.

Sydnee: I mean—

Taylor: My impulses are not towards, you know, sharing and kind and good.

Sydnee: I— Okay, look, this is where I think I have a deg— My undergrad is in biology.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: And this is where I would say it's because we're animals, Tey. We're animals. At the end of the day, remember that you're an animal, and remember that your stupid animal brain is gonna tell you to be safe and fed and protect your own.

And then it is up to whatever the other part of it is, I don't know, whatever your spiritual tradition tells you it is. [chuckles] It's up to that part of us to overcome, or to incorporate those animal needs, but then reach for something higher. You know? Ascend to something more.

That is— I think that is the impulse you’re feeling. There is, I mean, listen. I— When I say I’m angry all the time, I am not— I cannot say this enough, I am not joking. [chuckles]

Taylor: [laughs] I don’t think you are, I know you!

Sydney: No, I want our listeners to understand. [chuckles] I have been angry my entire life and I’ll never stop being angry. But— And so like there was very much— I went quickly from “How could this happen? I’m so heartbroken” to “I want to burn it all to the ground,” so quickly.

Taylor: Yeah, like—

Sydney: Like that was like, “Alright white women, then we all go down together.” [chuckles] Then— I mean “That is— This is what you want, we’re all going down.” I mean I went there very quickly. But I really, I do not wish violence. I do not wish harm.

Taylor: Right.

Sydney: That is not who I am, and I do have those impulses. And I think it’s okay to acknowledge, and then say, “But instead of harming those who harmed us, how can I help those who will be harmed the most? How can I protect and support and advocate for?”

And I think when it comes to the blue bracelet thing, this is what I would say. I stood the day after the election in a room filled with other white women, because of what I was doing at work at that moment. I just— Suffice to say there were a bunch of us in a room together.

And I said... “This sucks. [chuckles] We have to figure out how we are going to help and protect and support others around us, because our country has made a fascist, convicted felon, rapist, narcissist President, and a lot of people are going to be hurt by this, and we have got to figure out how we are going to stop that.”

And I said that not knowing the political beliefs of... pretty much all but one person in that room. And I— And if someone was uncomfortable by my words, oh well, I— Like this is the line, and I drew it, and I think that that is what we need to be more comfortable with.

And as— Especially as women, we are socialized, and even more so with white women, socialized to make everyone feel comfortable.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydney: We are constantly trying to make everybody feel okay. "What do you need? Do you need anything? Are you okay? Are you comfortable? Do you need a drink? Do you need your feet rubbed? What do you need? I— That's my job, my job is to make everybody feel comfortable."

I think in— I mean wear your blue bracelet, but also you have to make other people uncomfortable, you have to make it clear whose side you're on, you have to say it, and you have to say it out loud, not just on Facebook, although that's fine too, say it on Facebook by all means.

But you have to say it out loud, and you have to put yourself physically and emotionally and metaphorically between those who are going to be harmed the most and those who will harm them. And you have to make people uncomfortable and get uncomfortable.

Taylor: Well.

Sydney: And you can also wear the bracelet if you want, bracelets are pretty.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydney: I like blue.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydney: I— [chuckles] I mean, I— And I, you know, I thought about it and I was like, "That—" Well my, especially Charlie. Cooper sort of understands and is upset by what's going on, she definitely had some fear because of all the things that we have talked about leading up to this.

Charlie really wants to do something, she feels very strongly like, "I need to do something, I need to do something," and I feel like if sitting at home this weekend and making a blue friendship bracelet that she can wear to school Monday will also help her, in addition to the other things we will do, I don't hate that.

Like I'm not mad about that. You know, if it makes somebody feel a little better or safer as they do the work, okay. [chuckles] But... I just— I'm afraid it's gonna become the— I don't wanna say the word. The pink hats.

Taylor: Yeah, yeah. Well I mean I— Yeah, I've seen some people comparing it to like the black squares.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: That was a particularly unhelpful action because it keyed the algorithm, gamed the algorithm to hide posts that were actually sharing information.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: With the BLM hash tag and just put a bunch of black squares everywhere, that didn't help.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: I don't know if it's quite that heinous because... Maybe this, wear it, don't mis— don't make that video showing „em off. Don't—

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Don't try to start a business selling them.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: You know.

Sydnee: This—

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: I think you're hitting on the thing, Tey. Wear it, but it cannot be your whole thing. [chuckles]

Taylor: „Cause I'm trying to think from like just— You know, I will say this and any other trans person is allowed to feel differently, but this is for

me. Also because I live in New York, you know, it's a very safe place to be. I feel like I am protected by my whiteness before my transness comes into play. I don't think that's an egregious thing to say.

Sydnee: I— No, I think that it is a fair thing to recognize.

Taylor: Well and I—

Sydnee: I mean I am protected by my whiteness before the fact that I am a woman comes into play. So I mean I think it is a fair thing to understand, and then move through the world in a way where you know that the system benefits you in some ways.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Not in all, but in some.

Taylor: Well and that's— I know like... If I were to see somebody wearing a blue bracelet, it would at least be an indication to me like, "Well this person doesn't think people like me shouldn't exist."

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: I wouldn't feel the need to challenge somebody and say that's— what's that about? [chuckles] Like you know.

Sydnee: And—

Taylor: I would still judge them on their actions, but I could see, and this is again, just from my perception which is very much warped by my individual way of walking through the world, I could see how it could be a small signal to say, "You're not in danger."

Sydnee: And I do think those of us who have inherent privilege based on how we look or who we are, I do think— And I'm talking about myself, not you in this moment, Taylor.

I do think the impetus is on us to be visible in our resistance. And... Because I don't know how safe it is for everyone on the left to be visible in their resistance moving forward.

Taylor: Right. Well no, absolutely.

Sydney: So I'm not— I feel comfortable going out into the world with— I mean, I would wrap myself in the bi flag.

Taylor: [wheezes]

Sydney: And, you know, wear—

Taylor: Can you imagine you're at a doctor's appointment, your doctor rolls in just wearin' it like a cape?

Sydney: [chuckles]

Taylor: "Hello!" [chuckles]

Sydney: I will— But that is a choice I can make for myself, as someone who is much less targeted.

Taylor: Right.

Sydney: By this incoming administration than you will be, Tey. And so if you said, "I would not feel comfortable, you know, wearing a trans flag as a cape and walking in [chuckles], you know, into a whatever building," I don't know, a restaurant or whatever.

Taylor: Well I've never been a fan of the cape, just for personal reasons, I don't know.

Sydney: [chuckles] Well, you know.

Taylor: Not my vibe, usually. [chuckles]

Sydney: But I'm not going to— It is not for me to like put that on you. Now I will say, if you are somebody who says like, "Screw it, I wanna be visibly in your face, whatever you hate, all the time," I think that's like that's fine too, but I think that's a very personal choice, so.

Taylor: Well I mean I've had to confront my own sort of cowardice in how I present myself, because like I know my last job, I kinda did the like,

"Oh yeah, I'm trans but I don't care what you call me, it's fine," and then immediately—

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: — despite being on hormones for, you know, four years now, I don't dress I feel like in a feminine manner whatsoever.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: I was immediately called "she/her girly girly girl girl" every day of that job. And it was hard on me, but it was also kind of like, "I guess I'm safer this way, I guess I'll be treated more normally," but I didn't do the brave thing, which would've been saying, "By the way," you know.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: "This is who I am, deal with it." And that's on me. And you know, I could say, "Oh, well it was scary," but also is it because I know I have inherent safety if I hide myself, and I have the ability to. As—

Sydnee: As—

Taylor: As a trans man, I think at the end of the day, I walk around in a small, non-intimidating, white body. So either you read me as a white woman, great I'm safe. Or if you view me as a— if I pass for whatever reason, I'm a white dude, very safe.

Sydnee: Well and— But I think— And Tey, I respect you and am proud of you and admire you for however you decide to navigate, you know, the— I know things are going to be different, and I know that... Thank goodness you're in New York. I think—

Taylor: I mean I live in Bushwick, I could—

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: Like you can't— It's weirder to be straight in this neighborhood. [laughs]

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: Like I have a token straight friend, that's not a joke.

Sydney: So, but I do think like this is where— And again, I am gonna speak for myself. I am a bi woman who's married to a cis man, so I carry all the privilege of a heterosexual woman, right? Like nobody knows any different from the outside, anybody who doesn't know me well would not assume anything else.

So I carry a ton of privilege from that regard. And a lot— I have been, because I am active in like our— I help out with events in our— with our pride organization locally and help sponsor things. And you know, I got a Pride Award this year at our Pride Brunch.

Anyway, the point is because of my association with our local LGBTQ community, I have a lot of people who will say to me like, "You're such a good ally."

Taylor: Mm.

Sydney: "You're such a good ally. We love ally voices."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydney: Like [chuckles] I get called an ally a lot.

Taylor: That's funny.

Sydney: And for a while, I felt like, "I'll just let it pass." Like you know, like I also don't want to pretend like... this is— the most important thing in the world is that you recognize this about me.

You know what I mean? I don't know, it felt weird and selfish to demand something else. But then what I finally thought was "No, because I want people, especially straight people, to know that I am part of this community too."

Taylor: Right.

Sydney: "Because if you hate this community, you hate me. If you degrade this community, you degrade me. And so I wanna put that in

your face, because I have enough privilege that I can do that with less risk than other people in this community.”

Taylor: Well and that—

Sydnee: And so I correct people now for that reason.

Taylor: I mean and that’s kind of where I feel like the blue bracelets is a transgressive act less so, don’t feel like you deserve automatic trust from people that might be afraid of you because of it.

But if you wanna wear it to remind people that voted against us “I’m— This is who I am and I’m not afraid of it,” I don’t know, I think that’s more useful than anything.

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: To— If you ha— No-one can decide anybody else’s safety level, but if you can take up space, if you can advertise your existence, I think that’s a powerful move in the face of what we’re about to face. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Exactly, and I will say, „cause I know we need to wrap up, we’re going long.

Taylor: Yeah. Well.

Sydnee: There will be much smarter community organizers—

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: — and people who worked in mutual aid space for a long time than me, to talk about how we do more.

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: How we work harder in the, you know, in the future. I don’t have all those answers, I know what I have done here in my community, I’m always happy to share that information, but it’s very specific. Like I don’t know. [chuckles] It’s very West Virginia. I don’t know, I am not an expert in this area.

There will be smart people and there will be a lot of work to do, and a lot of it will make— Especially fellow white women, it will make us uncomfortable and we have got to get okay with that, because other people have been uncomfortable every day for a very long time, and our proximity to white male power has shielded us from that. And that's not— Those days are over.

Taylor: Well and I do wanna add on, just because we do talk about media and we were talking about books briefly. You know, whatever happens with whether or not Project 25— 2025 is the agenda or not. I think it would be a little naïve to think it's not gonna be something.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: But that first part where everyone's like, "Oh no, it's anti-pornography!" it's not pornography they're targeting with that specific part of it. It's specifically making it so all LGBTQ representation, portrayal in media is considered pornographic, and thus can be barred and banned.

So and you know, that's not— there are already moves being made in the entertainment industry to pander to what will be allowed in the future, that is happening now. And you know, start building up your— [chuckles] your queer libraries now.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Start saving your media now, and supporting that type of media. I think that's—

Sydnee: And—

Taylor: — a small thing that we can do.

Sydnee: Supporting that type of media, and not supporting media that explicitly eliminates that.

Taylor: Absolutely.

Sydnee: I mean that— It goes both ways, you know. And... Man, those movies are gonna be so boring.

Taylor: [sighs]

Sydnee: I mean I just don't understand, how did any of you— how— I know there are some Conservatives out there who watched *Agatha All Along* and enjoyed it. What is wrong with you?

Taylor: [chuckles] Wow.

Sydnee: Do you see?

Taylor: You know how broken it feels that the last gay kiss we'll get will be a lesbian death kiss?

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: Aw. [wheezes]

Sydnee: I mean but did you see how great it is? Do you see? Let— [sighs]

Taylor: [sighs]

Sydnee: I can't even.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Anyway.

Taylor: Alright, but hey, I think it's pretty cool that you can be a rebel just by readin' a book.

Sydnee: Yeah. You can be a rebel by— And you should do that, and just don't stop there. [chuckles]

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: But... But also, you know, all the other stuff. I feel like I'm so old that I forget to say the stuff that younger people on social media always remind me, that we're— that you should say, which is like also go take care of yourself, also drink water, also make sure you've eaten today, and take your meds, and you know, go talk to somebody who's supportive.

Again, whether that's like a family or friends, or actually a professional who can help you like... We need to take care of each other and ourselves. If we have not figured out yet [chuckles] that this work is long, I hope you know it now.

Taylor: And don't forget that your happiness is a act of rebellion, so.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Figure it out. [chuckles]

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: Find it.

Sydnee: You can still experience it. Okay. We will talk about something other than the election next week, I promise.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: It felt, I don't know, it felt profane to talk about anything else right now.

Taylor: I know.

Sydnee: I mean how could we even— I don't know. We will find joyous things to discuss for next week. In the meantime, you are allowed to do whatever does not harm you or others to take care of yourself. [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Right now. There will be a lot of work to do, and we can all engage in it together. And we can knit our community closer. And if you are someone who can build a bridge, I will not hate you for it.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: I just don't know that I can lay bricks next to you right now. [laughs]

Taylor: [sighs heavily] We don't have to start with bridges, we can start with a nice little safe house.

Sydnee: There we go.

Taylor: And then we can get to bridges. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah. I think they need to build the frickin' bridges!

Taylor: I mean, I don't disagree with that.

Sydnee: This is their fault.

Taylor: Ahhh, alright.

Sydnee: Alright, well thank you listeners. Thank you MaximumFun. You should go to maximumfun.org and check out all the great shows there that you would enjoy. Thank you to the Nouvellas for our theme song "Baby You Change Your Mind."

[theme music fades in]

Taylor: This has been *Still Buffering*, your cross-generational guide to the culture that made us.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: [chuckles] I am still buffering.

Taylor: And I am, too.

[outro music plays]

Sydnee: Were you gonna say you were me, or were you gonna say you were you first?

Taylor: No, I was just getting in— I was getting in position to say my name, and.

Sydnee: Ah. [chuckles]

Taylor: It's not— [chuckles] Just ready to go.

Sydnee: Ah. [chuckles] I just wanted to make sure. I don't know.

Taylor: Look I don't know, man. I just— I gotta do it, I said the words.

Sydnee: We all said the words.

Taylor: That's pretty good. [chuckles]

Sydnee: That was good.

[ukulele music plays]

Jesse Thorn: Hi, I'm Jesse Thorn, the founder of Maximum Fun, and I have a special announcement. I'm no longer embarrassed by *My Brother*, *My Brother and Me*.

You know for years, each new episode of this supposed advice show was a fresh insight, a depraved jumble of erection jokes, ghost humor, and frankly this is for the best, very little actionable advice. But now as they enter their twilight years, I'm as surprised as anyone to admit that it's gotten kinda good.

Justin, Travis, and Griffin's witticisms are more refined, like a humor column in a fancy magazine, and they hardly ever say "bazinga" anymore.

So, after you've completely finished listening to every single one of all of our other shows, why not join the McElroy brothers every week for *My Brother*, *My Brother and Me*.

[ukulele chord]

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