

**Blase Bonpane on WORLD FOCUS,  
Andy Griggs – Program Director of Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace  
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Hello, this is Blase Bonpane with World Focus coming to you from KPFK/ Los Angeles. We're podcast and available 24/7 on [kpfk.org](http://kpfk.org) where we're heard internationally.

Today I'm privileged to have Andy Griggs as my guest, a long-time peace and justice activist and educator. Andy is currently the Program Director for the Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace. ICUJP, founded in Los Angeles after 9/11, supports the leaders of Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, Jewish and other spiritual faiths and traditions who say religious communities must stop blessing war and violence. This is so important at this time because we look through the world and we're seeing state-led religious conflicts throughout the world and making this statement that religion should stop blessing war and violence is a great step for the future of religion. You can see the ICUJP website at [www.icujp.org](http://www.icujp.org).

Welcome, Andy Griggs. Thank you for being here.

**Andy:** Well, thank you, Blase. I was just recalling the other day when I first met you. I don't know if you remember but I was directing a play down at Long Beach City College, "De Donde."

**Blase:** I do remember. That was a great play.

**Andy:** Yes, it was and talking about the refugees coming to the US, fleeing Guatemala hellstorm, as it were. And that was 15 or 20 years ago

**Blase:** They keep coming in, one of the primary reasons being that the policy of our country drives them up here.

**Andy:** And the torture that goes on. The topic of our conversation is torture today, and the torture that is taught at the School of the Americas. It's amazing, those connections, and that's what ICUJP does. ICUJP makes those connections.

**Blase:** We're so proud of Father Roy Bourgeois in directing the School of the Americas Watch for so long and now he's under censure from the Vatican and it is so important to see anyone where conscience is number one. He had one worry about being suspended from the Vatican and it was his 95 year old dad. And he went down to see his dad in Litcher, Louisiana and he said, "Dad is this OK with you?" and his dad said, "Roy, you've been doing God's work your whole life. You're doing it now; don't worry about it!" And that's all Roy cared about, and his dad passed away just a few weeks ago.

As far as the Vatican goes, conscience comes first. That happens to be, oddly enough, Roman Catholic theology. Many Catholics don't know that. The Pope is not a line officer in the military and was not set up to be one. Your conscience has to come first. Roy is following his conscience and leading, as he has led every day of his life, back to when he was an officer in the military.

What's going to happen in LA this week?

**Andy:** Well, it's the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of Guantánamo as a prison for "enemy combatants." There are 167 people still there. President Obama, just yesterday, signed the National Defense Authorization Act, which said that prisoners from there cannot be transferred. So, his pledge which took place almost four years ago to close Guantánamo will not be realized at this point, unless he uses his powers in another way to close Guantánamo .

**Blase:** Half of those people there have not been charged with anything. The strange comment that the President made about “well, it has all these terrible provisions in it but I’m not going to carry them out.” Well, what a horrible things to say. “I’m signing a law. I don’t like the law. I don’t intend to invoke it.” But what’s going to happen when he goes on to the next phase of his life?

**Andy:** Exactly. And what’s happening is ICUJP, along with dozens and dozens of other organizations, is holding its second annual demonstration, starting this Friday, January 11th at 10:00 am with a silent vigil and tableau. There will probably be close to 20 people in orange jumpsuits to acknowledge the prisoners who are still there. The orange jumpsuits are the color that the “most difficult” prisoners there wore. At 10:45, a rally and a press conference. Our demands are that we close Guantanamo and end abuses at Bagram and end indefinite solitary confinement in US prisons.

**Blase:** So important to tie those together. We have tens of thousands of people in solitary confinement in the United States. This is a form of torture and Guantanamo is a torture center; this is one of the great disgrace areas. We are the largest prison state in the world. We have 25% of the world’s prisoners and 4-5% of the world’s people. And then we have this horrible thing at Guantanamo that was imposed on the Cuban people to take that area and then we said we’d pay rent on it. And of course, the Cuban government has refused to accept that rent for all these years – they may have the checks stacked up somewhere but they have not cashed one of them - because they say it is not legitimate. You stole Guantanamo from us. Now, adding insult to injury we use it as a center of torture for people who have not been tried and who have been tortured, some of them literally, children. This is totally unacceptable and we’re really excited about what you’re doing here.

We’re talking about Friday. This is 11 years too long. January 7<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 am, silent vigil and tableau, 10:45 press conference at the downtown Federal Building. You all know where that is? 300 North LA Street, right?

It is extremely important to be there because this is one of a list of crimes that are being committed by government.

And I just want to refer to this great book, Andy, because this is the book, "The Untold History of the United States" by Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick, and in it we have a rather well-known attorney Jonathan Turley, listing the various things that the administration is doing right now that are not OK.

- 1) Presidential power to order assassination of US citizens
- 2) Indefinite detention
- 3) Presidential power to decide whether prisoners will be tried in federal courts or military tribunals
- 4) Warrantless surveillance
- 5) Use of secret evidence in detentions and trials and invoking the government's right to secrecy to force dismissal of cases against the United States
- 6) Refusal to prosecute war criminals
- 7) Increased use of secret foreign intelligence surveillance courts
- 8) Immunity from judicial review for companies involved in warrantless surveillance of US citizens
- 9) Monitoring of citizens without court orders
- 10) Extraordinary rendition of individuals to other countries, including those that commit torture

While Obama has disavowed the use of some of these powers, his forbearance would in no way constrain future occupants of the Oval Office.

These things are unacceptable. What we have here is the outline of a military police state. If all these things are put into practice, democracy is gone.

**Andy:** Well, people may wonder how they can get involved to fight back against this. One is, of course, being at the demonstration and making your presence known, bearing witness to this. Other ways are that there are plenty of petitions on the websites and we will have some of those as well. Go to [www.icujp.org](http://www.icujp.org) or to National Religious Campaign Against Torture ([www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org)).

There are many of them available. One of the things that's going to be happening there is that there is a coalition that's been in existence for about 4-5 months called LA Versus NDAA. It's a coalition of groups and they're going to kick off a campaign to get City Council to disavow themselves from the detention and surveillance aspect of the NDAA. Several cities have done that.

**Blase:** And it's an absolutely astounding idea! Here with our county jail we have the largest number of mentally ill people west of the Mississippi River. So, what do we do with our mentally ill who are apt to go into schools and kill children? We put them in jail and then turn them loose on the street. So this is part of the deterioration. Empires deteriorate from the center and we are deteriorating rapidly from the center, unable to educate. Unable to take care of healthcare. Unable to keep our sewers going. Unable to keep our bridges built. Unable to help students in school, making it almost impossible for them to go to college without a life burden – debt.

**Andy:** One quick other thing I wanted to talk about, knowing that time is limited. I did want to talk about the other aspect of this which is what's fueling a lot of what's going on at Guantanamo and at Bagram or any of the other places, and that's Islamophobia.

Islamophobia has got to be fought and it fuels Guantanamo and we've got both CAIR and MPAC as co-endorsers of this event and we have got to recognize that torture is a moral issue and there's no excuse for it whether what's going on with "Zero Dark Thirty" – there's probably going to be a protest later that day to pass out literature about the facts versus the fiction.

“Zero Dark Thirty” has been said that it shows that torture worked in terms of getting Osama bin Laden, even though it’s been denied totally by the government.

**Blase:** It’s the same old argument. We heard that slavery is terrible but it is necessary for our economic system. That was the Civil War. We hear that torture is necessary, terrible but necessary. These are false statements and we hear the same thing about war. And we hear the same thing about nuclear weapons. All of these things which are destroying us.

**Andy:** Drones.

**Blase:** Drones. The same type of thing. They are not necessary. We do not need them. They are counterproductive. They are killing us. They are destroying the United States of America. They are creating enemies throughout the world and we claim this is necessary. So, you can call the movie a cultural event but a cultural event can also be very negative charisma.

**Andy:** It’s normalizing. It’s allowing it to be acceptable. We talk about the normalization of occupation. We talk about the normalization of torture.

Why is it that we talk about the children who were killed in Connecticut and don’t talk about the children who were killed just yesterday by a drone, pilgrims coming from a religious ceremony.

**Blase:** Children of Connecticut have no more right to live than children anywhere else in the world. They all have the right to live.

And, you know, there’s something that comes to mind on this. And that is that the Connecticut disaster has been an awakening for some who say “Well, I wasn’t for gun control but now I am!”

Well, we can do the same for so many things. Suppose we have a nuclear disaster in one of our silos which is entirely possible; people might say, "Oh, if I'd have known that we'd have that accident, I would have been against nuclear war!"

Well, why don't you get wise and realize what we're playing with right now.

We're in the moment of seeing our nation destroyed from within by virtue of a policy that we've created.

We're talking Friday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 10 am, silent vigil and tableau. 10:45 am, a rally and press conference. This is at the downtown Federal Building, Temple and Los Angeles Streets, marking the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of Guantanamo prison and the human rights violations it represents including torture, detention without charge, unfair trials, Islamophobia.

This business of religious hatred is SO SICK! We have more Islamists in the Congress now than we've ever had before as of today. I hope that it will help us to understand the sickness of religious hatreds.

And impunity, also for crimes by US government officials.

Andy, thank you for being with us today.

**Andy:** Thank you so much, Blase. A pleasure.

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**Blase:** Hello friends, this is Blase Bonpane with a continuation of World Focus. We have so many great organizations that have formed for peace and justice throughout the world. I have to reflect on the late 70's when Theresa and I were working on behalf of the Nicaraguan revolution and I recall on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1979, we were marching in celebration of the victory of the Sandinistas and we were with Manuel Valle who was one of the Nicaraguan leaders of the solidarity movement here in Los Angeles.

During this demonstration, you won't believe this, but he went up to the consulate of Nicaragua in Los Angeles as part of that demonstration and he said, "We won. You're the Somocistas and you're out." They gave him the key of the consulate in Los Angeles and they walked out. And that was the end of the Somocista consulate in Los Angeles.

Then Manuel said to me, "Let's go to Nicaragua, I want to get my papers as the new consul." So we did that and then Theresa and I started sending delegations to Nicaragua at the Nicaraguan government's request. They asked us to continue sending delegations and we continued that until about 1983 and we got so busy that we had to form a corporation which we called the Office of the Americas so that corporation has been operating now for 30 years but the work started four years before the corporation was formed. And it's formed as a non-profit educational corporation, dedicated to furthering international justice and peace through broad-based educational programs, which of course, includes media, and includes schools, universities, high schools. We were founded in 1983 in Los Angeles and used as a source of documentation and analysis of current and international events with a special focus on the foreign policy of the United States. That's where our focus is. Our focus to begin with was not necessarily on any particular country. It was on the foreign policy of our country because we live in a foreign policy dictatorship. Foreign policy is announced to us. We don't vote for it. Tomorrow morning we're told we're at war with 75 countries or whatever and we knew nothing about it until it was announced. So, this is a great problem because if foreign policy were decided by the people we wouldn't have been in constant war since the end of World War II and we have been in constant war. So, that's what we're about – to focus on the foreign policy and to focus on the sense of ethics and what can be done and international law, as well. That led us to form the Office of the Americas, still going after 30 years.

We got into delegations and we started with a sense of absolutely no competition. We didn't want to compete with any groups. We encouraged other groups to do similar things. Some began telling us that they also were going to send delegations of solidarity and we said "Wonderful!" Global Exchange started doing beautiful work. We said, "We're not looking for

work at the Office of the Americas. We have plenty to do! So, we'll support and we'll tell our people to go on your delegations," and that continued, that spirit of cooperation and it got into the thousands, very quickly, that we sent and today we see the great work of people like Father Roy Bourgeois. Delegations continue – there's one coming up to El Salvador in March through the School of the Americas Watch. The New Mexico border delegation in May; the Paraguay delegation. There's one that we haven't been to very often. Very important country and it was led by a liberation theologian who ran on a program of agrarian reform, ending a 61 year rule of the Strossner-Colorado party so he was, unfortunately, overthrown by some of the remnants of Strossner. So now there will be an important delegation to Paraguay, as well. And this will be conducted by the School of the Americas Watch. We're very excited by this kind of development, and so our work goes on. And it's wonderful to see groups like ICUJP working locally on the matter of not allowing religions to deteriorate into being used politically for violence and we're very proud of that development.

Well, Michael Moore has been very outspoken on all of these issues and, as usual, he came up with a very interesting insight, actually just yesterday, and he did this in the form of a letter which I think is important. He states:

"I don't support the troops, America, and neither do you. I'm writing this as I've just learned of the suicides of two more of our active duty reservists who live here in Traverse City, Michigan. That brings the total number of soldier suicides that I know of in this rural area to four. I am tired of the ruse we are playing on these brave citizens in our armed forces. And guess what -- a lot of these soldiers and sailors and airmen and Marines see right through the bull\*\*\*\* of those words, "I support the troops!" spoken by Americans with such false sincerity -- false because our actions don't match our words. These young men and women sign up to risk their very lives to protect us -- and this is what they get in return:

1. They get sent off to wars that have NOTHING to do with defending America or saving our lives. They are used as pawns so that the military-industrial complex can make billions of dollars and the rich here can expand their empire. By "supporting the troops," that means I'm supposed to shut up, don't ask questions, do nothing to stop the madness, and sit by and watch thousands of them die? Well, I've done an awful lot to try and end this. But the only way you can honestly say you support the troops is to work night and day to get them out of these hell holes they've been sent to. And what have I done this week to bring the troops home? Nothing. So if I say "I support the troops," don't believe me -- I clearly don't support the troops because I've got more important things to do today, like return an iPhone that doesn't work and take my car in for a tune up.
2. While the troops we claim to "support" are serving their country, bankers who say they too "support the troops," foreclose on the actual homes of these soldiers and evict their families while they are overseas! Have I gone and stood in front of the sheriff's deputy as he is throwing a military family out of their home? No. And there's your proof that I don't "support the troops," because if I did, I would organize mass sit-ins to block the doors of these homes. Instead, I'm having Chilean sea bass tonight.
3. How many of you who say you "support the troops" have visited a VA hospital to bring aid and comfort to the sick and wounded? I haven't. How many of you have any clue what it's like to deal with the VA? I don't. Therefore, you would be safe to say that I don't "support the troops," and neither do you.
4. Who amongst you big enthusiastic "supporters of the troops" can tell me the approximate number of service women who have been raped while in the military? Answer: 19,000 (mostly) female troops are raped or sexually assaulted every year by fellow American troops. What have you or I done to bring these criminals to justice?

What's that you say -- out of sight, out of mind? These women have suffered, and I've done nothing. So don't ever let me get away with telling you I "support the troops" because, sadly, I don't. And neither do you.

5. Help a homeless vet today? How 'bout yesterday? Last week? Last year? Ever? But I thought you "support the troops!"? The number of homeless veterans is staggering - on any given night, at least 60,000 veterans are sleeping on the streets of the country that proudly "supports the troops." This is disgraceful and shameful, isn't it? And it exposes all those "troop supporters" who always vote against social programs that would help these veterans. Tonight there are at least 12,700 Iraq/Afghanistan veterans homeless and sleeping on the street. I've never lent a helping hand to one of the many vets I've seen sleeping on the street. I can't bear to look, and I walk past them very quickly. That's called **not** "supporting the troops," which, I guess, I don't -- and neither do you.

6. And you know, the beautiful thing about all this "support" you and I have been giving the troops -- they feel this love and support so much, a record number of them are killing themselves every single week. In fact, there are now more soldiers killing themselves than soldiers being killed in combat (323 suicides in 2012 through November vs. about 210 combat deaths). Yes, you are more likely to die by your own hand in the United States military than by al Qaeda or the Taliban. And an estimated eighteen veterans kill themselves each day, or one in five of all U.S. suicides -- though no one really knows because we don't bother to keep track. Now, that's what I call support! These troops are really feeling the love, people! Lemme hear you say it again: "I support the troops!" Louder! "I SUPPORT THE TROOPS!!" There, that's better. I'm sure they heard us. Don't forget to fly our flag, wear your flag lapel pin, and never, ever let a service member pass you by without saying, "Thank you for your service!" I'm sure that's all they need to keep from putting a bullet in their heads. Do your best to keep your "support" up for the troops because, God knows, I certainly can't any longer.

I don't "support the troops" or any of those other hollow and hypocritical platitudes uttered by Republicans and frightened Democrats. Here's what I do support: I support them coming home. I support them being treated well. I support peace, and I beg any young person reading this who's thinking of joining the armed forces to please reconsider. Our war department has done little to show you they won't recklessly put your young life in harm's way for a cause that has nothing to do with what you signed up for. They will not help you once they've used you and spit you back into society. If you're a woman, they will not protect you from rapists in their ranks. And because you have a conscience and you know right from wrong, you do not want yourself being used to kill civilians in other countries who never did anything to hurt us. We are currently involved in at least a half-dozen military actions around the world. Don't become the next statistic so that General Electric can post another record profit -- while paying no taxes -- taxes that otherwise would be paying for the artificial leg that they've kept you waiting for months to receive.

I support you, and will try to do more to be there for you. And the best way you can support me -- and the ideals our country says it believes in -- is to get out of the military as soon as you can and never look back.

And please, next time some "supporter of the troops" says to you with that concerned look on their face, "I thank you for your service," you have my permission to punch their lights out (figuratively speaking, of course).

(There is something I've done to support the troops -- other than help lead the effort to stop these senseless wars. At the movie theater I run in Michigan, I became the first person in town to institute an affirmative action plan for hiring returning Iraq/Afghanistan vets. I am working to get more businesses in town to join with me in

this effort to find jobs for these returning soldiers. I also let all service members in to the movies for free, everyday.)

Sincerely yours,

Michael Moore

Well, this is one of the frauds that people have given to us. What does “Support the Troops” imply as a slogan? It implies that the troops wanted to go to Afghanistan, and that they wanted to go to Iraq. And that they wanted to go to Pakistan. And now, even some are back in Guatemala. No, that’s not it! They were told to go there or to go to prison. So, the implication is that they’re doing what they wanted to do, what they decided to do, and that’s false. So, the whole theme of “Support the Troops” is just one more falsification of reality.

Like the “Fiscal Cliff”, that pathetic act that’s been going on in Congress now for so many weeks, talking about Social Security as though it were a welfare program. Any Congressperson that implies that has no business being in Congress. This is a bank account that you and I have been paying into since we were teenagers and of course, the wealthy paid much less into it than we did. Their income is capped so they don’t pay after x amount. We’ve been paying into it and the government has been stealing from it, of course. They took money to fight the war in Vietnam; they owe Social Security now about a trillion dollars. and we have to listen to these people ignore the fact that our wars are the cause of the deficit, that our wars are destroying the United States.

You know when the Soviet Union fell apart? It fell apart because it couldn’t continue its militarism. It fell apart in a country that I think we may not know much about. In fact I think our policy planners know nothing about. A country called Afghanistan. We supported the Mujahideen. We supported the fanatics that were anti-Soviet. And we wore down the Soviets so that they fell apart as an entity in the wake of the war - their war, in Afghanistan. And then the people that we supported became our enemy. And now we’re falling apart in attempting

to destroy the poorest country in the world. At least one of the very poorest. A country with no Pentagon. A country with no air force. And a country where the army, which we have created, is now mutinied against us.

Do you think we'll get the message? I think we should.

Earlier, I spoke about the fact that some people went through a conversion in hearing about this horrible massacre in Connecticut. They said, "Ok, I wasn't for gun control beforehand, but I am now." We've seen that, even, in various politicians and it seems so strange that they didn't get it initially. You have a license to drive an automobile, which is a deadly weapon, of course. And they will pay a fine or go to prison if they are not properly licensed to drive a motor vehicle. There is no reason why every firearm in the United States does not require a license.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment has nothing to do with it. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment does not exclude licenses. People who were so interested in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment, some of them, call themselves the Strict Constructionists. All right, anyone can have a blunderbuss that has one shot in it and fires maybe a hundred yards. You can have a right to have that blunderbuss. But you do not have the right to have the largest weapon of mass destruction in the world in your hands. And that is today the assault rifle. This is, of course, excluding nuclear insanity because we haven't used nuclear insanity directly since our country did in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and of course, all of our military leadership opposed that after they heard about it. General MacArthur opposed it. The Admirals opposed it. So nuclear insanity is there and it's still a risk today but the de facto largest weapon of mass destruction on the planet today is the assault rifle which I think the NRA would like our children to carry and of course our teachers should each have one in school. That would really be great, wouldn't it?

Well, let's look at this nuclear insanity that we're fortunate enough to have The Sunflower, the newsletter of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and much of the writing by virtue of David

Krieger, their president. He reminds us in their latest issue that a British nuclear submarine breaks up in the Atlantic Ocean.

“HMS Vigilant, a British submarine that carries nuclear weapons, test-fired a Trident missile in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Florida on October 23. After the test, as it was en route to its home port in Scotland, the submarine's rudder broke and it was forced to go to a U.S. naval base in Georgia where some U.S. nuclear weapon submarines are docked. The submarine had just undergone a three-year overhaul costing \$482 million.

Another British Trident submarine, HMS Vanguard, collided with a nuclear-armed French submarine, Le Triomphant, in February 2009 in the Atlantic Ocean. Both boats had to return to port for repairs.”

The nuclear issue is so serious. Can't we have the same conversion of people that took place because of the CT massacre, of those looking at nuclear insanity and saying, “Oh my God, we can't support this.” You have to be socially insane to support nuclearism.

Now we see here in the Los Angeles area that we have a slight problem. A recent federal study reveals that there are still hundreds of radioactive hot spots at the site of the Santa Susanna field lab. This is the suburbs of LA where this suffered a partial nuclear meltdown on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1959.

William Preston William Preston Bowling, founder of the Aerospace Contamination Museum of Education in Chatsworth, said,

"The good news is we now know how bad things are on the site," Bowling said. The bad news is that the high levels of contaminants were in an area that drains into the headwaters of the Los Angeles River."

Boeing, which now owns the site, plans to turn the site into "open space parkland" available to nature enthusiasts, hikers, bikers, rock climbers and nonprofits such as the Girl Scouts."

Well, this is a hotspot, right here in LA. Check this out in the Los Angeles Times, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012, and the article, "Radioactive hot spots remain at former research facility's site."

Friends, I have a unique piece here that I'd like to share with you. Noam Chomsky has been a guest on this program many times but he rarely talks about his personal life and recently he did an interview with Michael Kasenbacher about some of his personal life and it is utterly fascinating. He was asked how he found his calling and he said,

"If I had the time I would spend far more time doing work on language, philosophy, cognitive science, topics that are intellectually very interesting. But a large part of my life is given to one or another form of political activity: reading, writing, organising, activism and so on. Which is worth doing, it's necessary but it's not really intellectually challenging. Regarding human affairs we either understand nothing, or it's pretty superficial. It's hard work to get the data and put it all together but it's not terribly challenging intellectually. But I do it because it's necessary. The kind of work that should be the main part of life is the kind of work you would want to do if you weren't being paid for it. It's work that comes out of your own internal needs, interests and concerns."

Just a comment on that. Chomsky is doing what he considers necessary. His real interests here were in language and philosophy. Of course he's the father of one of the great sciences of linguistics and he finds that stimulating. He doesn't find the work that he's doing now as stimulating but he says it's necessary. What a sense of having a moral compass!

He's asked how he knew what he wanted to do and he states,

“...a craftsman, I happen to be no good with tools, but take someone who can build things, fix things, they really want to do it. They love doing it: ‘if there's a problem I can solve it’. Or just plain physical labour – that's also gratifying. If you work on command then of course it's just drudgery but if you do the very same thing out of your own will or interest it's exciting and interesting and appealing. “

He's talking about the importance of doing that which we love and which seems necessary to us. He has so many thoughts here but we'll try to catch a few of them. He speaks about children saying,

“Children for example are naturally curious – they want to know about everything, they want to explore everything but that generally gets knocked out of their heads. They're put into disciplined structures, things are organised for them to act in certain ways so it tends to get beaten out of you. That's why school's boring. School can be exciting. It happens that I went to a Deweyite school until I was about 12. It was an exciting experience, you wanted to be there, you wanted to go. There was no ranking, there were no grades. Things were guided so it wasn't just do anything you feel like. There was a structure but you were basically encouraged to pursue your own interests and concerns and to work together with others. I basically didn't know I was a good student until I got to high school.”

Friends, this is one of the prime intellects of the world speaking and he helps us to reflect on the fact that grades are a disaster. I know I have always hated them and did a really bad job of grading because I hated grades as a professor. I thought that it was ridiculous, that I'm not here to be your judge. I am here to help you to think and to be able to have opinions that are backed up with facts. And grading becomes so disgusting, a horrible thing. We must go back to where Dewey was as an educator. Check Google, check your Britannica to review what the Dewey progressive education system was about. We need it desperately.

“I went to an academic high school in which everybody was ranked and you had to get to college so you had to pass tests. In elementary school I had actually skipped a year but nobody paid much attention to it. The only thing I saw was that I was the smallest kid in the class. But it wasn't a big thing that anybody paid attention to. High school was totally different – you've gotta be first in the class, not second. And that's a very destructive environment – it drives people into the situation where you really don't know what you want to do. It happened to me in fact – in high school I kinda lost all interest. When I looked at the college catalogue it was really exciting – lots of courses, great things. But it turned out that the college was like an overgrown high school. After about a year I was going to just drop out and it was just by accident that I stayed in. I happened to meet up with a faculty member who suggested to me I start taking his graduate courses and then I started taking other graduate courses. But I have no professional training. That's why I'm teaching at MIT – I don't have the credentials to teach at an academic university.

But that's what education ought to be like. Otherwise it can be extremely alienating – I see it with my grandchildren or the circles in which they live. There are kids who just don't know what they want to do so they smoke pot, or they drink, they skip school, or they get into all kinds of other anti-social behaviour. Because they have energy and excitement and nothing to do with it. That's true here, I don't know how it is in Austria<sup>[1]</sup>, but here even the concept of play has changed. I can see it even in the place where I live. My wife and I moved out to this area because it was very good for children – there wasn't a lot of traffic, there were woods out the back and the kids could play in the street. The kids were out playing all the time, riding their bikes whatever. Now there are children around but they're not outside, they're either inside looking at video games or something or else they're involved in organized activities: adult organized sports activities or something. But just the concept of spontaneous play seems to have diminished considerably. There are some studies about this, I've seen them for the United States and England, I don't know if it's true elsewhere but spontaneous play has

just declined under social changes. And I think it's a very bad thing because that's where your creative instincts flourish. If you have to make up a game in the streets, if you play baseball with a broom handle you found somewhere that's different from going to an organized league where you have to wear a uniform.”

Friends, this is Chomsky on his reflections on his education that was so boring to him that he almost dropped out of his first year of college. It's extremely interesting to reflect on what he is saying here. It's a question of being over-organized. Chomsky is with Einstein who felt that our education has to focus on imagination and creativity so the questioner said to him, “How do you think it is possible in our society, not just in education, for people to counteract all this structuring, this tendency for us to be driven into situations where people don't know what it is they want to do?” Well, Chomsky responds,

“I think it's the opposite: the social system is taking on a form in which finding out what you want to do is less and less of an option because your life is too structured, organized, controlled and disciplined. The US had the first real mass education (much ahead of Europe in that respect) but if you look back at the system in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century it was largely designed to turn independent farmers into disciplined factory workers, and a good deal of education maintains that form. And sometimes it's quite explicit – so if you've never read it you might want to have a look at a book called *The Crisis of Democracy* – a publication of the trilateral commission, who were essentially liberal internationalists from Europe, Japan and the United States, the liberal wing of the intellectual elite. That's where Jimmy Carter's whole government came from. The book was expressing the concern of liberal intellectuals over what happened in the 60s. Well what happened in the 60s is that it was too democratic, there was a lot of popular activism, young people trying things out, experimentation – it's called ‘the time of troubles’. The ‘troubles’ are that it civilized the country: that's where you get civil rights, the women's movement, environmental concerns, opposition to aggression. And it's a much more civilized country as a result but that caused a lot of concern because people

were getting out of control. People are supposed to be passive and apathetic and doing what they're told by the responsible people who are in control. That's elite ideology across the political spectrum – from liberals to Leninists, it's essentially the same ideology: people are too stupid and ignorant to do things by themselves so for their own benefit we have to control them. And that very dominant ideology was breaking down in the 60s. And this commission that put together this book was concerned with trying to induce what they called 'more moderation in democracy' – turn people back to passivity and obedience so they don't put so many constraints on state power and so on. In particular they were worried about young people. They were concerned about the institutions responsible for the indoctrination of the young (that's their phrase), meaning schools, universities, church and so on – they're not doing their job, [the young are] not being sufficiently indoctrinated. They're too free to pursue their own initiatives and concerns and you've got to control them better.

If you look back at what happens since that time there have been a lot of measures introduced to impose discipline. Take something as simple as raising tuition fees – it's much more true in the US than elsewhere, but in the US tuition is now sky high – in part it selects things on a class basis but more than that, it imposes a debt burden. So if you come out of college with a big debt you're not going to be free to do what you want to do. You may have wanted to be a public interest lawyer but you're going to have to go to a corporate law firm.”

So, what Chomsky's talking about here is education as a manner of control. Very interesting interview in which he explains his personal thoughts on education. He always has a lot to say to us.

Thank you for being with us today.