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I am back with Andrew Yang. Andrew, thanks for joining me. Sam, thank you for having me. This is going to be like a refuge of a conversation, I think. Like I mean, most people listen to you because you make us smarter, wiser, more enlightened. And I feel like I could use some of that energy as well.

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I hope to provide, but I'm very happy to talk to you first. But before we jump into all the topics of interest, how are you feeling? You can't covid, right?

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Yes, I have covid and I was hoping for the sympathy sondes, the suffering. And it turns out I got my share of the suffering where I've had the flu version. So just imagine a very nasty flu bug with some added wrinkles. But I'm on the mend and I should be out and about in the next number of days, hopefully.

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How long's it been? When did you first get symptoms? I first got symptoms last weekend. So we're recording this on Wednesday. So it's been about ten full days now. And the symptoms started out mild. And I was hopeful that I would skate and just be holed up in my room. But then I've had about a week of real fatigue and fever and flu like experiences. Yeah, well, I guess all things considered still sounds lucky, but sorry to hear it.

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You know, I had an oximeter, Sam, I don't know if people know this, but it's so helpful just us to be able to take your blood oxygen level at any moment, because when you're you're there, you're not sure how you're faring and then you just check in then. I'm fine. So anyone listening to this, if you want to be prepared to set up blocks that are make tool, it's only, I think 20 bucks or so.

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Yeah, yeah. You can get those on Amazon or there was a time when you could get those on Amazon. I assume they're they've been Mass-produced at this point. So, Andrew, you are running for office of mayor in what is very likely the most important city on earth. I love the idea of you being mayor of New York. Let me just get my biases on the table. And it's amazing to consider New York being a kind of laboratory to experiment in how we reboot society at this point, that it seems like so many things are up for review and just how we function collectively.

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And the idea that someone with your creative and modern take on things could be steering the fairly large ship of of New York City is just it's amazing to consider. So. So I'm wish you the best of luck, brother. Well, thank you, Sam.

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I do think that this is like a continuation of the arc that, frankly, you helped launch in twenty eighteen when I was an unlikely presidential candidate and we made a really powerful case around trying to advance and humanize the economy that I daresay ended up becoming mainstream popular wisdom where as we're having this conversation, the last I checked. Eighty five percent of Americans are for tax relief during the pandemic and a majority are for tax relief in perpetuity, otherwise known as basic income.

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And I'm really eager to take principles that I fought for at the national level and apply them in New York City around fact based governance and trying to get bureaucracies to work in a more modern and technologically proficient fashion. I can't wait to roll up my sleeves, get some incredible people on board and try to steer New York City in a positive direction. And this race is also different from the presidential race and that it's very I'm the front runner in the presidential race.

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So so there's an enormous opportunity here that I hope we take full advantage of it.

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So what's New York like now? I mean, we're still in the midst of this pandemic. I know you're probably doing a better job than California in rolling out the vaccine, but we're still under the shadow of this thing. What's happening? New York City is badly wounded. It's been devastated by the coronavirus on multiple levels, and most of your listeners know me as a numbers guy. Some of the numbers that reflect how bad it's been in New York City, over twenty seven thousand lives have been lost.

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Over half a million have been infected. Over seven hundred thousand jobs have been lost. The unemployment rate is over twice the national average, in part because the city is missing 60 million tourists who used to support over three hundred thousand jobs. Midtown Manhattan commercial buildings are eighty two percent unoccupied. Subway ridership is down 70 percent. Violent crimes are rising. Three hundred thousand New Yorkers have left the city in terms of filing for change of address forms and just relocated, so there's just a lot of pain and suffering right now.

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Over ten thousand small businesses and restaurants have closed and more are joining them all of the time. This is a city that thrives based upon people coming together in large numbers and people visiting and people eating out every night. And a lot of those things aren't happening right now. So the adjustments have been really painful for many, many organizations and individuals and families here. I know it's been bad in California as well, but I do think New York City has a special dependence on people feeling like they can come together in large numbers.

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Yeah, it seems to me that it's really a perfect storm there with respect to specific variables of density and dependence on tourism and retail and office space going on occupied and just the weather right there. Many places in the country where restaurants can start serving outdoors before they they open indoors. And, you know, I know you guys tried that, but in the dead of winter, it doesn't work very well. Let's go through these topics somewhat systematically. I'd like to get your take on each the retail and office space problem.

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I mean. Eighty two percent unoccupied. One thing that worries me is that there's the prospect that our our habits have changed enough under covid with remote work in particular, that it's conceivable that that office space will go unoccupied, not because covid has lingered, but because habits have changed. Is that you think that's possible or likely? Or how do you how do you view using all the space in New York if people's attitudes toward remote work have undergone a durable change?

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I think we're in the midst of a very significant cultural shift. I think organizations are going to change how they schedule in-person meetings and having people in the office. I do think that there are a couple of forces that have cut in different ways than where right now pre covid there was a tendency for companies to pile employees on top of each other in New York as well, because it was a very expensive office space. So you'd say, hey, guess what, guys like we're going to slam you into cubicles and bullpen's and have people in very close quarters.

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So I think there are going to be shifts in both directions. Believe that some of this space will likely have to change its expressed purpose, but I do not think would be realistic for everyone to say, look, things are going to go back to the way they were in terms of people using the space the same way and frankly, in some cases paying the same premium that they were paying. There has to be very significant adaptation even as you're trying to accelerate the comeback.

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We definitely. Need to vaccinate everyone as quickly as possible and then give you the confidence

that if you come to the office building, everyone there has been either vaccinated or tested negatively so that you feel 100 percent secure. Those things are necessary preconditions. And then even if you do those things effectively, they will still be some changes that likely happened throughout many of these organizations and their lease commitments.

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I think I'm just agnostic as to how durable these these changes are. And in the way we work is hard to imagine the same degree of business travel, for instance. We all know now that we know a Zoom call can actually fill the bill for what used to be a getting on an airplane and spending two or three days roundtrip going to a meeting. I think that has got to have been reset in some generational sense. But I also think there's you know, as you point out, there are forces that cut in the other direction.

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And one will just be I think people will want to have excuses to get together as well. I mean, I think if we if we can get covid truly behind us, I think it will be an amazing time to be opening a restaurant because people are going to be desperate to be in restaurants and bars. And we could look at a table in a restaurant in New York once we fully recover here. And I guess the same could be true of certain approaches to office space and retail.

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I don't know. I mean, again, so much shopping has moved online, but you got to think a reinvention of retail is also possible because, you know, most of us are getting sick of living like somebody out of a Dostoyevsky novel and not leaving our houses. So once we fully get out from under the shadow of covid, how do you picture New York rebooting on street level?

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Retail in New York is often geared towards some of the 60 million tourists. And I think that those experiences will still be very much desired when if you visit New York City, you want a memory, you want something that commemorates and documents, documents or visit, and people will want that experience in some way. It could be that the make up of the retail changes, there have been a lot of very significant brands that invested in Times Square restaurants and whatnot, in part because they they thought that it would be a worthwhile branding expenditure.

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And I think that's to New York City, because the thought is that you can reach people from all over the country, all over the world if you are investing in, like a Times Square restaurant or something along those lines. So I do think that retail for tourists will be a constant. There are going to be a lot of storefronts that need to get new tenants. Right now, if you like New York City streets, there are a lot of empty storefronts and it's unclear whether they're going to end up reopening on their own.

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Naturally, that there have been some suggestions around having vacancy taxes for landlords to try and give them some sort of spur to make sure that there is a tenant to fill that storefront because it's going to be an issue for a while.

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Well, let's talk about crime and homelessness, because these are obviously not just problems for New York. Cities all over the country are seeing a spike in both know the stories out of San Francisco are testifying to something like a free fall condition there with respect to quality of life. Again, with with respect to both variables, crime and homelessness. Let's take homelessness first. Just what is the reality of homelessness now in New York and what would be a response to it that could fundamentally change the picture?

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Well, the first thing you want to do is try and keep the problems getting worse, because there are many New Yorkers who are in position to potentially get evicted if the moratorium isn't extended or if they don't have legal representation. It turns out if you have legal representation, the odds of your

staying in your apartment go way, way up. So one thing the city should be doing is making sure that any tenant who wants a lawyer can have one. We should be trying to keep people in their homes.

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The city has had a program for a while around emergency assistance. That makes perfect sense where you spend a little bit of money trying to keep people in their home. It ends up saving the city a lot of money on homelessness services. And the homelessness problem is growing in New York City. Order of magnitude. You have about fifty seven thousand people in shelters right now in New York. And in some cases, New York is spending tens of thousands of dollars a head per year on providing shelter to folks because of the overburdened shelter system, in some cases even finding hotel rooms, because that was the only shelter that could be found.

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So. This is a situation where you want to try and keep the problem getting worse, number one, and then number two, we need to develop more sustainable, affordable housing, which has been a constant problem in New York City because no one actually has wanted affordable housing to be developed in their neighborhood. When the proposal comes up, they're all for it in the political abstract. But then when it was like like, how about your district? Then people didn't like it.

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So one big opportunity here, there are a few things one can do. One is we should be expanding something called safe haven beds, which are beds that are provided by nonprofits, in some cases religiously affiliated nonprofits that in many cases homeless people prefer to homeless shelters. Some homeless people really do not want to go to a shelter, but they'll go to a safe bet. So any of those beds are worth their weight in gold and we should be trying to expand capacity.

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But the other big move would be to quickly repurpose some of these vacant hotels that are going out of business right and left, frankly, right now in New York City. If you can imagine being a hotel operator right now, you're looking at 90 percent of your business drying up for at this point, 10 months in a row. And so a lot of hotel operators are throwing in the towel and the city should actually be catching that towel and saying we'll take it off your hands and then repurpose some of those hotels from ongoing affordable housing for folks that actually in many ways ideally set up for it.

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Already they have the plumbing, the fixtures, the infrastructure. So this is one of the only golden opportunities of the pandemic age for the city of New York. There are many of these hotel operators that actually at this point would take a deal just to walk away.

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Interesting, how do you stop a hotel like that converted to affordable housing from becoming a kind of circus of dysfunction, of the sort that I imagine explains why homeless people often don't want to go to shelters because they're either perceived to be unsafe or they're just many of the reasons why people are homeless are now concentrated in a building right away, you know, mental illness and substance abuse being the primary ones. I mean, obviously, people become homeless for other reasons of the sheer bad luck of economic emergency or illness, you know, plus eviction.

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But there's so many people who are on the street or, you know, chronically on the street due to substance abuse or mental illness. How could we make these places, places where people can get the kinds of services they need and have the result be something like a remedy for the problem of homelessness? Well, no one would be to have a mixture of types of residents and families so that you could have people who just would be really thrilled about an opportunity to live in a repurposed hotel alongside maybe some folks who are struggling.

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And so you wind up without a very high density of folks who might be struggling with substance

abuse or other issues. There's also something called supportive housing where you actually have some of those services built in. And so you could have social workers or addiction counselors actually even staffing some of these centers so that there are some countermeasures in place that the goal would not, frankly, be to turn these hotels into shelters in the way that would be a concentration of some of the issues that shelters right now face.

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It would be so that there's a whole mix of families and people have found that actually to be a way for folks who are struggling to have a social context and be in better position to improve.

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Right. Right. So what about crime in the city? What's happening there? I mean, there's a spike in many cities of 50 percent or so in the last 10 months.

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It's a bit higher here, unfortunately, and also discouraging the rates of resolution, which is that the perpetrator gets caught, have been going down. That, to me, is a very nasty combination. You want the rates of resolution to be going up or staying constant, worst case. So we need to invest resources in trying to stem the rise and also catch perpetrators. One of the things that I always have this working theory is that if there are, let's say, 10 robberies, that might not be 10 robberies, that could be like two robbers who just are going around robbing multiple people.

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So when I see these rises and the fact that many of the crimes haven't been resolved, I think to myself, well, there are some very bad actors who are in a position to strike again. And that, to me has to be where you focus your resources is that that a relatively small number of people being apprehended could end up being a significant factor in some of these raids. I'm going to tell a dumb story. But it was this. Is this an experience I had?

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I ride my bike around New York City a lot. Not not a motorbike like a lot of that I've got. You're campaigning on a Harley.

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I've added up of like an 80s action hero to be riding on a motorcycle. So being safety conscious, I bought a blinker to attach to my to my bike because my bike had the juice and I was kind of lazy and decided to buy a new one, even though there was a way to recharge. And so I bought this liquor very nice, very shiny, and I put it on my bike and it was actually taken off my bike within a park by bike and locked it.

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And so my bike was locked. So it was a little bit difficult to just take. But someone saw the bike inside to take it off my bike. Like that was the kind of thing that I don't think necessarily would have happened in another time in New York's history. I think right now is like a time when people are feeling kind of desperate and so does something as dumb as like a biker, a on a bike like that. They might take it now when they might not have before.

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Obviously, the topic of law and order brings us up against issues of social justice here that that are both understandable and I also think are deeply misconstrued by many people, you know, on both the right and the left. But I do think where, you know, post George Floyd. So now coming on, I don't know what that would be. Nine months or so we're living through a the aftershocks of a kind of moral panic around policing police violence, issues of lingering racism, notions of of equality in this space that don't actually make sense when you're talking about the demographics of crime, a belief that in particular the black community is overpoliced.

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Whereas if you ask members of the black community living in the most crime ridden neighborhoods, that's certainly not their perception. You know, arguably, they're overpoliced with respect to petty crime and under police with respect to serious crime. And in the starkest case, you have the problem of murderers just going free, you know, crimes being unsolved and the worst kinds of crimes being unsolved disproportionately in certain neighborhoods and yet any seemingly rash. Approach to fighting this sort of crime, you know, directing cops preferentially into places where more of the crime happens can be spun as as racist or, you know, otherwise optically horrific sort of any time you want, you know, and people are so sensitive to this that I think we're right to fear that in many cities.

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I don't know if New York is an example, but in many cities, there's something like a Ferguson effect that has happened here, which is, you know, you know, we're cops kind of stop policing in areas where the inconvenient YouTube video leads to the reputational destruction of of the cops involved or the police force that's supposed to be solving crime in these neighborhoods. So it's a hard problem to solve. And, you know, just from a PR point of view, whatever is rational to do in terms of fighting crime and improving people's lives.

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And as you know, Michael Bloomberg had his own adventures with stop and frisk. How do you view solving this problem or ramming through it or ignoring it? I mean, what is the approach to fighting a resurgence in crime in New York in a way that actually fights it as efficiently and as safely as possible? I mean, the NYPD has had a number of real issues that predated George Floyd in the summer, there was a gentleman named Eric Garner who was publicly choked out and lost his life.

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And I don't know if you remember, this was a number of years ago, but there were NBA players like I can't breathe a number of years ago for Eric Garner. That was New York. The NYPD spends hundreds of millions of dollars a year settling civil lawsuits against it, which I take as a very, very. Terrible data point on so many levels, one, because if you can imagine the city of New York spending hundreds of millions on anything like the last thing you'd want to spend it on, settling lawsuits against cops who done something wrong.

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The second thing is that if you're losing a couple hundred million dollars worth of lawsuits a year, that probably means that a partner might even be a multiple of that, because a lot of times I'm sure no one's actually getting sued for something that they're doing wrong. So there is a genuine cultural problem where the NYPD is concerned that I think it extends to something that all of the officers when I talk to officers on the street, some of them, frankly, seem like exactly the kind of people that you are policing their community.

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When I was in the Bronx, there was a team. It was like a Latina woman in a black kind of patrolling. And it made you feel like, OK, these are people actually even. Represent this community. There has to be an ability to focus on lowering rates of violent crime and bringing up resolution rates. And simultaneously not encouraging. Hundreds of millions of dollars of. Lawsuits for civil rights abuses or having well publicized issues where your officer did something that.

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People would find objectionable, and I do not think that it is impossible to do two things at once, which is bring down violent crime rates and try to address it or form a culture that has definitely demonstrated some excesses and that the excesses have been demonstrated very recently. You know, that there is that there were issues around NYPD responding excessively to various protests and just a number of weeks or months ago. So that it is a complex issue, but you have to be able to tackle both of things at once.

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And I think that go hand in hand, because if the public knew that police were bringing down rates of

crime and catching perpetrators like, I think public trust and the truth.

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Yeah, I mean, there's just so much confusion on this issue that it's very difficult to sort out people's intuitions here. You take the Eric Garner case. The thing that was so obscenely wrong in that instance was that the cops were trying to enforce that law in the first place. Right. I mean, just the effort to enforce a don't sell cigarettes on the street law led to an escalating violence that he was absolutely resisting arrest. I mean, once you try to arrest somebody and they say you're not going to arrest me and they're going to physically resist, well, then the cops are all of a sudden in this escalating use of force scenario where things can obviously go wrong.

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And if somebody just reaches into his pocket at that point, you know, then you have a cop having to make a split second decision whether this person is going for a gun or a knife or it's just it's chaos. And so you can't have idiotic laws that put cops on this continuum where decisions are being made about whether to effectively kill someone. And the war on drugs generally has put us in this spot for now decades, where cops are executing no knock raids and sometimes they get the wrong address.

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And you probably don't have this problem as much in New York because I would imagine the rate of gun ownership is a legal gun ownership is almost nonexistent. So there's not the same problem with people with cops kicking in the wrong door and then get into a shootout with somebody who thinks he's defending himself. But it really does start with having some bad laws being enforced in many cases. And why can't we simply focus on the problems that are that are totally uncontroversial, like violent crime and including things like robbery?

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I mean, that has to be at the top of everyone's list of things that need to be enforced.

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And that is something that I believe I'm going to help effectuate as mayor that we can. Decriminalize or frankly, relax enforcement around certain forms of recreational drug use. I've already targeted opiates as an example of something that I don't want to be prosecuting. I've also championed decriminalizing sex work because to me, like police should be dedicating energies to more serious crimes that actually can serve the public to a higher level. And so you're exactly right that I mean, these are things that we may be able to make happen in New York City as early as next year.

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Yeah, it would be amazing. Again, it's useful for people to consider how much bigger than a city New York is, really.

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I mean, it is a lot of the things I tell people, Sam, all the time is that if New York metro area were a country, it would be the 11th biggest economy in the world right after. So the amount the amount of impact that we can have is really vast.

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It's important to get right because of the failure of New York for that very reason would be a very bad sign. Right. I mean, the failure of New York on some level is the failure of civilization. I mean, given how important it is culturally and economically, a proper renaissance in New York where we connect all these dots correctly and reboot as quickly as possible. That would be amazing. And it would be amazing to generalize those lessons to other places.

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Where does UBI fit in here now? People will be familiar with. I think you're campaigning for president on this plank. Perhaps you might want to say something about it for anyone who isn't. But is there a scope for a UBI experiment in New York, a universal basic income?

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I think most of your listeners are familiar with as. Policy where everyone gets a certain amount of money to meet their basic needs. I was championing a thousand dollars a month during the presidential campaign, which now doesn't seem like enough to give it to pandemic. I think people are now advocating for two thousand dollars a month for everyone, which seems very reasonable to me. New York City is going to be facing budgetary shortfalls for the foreseeable. So we're going to have to be very targeted.

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Proposed Cassilly program to alleviate extreme poverty among the half a million or so New Yorkers who right now are at that level, and we can lift them up out of extreme poverty and do so in a way that I believe. Is going to end up saving the city hundreds of millions of dollars because of the expenses that the city incurs when people end up in our institutions in various ways, whether those be shelters or other forms of safety net, that sometimes people find themselves in worst case scenario, you know, like a prison or another institution.

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So this billion dollars in cash relief, I believe, could serve as a template because it's going to be the biggest program of its kind. And my hope is that we can augment it with private philanthropic resources among folks who are looking for innovative ways to fight poverty. I also want to take some of the money that we put into people's hands through something called the NYC program and have it be funneled through locally owned small businesses because of the scale of the New York City economy.

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I think that there are ways that we can actually have more of the value flow through the hands of folks that we're also trying to help recover or in some cases, stay open.

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Yeah, what is the role for philanthropy here? We were talking about a winner take all kind of economy before covid, but covid has certainly accentuated that in ways that that I guess are unsurprising but were probably unforeseeable because no one was really thinking about the consequences of a pandemic. So, I mean, we've seen some businesses absolutely decimated through no fault of their own. As we've mentioned, restaurants, no matter how successful they were before covid just got crushed.

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But there are people who have made tens of billions of dollars in individuals who have made tens of billions of dollars, even hundreds of billions of dollars in a couple of cases over the last 10 months. And I'm just wondering, it just seems like, again, New York is a singular place. I think you really could make a pitch to some of the wealthiest people in our society who whether they have roots in New York or not, to make a major philanthropic push to do something amazing there.

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Yeah, that's very much the vision and the plan where if you want to try to address poverty in the biggest city in the country and one of the most important cities in the world, and you want to work hand in hand with the city. Then this is your opportunity and this city is going to put forward a billion dollars, but in my mind that should be just the beginning and you can easily imagine individuals stepping forward and saying, I want to demonstrate that poverty is something that we can defeat if we decide to do so.

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And I have a number of other anti-poverty plans that are related. One is trying to get people high speed Internet. Twenty nine percent of New York City residents don't have high speed Internet right now. And so you can imagine some of them trying to have their kids learn from home, 12 percent don't have a bank account. So they're subject to check cashers, money lenders and pawnshops, which



sometimes charge usurious rates. So there are different ways that we can.

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Combat poverty, and I hope to make New York City the proving grounds for a lot of these ideas you said before saying that its comeback is vital. I don't have any illusions and that there is no guarantee that we are coming back the way that we want it to. I think there's a lot at stake. I believe that I can help dramatically increase the odds of coming back. But one of the ways it's going to come back is if we're willing to invest in innovative ways and programs that get people excited and that we're able to access resources that don't fall directly under city agencies.

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That's one reason why I'm excited to run for mayor, is I want to present a vision of New York City that different types of people will get excited about. That, frankly, would not ever set foot in city hall.

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Yeah, innovation is really in your DNA. So it's great to think about taking a non-standard approach to so many things here and nonstandard in a way that's not the mere wrecking ball of, you know, being a Trumpy, an outsider. We've tried that on a national scale, but non-standard in not being captured by all of the kind of the legacy code that is making it impossible to innovate, to have a truly fact based and well informed discussion about how we move forward on all these fronts.

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I think you're the guy to do that.

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And yeah, so once the election is the end of June, this is the primary, June 22nd, as is the Democratic primary, which is essentially the whole kit and caboodle, given that it is New York City and we are in great position to win, but we could certainly use people's support. This is a very fast race, the sprint, and we need to raise as much money as possible by the March 11th filing deadline, which is what we're going to file our first fundraising.

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So if anyone wants to support, you can go to Andrew Young dot com, which will direct you to the campaign website. Any contribution would be enormously helpful. We're in a very fast fight for the future of New York City. And I got to say that any time I'm on your podcast and it doesn't mean that many times, but it does feel like another another benchmark, another chapter. It's like I feel like I'm this political figure that you helped cultivating create and I'm still fighting.

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You know, it's like the vision is still very similar, even if the context is changing from the White House to, in this case, Gracie Mansion in New York City.

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I certainly hope that when you become mayor of New York that you take advantage of the national spotlight there, because, again, the success of New York is really is a unique moment. We have been reset so fundamentally as a society and are just grappling with what that means. And, you know, New York is the the fulcrum of our swing into a full recovery or into the failure of that. Right. It's just, you know, I'm old enough to remember that it was possible to have in New York that was really screwed up, I mean, back in the 70s and 80s.

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And I forget what year New York really turned around with respect to violent crime. And it just kind of infrastructure sanity. I mean, just like picking up the trash. But there were years there where New York really had just fallen off a cliff. And, you know, you have these bad movies, you know, the O.J. Charles Bronson movies being inspired by how grim urban life had become there. So it's possible to screw up. And there's no question this is an inflection point.

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So we need smart people like yourself to figure out how to reboot from here. And so I wish you the best of luck and I hope people will support your campaign immediately. I just before we close, Andrew, I want to ask you a couple of big picture national global questions just to get your take, because I went out on Twitter and asked for questions and we got a long list, but there were many on the point of just what you think we should do with respect to big tech now.

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And how do you view regulating big tech in our public conversation and all the all the anguish we've experienced pro and con on that topic?

[00:39:39.590]

I think that we need to regulate tech much more intelligently. And I've been very frustrated that a lot of politicians have just gotten accustomed to grandstanding and trying to score points for. News, while the essential issues remain completely unaddressed, the insanity of having at this point a near trillion dollar industry being regulated by Section two 30 of the Telecommunications Decency Act that was written in nineteen ninety six before Facebook even got started. And then in D.C., they're still looking at it like fighting over what it means.

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And it's like no one could possibly have known what the Internet was going to look like in nineteen ninety six and it's twenty five years later instead of. Yelling at tech companies for not doing something you like or don't like, try and come up with a genuine regulatory framework that balances what you think the public's interests are. One aspect of that should be trying to respect our data rights as human beings, because right now our data is being sold and resold for hundreds of billions of dollars a year.

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And that cost is not just economic, it's actually in human agency. It's in public trust. We're getting packetized ourselves and sold to various advertisers in ways that also undermine the public good. And our government has been completely absent on this. I think California's privacy laws are some of the best in the country that the newest. Rule is for there to actually be a dedicated privacy protection agency in California, it's almost like some kind of data cops. It makes me very happy.

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I hope they get a really cool uniform and sigil. But other states should be following suit and the feds should be following suit. California actually is ahead of the curve on this. And what about with respect to our politics? How do you think we could improve a system that is now? It's hard to characterize how ramshackle it appears. First of all, the fact that we can't seem to hold an election that the country can trust the outcome of how do we even approach a national conversation about improving our politics and the actual the infrastructure that allows us to deliver political results going forward?

[00:42:22.770]

Sam, I'm so glad you asked this, because I actually worked on a book that's on this topic that's going to come out in the late summer night. But I'll send you the manuscript because it's that on my line. But I'll let your listeners know what one of the key takeaways is, which is ranked choice voting, we need to get rank choice voting adopted around the country because it will help reduce polarization. It will free legislators up from the fear of being primaried, which right now is guiding some very extreme decisions.

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Right now, over 80 percent of elections are predetermined in terms of whether it's going to be Democratic or Republican. And so most voters don't actually have a genuine choice in their representation. If you have rank choice voting, it decreases negative campaigning.

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It gets rid of the spoiler effect so no one can be accused of wasting your vote and maybe explain how

the rank choice voting works, because I think many people won't be familiar with the logic of it.

[00:43:28.540]

Oh, yeah, I'm sorry I got so excited here. You know, New York's mayoral races rank choice, voting for the first updo. So this is very relevant. But the way rank choice voting works is that the winner has to get over 50 percent of people's votes, which use that as a starting point. And the second thing is that you can rank more than one candidate as someone that you'd like to see win. So use the mayoral race as an example.

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Let's say there are seven candidates. You can rank me first and then Scott Stringer second and then my third. And then what happens is when they count all of our votes, if no one gets up to fifty point one percent at the top line, then they get rid of the bottommost candidate and then they reassign that candidate's votes based upon that person's second choice or that candidate's second choice votes. So then that person's votes get reassigned and you repeat the process over and over again until someone gets past fifty point one percent.

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So in this way, you can actually vote for whoever you want as your first choice and have no fear that it's somehow going to result in someone you detest winning because you can just rank your second choice person. And then if your person ends up being one of the bottom performers, your votes just flow through to your second choice. Right? Right.

[00:44:59.890]

Which is a huge deal because the the Ralph Nader effect is a problem. And to be able to completely circumvent that issue of there being a spoiler and a wasted vote would change a lot if nothing else changed.

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And here's the wild thing, Sam, is that in twenty five states around the country, you can actually activate a referendum for twice voting simply through a ballot initiative that requires a number of signatures. And in some states, it's actually a relatively modest number of signatures. Two states have already adopted rank choice voting and open primaries. And those two states are made in Alaska. But there are other twenty three states that have ballot initiatives where all it takes is some animated citizens and a bunch of signatures and you could actually transform democracy for the better.

[00:45:55.540]

It's very exciting that this to me is something that has enormous potential to decrease the polarization that is making us less and less functional. Well, Andrew, I will let you go.

[00:46:07.180]

I wish you a swift recovery from covid and a thoroughly successful campaign. And I look forward to on the other side of a vaccine being in a crowded restaurant with you when you were mayor of the city of New York. It's a date.

[00:46:23.650]

I will host you. We will go to whatever show that you had a hankering to see. We'll have the best cuisine in the world and then we'll have the after dinner drink at Gracie Mansion to celebrate the renaissance of New York City like that. This is a beautiful vision, Sam, and I'm definitely going to fight for it. Wouldn't that be something? Well, yes, I will get it. Thank you so much, Sam.