

Martin, Thomas Greene Park, Gowanus, Brooklyn
June 26, 2021

Rachel (00:01):

So Martin, the first question then I ask is when you think about global warming or the climate crisis, what do you think about, and how do you feel?

Martin (00:12):

I do... Sometimes the first thing I think about, and I almost put it into two categories; the slow moving stuff, which would be climate change and global warming, and then the real big ones. And I'm not sure which is going to bite us in the ass first, but stuff like the amount of plastic in the Pacific ocean, the stuff like the Fukushima radiation floating eastward, these kinds of immediate potentially within the next couple of years or visible very potentially right now. So that's kind of the first thing that comes to mind.

Rachel (00:56):

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Martin (00:56):

And then the other thing that's slow moving that, I don't know. I actually try to be an optimist, so I can't tell you that I'm convinced that some of this stuff is going to have an existential impact on our civilization in the next 10 years, or 15, or 20. But my gut feeling though, is that it's inevitable.

Rachel (01:22):

What is the it, in that sentence?

Martin (01:24):

Where our civilization, like our global civilization. And I'm using that word also to contrast it to other civilizations that have existed historically. Many of which have also succumbed to climate issues, just because of how our activities are intertwined and dependent on our populations are dependent on ecosystems. So our civilization as others that have come before us, I do think will eventually be gravely compromised. For instance, if cities need to be abandoned, if certain nations disappear, if there's real intense food scarcity, wars that come from food scarcity and water scarcity, and then overpopulation in the wrong places, and all this stuff. I think that that calamity is coming. I really can't say when that is. I don't know. I could see it within 200 years or so. And it's funny because one of the things I felt was conveyed with the pandemic was that some of these historic scourges of humankind still happen.

So we've been blighted by pandemics and communicable diseases. For instance, right actually where we're sitting here in North America, 90% of the population wiped out from communicable diseases when Europeans first arrived. So this kind of stuff we are not free of and our society is not wisened enough to necessarily foresee it. And as we've seen handle it in a sort of collective kind of way, but basically these things happen. So just as we are not separate from nature, it's kind of my point. These things, and it's easy to look back in history and say then, well now is different. We're not like the Oakwell culture in the Midwest that was sort of dependent on certain things that had to abandon their big population sites because of whatever over harvesting of timber, this kind of stuff.

We're not like that because we are more complicated, we're globalists. So we always can import what we need from other places on the planet, even water or whatever. But I actually think we're not that separate and we're still subject to a lot of the two nature, and changes in nature, and changes that we make happen. So that's one thing I think we felt humankind felt small during the pandemic. And I

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feel like that's kind of how we should feel as small and vulnerable because that's how I see it. So I can see developments out in the desert west, big over developments and I can look at that and go, you know what, it's totally foreseeable. But all that's going to be abandoned. We are not above that kind of issue. So those are the things that come to mind when I think of climate change.

Rachel (04:22):

And how do you feel?

Martin (04:24):

It's funny because I try to watch the negative emotionality of it, and I do have a certain amount of shout in Florida in this. And I do believe if we're going to be that stupid, that maybe we deserve what's coming to us. So I want us to overcome this and I want us to be smarter and make the right choices and come together. I am afraid that it's going to take some harsh medicine. So we're going to have to see with our own eyes people, and I'm afraid, have to see people suffer in our developed countries. And I don't want to be negative, but we might have to see with our own eyes, like similarly how the pandemic wasn't taken seriously until we saw the body count go up. So I don't want to go there.

And I want us to be able to foresee and listen to the science and developing science that keeps happening. But we might have to see this. And I hate to say it, but if it's going to go there and I don't want to be the, I told you so person, I feel like I like to see it if it happens. In other words, it's sort of like either collapse or near collapse to our civilization. Because that actually might be the only way forward for maybe a planet where there's maybe less people because unfortunately people will die just like they did in the great plagues. Maybe that might be unfortunate when it takes to have a future into the coming millennia. That kind of makes sense where we actually learn and maybe start from a smaller population or one where some of the great superpowers are sort of brought down in terms of their power, because of how money changes, the power of money changes and stuff. So I don't... That's getting space, very speculative, but it might take time.

Rachel (06:31):

Moving away from an emotional, I want you to say, I want you to talk to me from an emotion vocabulary. So when I ask how does it feel, I know...

Martin (06:45):

That was a little bit the negatives.

Rachel (06:48):

It's...

Martin (06:48):

Which I have a lot of.

Rachel (06:49):

But what is it? Like use an emotion word then. So you fear, you have fear. Are there any other emotions that come up? I also kind of heard some maybe excitement or anticipation in like encountering the future from you?

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Martin (07:11):

Yeah. It's not the one I want.

Rachel (07:13):

Yeah.

Martin (07:15):

But human beings, it's terrible to think because we've seen what suffering of humanity from other stupid and bad choices we've made.

Rachel (07:25):

Right.

Martin (07:26):

So, of course, I would never want that. Strangely enough, I'm not sure that the actual suffering would be as bad as say the smallpox plague brought by colonialism in North America.

Rachel (07:38):

Right.

Martin (07:39):

Or just the general scourge of colonialism and what it's done. But yeah, so let's move away from that because, yeah, it's not... It's not, yeah. It's weird. It's complicated. And I think the thing that's most fearful is stuff of like the nuclear and the nuclear domain. Also, again, because I've seen it with my own eyes. We've seen images of whatever, what nuclear bombs will do. And so we know what nuclear can do to a population. And it's frightening to think of what's happened in Fukushima and we have nuclear reactors nearby as well. And sometimes there's little problems that have come up in Three Mile, not Three Mile Island, Indian Point, which is just a thought. And there's been leaks, there's been stuff and they shut it down for a day. But, yeah. So fear, I think there's a lot of anger for me because there's a fu. It's funny because I used to...

What's funny because what always happens is the people that are most involved with this stuff. More people that are on my side that are more sort of radically involved and look at these things, they always turn out right. Sort of unfortunately, because I've wanted to be an optimist, you know, but for instance, some of the rhetoric that I used to hear I've come around to, which is just a point where the sort of disregard for the sacred, for instance, really hits me and it really hit me with the water protectors in, I guess that was South Dakota, with standing rock and stuff.

And so sort of indigenous people speaking up and then I kind of started feeling like there's something there. Even if I don't exactly participate in the spiritual aspect of what they're talking about, I'm not a native American. So I don't really feel or cultivate that relationship but it's sound to understand that as like say we are under the care of the earth, and the atmosphere, and our ecosystem, and all the powers that are within it. We are in the care of that, which is sort of a more indigenous and maybe hunter gatherer or less complex society as we have it. Society with intense money and lawyers and politics. So that...

Rachel (10:02):

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A modern world.

Martin (10:04):

What world?

Rachel (10:05):

A modern world.

Martin (10:05):

Right. So that's something of like a more ancient and actually one that's a longer, it has done us humanity, a better service over a longer time. And we're talking what like 100,000, 200,000 years of modern humans operating with that sort of attitude about the environment. Clearly in awe and clearly being a lesser of the lesser that the environment, as opposed to our utilitarian view of the environment. And I really kind of, I wish, I'd like to point a finger of when that actually started. I guess, that started maybe with capitalism in the 1200 or 1300. Feels like it started both before that.

Rachel (10:49):

Yeah.

Martin (10:49):

With trying to control nature with agriculture.

Rachel (10:52):

Which was like 1400, no. When was that?

Martin (10:57):

I think agriculture was more of like 4,000 BC.

Rachel (11:01):

Yeah.

Martin (11:03):

The earliest examples of that I think in the near East or middle east, it started there. Also, changing theology. Even it's funny talking about the beast with Christianity. It's funny because it's interesting that all the bad things were supposed to purge. Some of it should be purged, actually, not all of it. But some of it. But we associate with something naturalistic. It's the beast, it's the animal. It's of nature. So it's this sort of battle overcoming of nature that sort of... So these sort of religions kind of brought us into this garden that's given for us to do what we will with. And then some people, for instance, what's that guy's name? He was a Republican from Pennsylvania.

He was criticizing Obama saying that environmentalism is a crazy theology, because it's for man, quote unquote, for humans. That it serves us, not the other way around. So totally getting rid of any idea of being a caretaker, or being AR, or treating with respect and a sense of sacredness. So I think that that's another thing in terms of like my anger, would be that. And then we see that play on all aspects of

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our society, but that's the root of it. And we're seeing the most urgent expression of that in our attitudes with the environment and putting money first, all this stuff.

Rachel (12:42):

So what are the changes that you've seen? How long have you lived in New York?

Martin (12:46):

I was born here.

Rachel (12:48):

Okay, great. Good question then. What are the changes that you've seen in your local landscapes, in your local seasonal patterns in the weather? Do you feel like you've noticed and experienced change?

Martin (13:04):

That's the thing, is I really... The place where I really feel it is in temperatures. Stuff like, because I do remember when I was a kid in the 60s, I do remember a few days here and there and it would be surprising. It would be like 60.... It would hit 60 degrees in January. It'd be one or two. It's not, it wouldn't be unheard of. We'd all be surprised, but it would happen even in the 60s. But then the stuff that I do not remember is like nights. Nights in the 70s in January. That's what I actually really felt it in terms of clear evidence where you're just not going to find it in the temperature, or weather record for New York city is at nighttime, these temperatures at night where there would be, yeah, because I remember warm spells and I tried to add it up.

Was it really, did we really, it seems like they were longer recently, but I wasn't sure. I was like, yeah, I remember a warm spell in the 60s. How does this compare to this warm spell now like during January or February? And sometimes I wouldn't be sure. Maybe that was five days, four days and now it's eight days. But I wasn't sure. But at night I was sure because I was like, that's crazy. I never felt like 65, 68 degrees, 70 degrees January, then in the 60s. So that I really noticed a difference. And then of course living through Superstorm Sandy, and I understand that these things are sort of meant to happen now and then when we are meant to have super storms. But there really was a period then, and that's the thing. It'll ebb because there'll be a few weaker hurricane seasons.

But the one I remember around that time and not just a hurricane, it was like a hurricane epoch or something. It was like three or four in a row and it was intense. And you can't just look in New York city, you have to include Jersey Shore. You have to include like Upstate New York, Long Island and New England. It was intense stuff. These storms that would just like have an impact on the Catskills. Like Margaretville and the Catskills underwater, this kind of stuff, because you dump six inches on the Catskills of rain, there's going to be massive flooding in the valleys. So that's stuff that felt unprecedented. And also, stuff like seeing the sunsets from the wildfires this Summer. Where it's funny, I knew what it was. I was in a car driving around with some friends and then I was like, this is weird, the sky. It's weird because it's kind sunny, but hazy. But it's not hot or something like that. I knew, I pretty much suspected it was Ash in this atmosphere, then I realized in news reports that's what it was.

Rachel (16:00):

What does it feel like to encounter new weather? Especially as someone who's lived here for 40 years, 50 years. What does that feel like? And I heard you sort of talking about the calculation of like, is this

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normal? Has this always been like this? Is this continuous? Is this discontinuous? But what's it feel like in your body to be experiencing weather that you hadn't been experiencing for 40 years?

Martin (16:35):

A little problem for me is because I get emotionally tied up to a lot of things that are happening politically around us. So there's, whether it's our president and a lot of other issues other than climate all happening at the same time. So for instance, the recent two years have been a time where I have to really check my anger because it's also unhealthy. So I have to watch it. So there's a ton of anger going around, which I also think is sort of deliberate. Make us overwhelmed with issues and anger and that's why they would almost deliberately put some other thing to get us outraged strategically. So we're like overwhelmed with stuff to respond to and stuff to be angry about. So what's bad about that is a numbness that happens.

And I also try to watch because I'm not the most politically active or active activist. I wish I was. The reality is that I somehow, because I'm taxed, overtaxed, I do tend to pick my battles, which I don't like. I'd like to fight all the battles. So I don't like feeling numb. And I think that numbness is the thing that pulls us down into apathy, which I don't like. And I actually feel I know too many apathetic people and I am not there. I'm unfortunately, somewhere in the middle I'd like to be more active, but it's hard to be full time. I'm glad that there are full time activists, whatever that means. And unfortunately, activists do have to pick their lanes because just too much. It's massive. Even one issue might be massive.

So even when we're talking about climate change, it's actually massive. And it's true, for instance, the stuff I get most angry. I guess, just it's... What really makes me the most angry. Here we go, is aside from the overall sense of our attitude and a loss of sacred and relationship to the earth, is the lessening Summer ice in the Arctic. That's the one that just kills me. So I guess we all have our little once that really gets my blood boiling, I got to say. That is sort of over there also. Its...

Rachel (18:48):

And that makes you angry.

Martin (18:49):

That's the one that...

Rachel (18:50):

It doesn't make... It's so interesting to use, say anger instead of like when I think about that, I think sadness, hopelessness, but grief, but anger is so interesting.

Martin (19:01):

Because I feel like a lot of what I can tell you is sadness, a lot of numbness, which is sadness and almost of slightly into depression. Into clinical depression. But then I wanted to point out where I have the most visceral thing regarding specifically climate change and global warming.

Rachel (19:22):

Yeah.

Martin (19:22):

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It's with the ice. That really kills me. It seems like... Also, loss of glaciers.

Rachel (19:30):

Why? Why this melting ice?

Martin (19:33):

The loss of glaciers like, for instance, on Kilimanjaro, whatever they call the mountain now Kilimanjaro in Kenya and places in even in Alaska and in Montana, certainly. That really... That's anger mixed with sadness, because I also think those are beautiful things.

Rachel (19:56):

Right.

Martin (19:57):

And they're beautiful things. So there's an aesthetic also that comes in to those specifically. So maybe that makes me, it tempers my anger with sadness, but it's still angry. But the melting ice really kills me because that's the stuff that's sort of like, this is not the way the planet is supposed to work at all. Is the potential loss of all summer sea ice in the Arctic, and also the change in the compass, in the balance between CO2 and oxygen in the air. That's the one, that's the... Everything else it's the question of scale. Humans have always had waste and polluted, and we see historically civilizations from millennia had to particularly more complex societies have to deal with waste and where they're going to put it, how to dispose of it. So we're always going to have waste. But fundamental things we're not supposed to change the composition of the atmosphere.

Rachel (21:01):

I think do we have any extra paper for them? We've got 10 more men it to draw.

Speaker 3 (21:07):

Sure.

Rachel (21:08):

Yeah. You can draw.

Speaker 4 (21:10):

How can you draw behind a back?

Rachel (21:13):

Behind a back? What do you mean?

Speaker 4 (21:16):

Behind there.

Rachel (21:18):

You want to draw over there?

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Speaker 4 (21:21):

Behind, yeah.

Rachel (21:21):

I think so. Why don't you just take some paper and crayons and go where you'd like?

Speaker 3 (21:34):

You want to work right here.

Rachel (21:34):

Very specific.

Speaker 4 (21:36):

[inaudible 00:21:36].

Rachel (21:38):

No, I just totally lost my... Yeah, so right...

Martin (21:41):

Anger versus numbness.

Rachel (21:43):

And the way that the world, the fundamentals of our, what would you call that? Like the fundamentals of our tectonics or something like, it's not tectonics but...

Martin (21:58):

Yeah. It's almost multi tech is the rock.

Rachel (22:02):

But it's like, I guess, what you're talking about is like what defines the world that we live in. Which is an interglacial period during an ice age, that for 10,000 years had this composition of ice to water, to land. And it defined the [inaudible 00:22:25]. It defined our geological era, which also included the composition of oxygen to carbon dioxide. And now that's shifted. And...

Martin (22:37):

Yeah, that seems like just such a no go. I don't see how anyone can make... There is no argument in my mind that that's okay. And the argument that the opposition makes of like, CO2 is actually not a poison. So it's like, it's not that much of a problem to have more of it in the atmosphere. But I think of the actual relationship between the two. So in other words, the actual balance of those two gases, and that seems absolutely fundamental to how trees function, to how human beings function. It probably is tied to the increase of asthma. So that is just something almost inarguable. They might, the only thing they can say is like, CO2 is in itself, not bad. They can make that, but that's not, that's a super weak argument.

So aside from that super weak argument, there is no arguments. Inarguable. We can't be changing. That was never in the plan. If you believe in God, God never said, that can be faxed with.

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That's the thing. That's what you got. That's what we call atmosphere. And yeah, I can see that that has changed over time, but that is way too much playing God for human beings. When we're talking about, I don't know, maybe we'll go to plea. Maybe we'll go to like it was pre the glacier...

Rachel (23:53):

That was a totally different world.

Martin (23:57):

Now we're going to pre ice age, we're going there. That's much more than like, that's much more extreme than like an invasive species. That's bad too. But that's way more playing God. So once we get into that stuff, that's the stuff that really gets me angry. It's also in terms of anger too, as I am angry about, because it's tied to this also is invasive species. Aside from us moving around and actually importing it physically; physically importing invasive species is also them invading from other places. So you have that and also affecting fish. So you have like the Gulf stream pounding Scandinavia, and Scandinavians go, wow, we don't have those fish anymore. And then the salmon. Yeah, so that would be, I guess, number three in my anger list.

Rachel (24:54):

So my last question that I'm going to ask you is...

Martin (24:57):

That'd be so long winded.

Rachel (24:59):

No, this is what it's supports to talk.

Martin (25:02):

You got it out of me. You got that thing like, okay.

Rachel (25:05):

Yeah. My last question is what do you feel hopeful for?

Martin (25:12):

I'm sorry. I don't feel hopeful. I think our goose is cooked.

Rachel (25:18):

Where do you see yourself in there?

Martin (25:20):

That's a balance, because I say I'm not hopeful. Okay. If we really are going to parse it, maybe I think we still have a 15% chance. I just don't... I think it's going to take a real surprise. And I think it's going to take us taking a hit in another way first. So stuff is going to have to... There's no... I think that the powers can't be reformed, and a lot of the things that we're fighting against, a lot of the root causes are just too strong. The financial system, greed, human greed, all these things. It's just way too powerful. It's going

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to take an almost, maybe even unrelated impact on all these power structures to maybe give us some hope to rebuild in a better way.

Rachel (25:20):

Yeah.

Martin (26:09):

The stuff that they're talking about doing now, you have Boris Johnson saying, we're coming back, we'll be better. We'll be back. And then he sort of makes fun of gender neutral and then he's like, come back, we'll be, I don't know, gender neutral, more feminine. He actually said that. Something like that. So maybe that's better. But so the whole rhetoric of we're coming back better because we were knocked down, I actually wish was kind of true. I wish we had been knocked down just enough to come back and be smarter, and be wiser. That's part of the learning process. That's why you let kids, we're kind of children in this sort of cosmic playground that we inhabit.

We're basically on the level of children. You do kind of let the child get their knee scraped. If you wanted them to be careful about busting their head. So they'll scrape the knee and then they'll be careful about their face next time or something. So I actually was hoping that maybe something like that, but it doesn't seem like it's going that way because these forces are too ginormous.

Rachel (27:10):

Yeah.

Martin (27:11):

Can't be stopped.

Rachel (27:13):

I agree with you. Martin, thanks. This is great.

Martin (27:19):

Thank you. Yeah.

Rachel (27:19):

I really appreciate it.