

I don't remember the first time I distinctly heard about Donald Trump.

I was always a relatively politically active person, even as a child, even if I didn't know what being *political* was.

I remember being 6 years old and visiting some friends from church and the three of them lived in a closet underneath an active train track. I remember thinking it was so cool, but as the train passed and rattled the roof to their 200 square foot apartment, and asked their little girl how she slept. She laughed and said, *I pray for sleep! Other things, too!*

I remember being 7 and going to school after Obama got elected. We were sitting in the library, all of us cross legged and big eyed, watching our librarian flip through *Smart About the Presidents* (Buller et al., 2004), and when it got to the page explaining that the United States has not had the privilege of having a black or woman president, our librarian turned to us slyly and winked, saying “Well, that's not true anymore! Which one of you will be the first woman president?” I remember thinking *Maybe it'll be me. I would be a great President!*

I remember being 9 and asking my mother to volunteer at soup kitchens, at pantries, at various church and school events that called for it. She didn't have the heart to tell me that we were the families using these programs, and she would restock the cans we collected from the pantries and bring them back, my sister and I smiling big.

I remember being 13 when a close friend told me he was a boy trapped in a girl's body, and we both held each other until the sun rose.

I remember being 14 and not being sure why I cried when Obergefell v. Hodges allowed for gay marriage to be legalized.

And I remember a little bit later, that same year, being in eighth grade, watching the news with my mother, showing clips of Donald Trump at a podium, declaring the United States needed to eject the Muslims from our country. The Hispanics. Or rather, the Mexicans. He called for the removal of transgender persons from the military and the surveillance of communities. Later, he would tweet to Twitter: “Without looking at the various polling data, it is obvious to anybody the hatred is beyond comprehension. Where this hatred comes from and why we will have to determine. Until we are able to determine and understand this problem and the dangerous threat it poses, our country cannot be the victims of horrendous attacks (...).” He would repeat all of this to roaring applause at a rally in Mount Pleasant, S.C. on December 7th, 2015.

I remember turning to my mother, and saying *Why are people cheering?*

My mother, staring straight ahead, her lips pursed in disgust, picking at her nails, said, “Because some people are evil, Brandi.”

That quote stuck with me, though. “Without *l o o k i n g* at poll D A T A, it is ^{obvious} to ANYONE the ~~hatred~~ is beyond **comprehension**.” I did not understand how a political candidate could make such broad claims without even glancing at poll data (or, at least, admit to not doing so). I did not understand how this hatred felt misplaced. Even then, it was buzzing and palpable to me.

I remember later that same year I was sitting in the front of English class. We were learning about the importance of word connotation, and how, often, the connotation of a word will make your statement more or less effective. *Is it better to be skinny, or slender? Is it better to be ebony,*

or black? Our teacher was flashing photos on the screen, asking us to describe them neutrally. A horse. A photo of the science teacher. And then, Donald Trump. The energy in the room shifted immediately. Some of the girls were hushing their boy friends, all of whom suddenly perked their ears up. I contemplated how to describe Donald Trump accurately, and raised my hand. I said *Donald Trump is a controversial candidate*. My teacher stalled, then agreed, explaining how I made a neutral statement. Funnily enough, I would find myself in my first year of high school at a leftist agriculture charter in the forests of New Haven, and the way I and my peers spoke about Trump changed radically. All of the teachers and students alike spoke openly about their disgust for the man, and provided me with acute reasons why. I thought, naively, that Trump would never win the election. Especially not against Clinton.

And I remember walking down the stairs from my room to the living room, where my mother and grandmother were watching the news, sniffing, stiff, holding each other.

I remember being on the bus with my classmates, all of us declaring we would not be doing work that day. How stupid it was to even have us go to school!

I made it to my first period Algebra class with Larry Dome, and kept to my word. I pushed the paper for the first assignment and leaned back in my chair. But then, Larry Dome did something no one was expecting. And would stick with me for the rest of my life.

Oddly, it'll be this class that inadvertently started a fire in me for a project I will not begin until November of 2025. This is that project. Strap in folks, we got a lot to unpack here.

At Bennington College, I studied an array of topics with the statement of interest: *How can we make education of politics, and every single facet of that, the most accessible to those who need it the most?*

At college, the 2020 election came my freshman year, and we saw Biden overtake Trump. The election saw the highest voter turnout since 1900; roughly, 161 million people were registered to vote in the 2020 presidential election and 158,427,986 ballots were submitted—96.3% of registered voters (Trainor III et al., 2025)!

I thought that was the end of Trump. The start of a politically active American public.

How naive of me.

After Trump won the 2024 election, I realized I was becoming more patriotic than I ever have felt. I was seeing the country, that albeit has wronged me, my family, and my peers at every chance it could, that promised this land is your land. Land of the free. I dove into the meaning behind the song, and found Woody Guthrie's original lyrics.

As I went walking I saw a sign there
 And on the sign it said "No Trespassing."
 But on the other side it didn't say nothing,
 That side was made for you and me.
 In the shadow of the steeple I saw my people,
 By the relief office I seen my people;
 As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking
 Is this land made for you and me?

In 2009, Bruce Springsteen and folk legend Pete Seeger sing *This Land is Your Land* as part of President Barack Obama's inaugural celebration, and the lyrics have otherwise been thrown to the extremists.

But is that so extreme? To dig deep into our country and sing the tunes of those who couldn't? Is it so extreme to feel this hatred coursing my blood hot? Was Guthrie radical for observing? Did you consult the polls, Mr. Trump? Do you see why were all so fucking enraged? Does this hatred finally make sense to you?

I have been dealing with grappling with these twisting knives inside of me. I turn to everyone around me, and feel as though it has never quite been this hard before. How have we gotten here, as a nation? And while we all stare out into this dystopia, too tired to revolt, too hungry to sleep, too anxious to miss that shift, too poor to move, what can we really do?

I found myself thinking backwards on the people who made me who I am today. I thought about the people who gave me the tools of education, the power of understanding and critical thinking, of the people who just straight up altered me in one way or another.

I found myself thinking back to the infamous math class back in 2016, and ended up contacting Larry Dome at the beginning of November for an interview about his life.

On November 7th, 2025, Larry sat down with me for coffee where we ended up talking for 3 hours, 2:02:50 of that which were the actual recorded interview. For the sake of this article, I will be picking apart the interview, condensing some language, and removing parts where I comment, if needed and applicable. The entire transcript, however, will be available and (mostly) unedited, and I encourage all of you to turn to Larry's words, as they provide so much clarity, joy, fear, direction, and love, that we could all use some more of. I wanted to ask questions to pick his brain, shape the person he is, and then unpack that.

Brandi Ocasio (00:00)

To start us off: How were you raised?

Larry Dome (00:02)

Okay, I'll give you a short version of my history. SO! I was adopted because the woman who adopted me had cancer, and couldn't have kids, but she really wanted them. I was born in 1956, and back in those days, if you gave your kid up for adoption, it was actually illegal for you to stay in touch with the kid.

Brandi Ocasio: Really?

Larry Dome: Yeah, absolutely. And no records were kept.

And so the adopted family I had was, as far as I was concerned, my family. At an early age, they did sort of explain to me what adoption was, and how it was really OK, because they had had to do all this extra work to actually get me. My sister down in Washington and myself were adopted. The step siblings came in later because my father remarried. But anyway, (00:57)

the difficult part of that was there was also a stigma attached to being adopted. Sure. Because your mother must have been a whore, you're a bastard, blah, blah. So I used to get a lot of shit when I was a kid. But anyway, (My adopted mother) ended up, the cancer came back and they didn't have a lot of the treatments they do today, so it had spread to her breasts and her lungs and then finally to her brain and that finished it. But it was about a two or three year process.

Larry Dome (01:27)

I was 12 and I was about to enter seventh grade. I had been very shy—actually I (now) talk a hell of a lot more than I ever did, I never used to say a word! I didn't have many friends, um, cause I was, I was very shy and also this is where I started not fitting in well with men because I was a little different and a little odd. I got a lot of the year of faggot and getting towels snapped at me in gym class when I had to take a shower. That kind of shit.

Brandi Ocasio (02:00)

And this was in the 70s at this point?

Larry Dome (02:17)

This is the late 60s. My mother died in 1968. So I got into seventh grade and it was kind of a lost year, but then in eighth grade, I kind of got hooked up with some people who were starting to smoke dope and suddenly there was this whole little group of people that liked me and we smoked dope together.

Brandi Ocasio (02:37)

Yep. That's how it goes.

Larry Dome (02:39)

It was this really good group. Actually, probably at least half or maybe two thirds of those people were girls. And I'm actually still in touch with a lot of them. And so somehow we managed to get ourselves through high school. And I went to a very good private prep high school. And, but the (03:02) school had made the decision to stay in a very rough neighborhood in Germantown. That's a part of Philly. It was interesting that, you know, here were these mostly white kids that when you left school, then you were going out in this neighborhood and they were pretty tough and that sort of started the whole gang thing for me because I got sick of getting beat up. (03:27) But anyway, this clique of people that I got to be friends with, really sort of, we all got ourselves through school together. And then I met all these other people. My girlfriend Karin and the gang, I had these two groups and managed to get myself through a lot of shit and got off to college. Two years before that my father remarried and that's when we moved from Germantown up to Chestnut Hill and that's where I inherited four step siblings, only one of whom was young enough to be living at home at that point. And then went to college. That went okay.

Larry Dome (04:12)

I ended up severely regretting the college I picked because it was a bunch of rich kids from New York, for the most part. I didn't fit in there well.

Brandi Ocasio (04:17)

Did you not? For being poor?

Larry Dome (04:21)

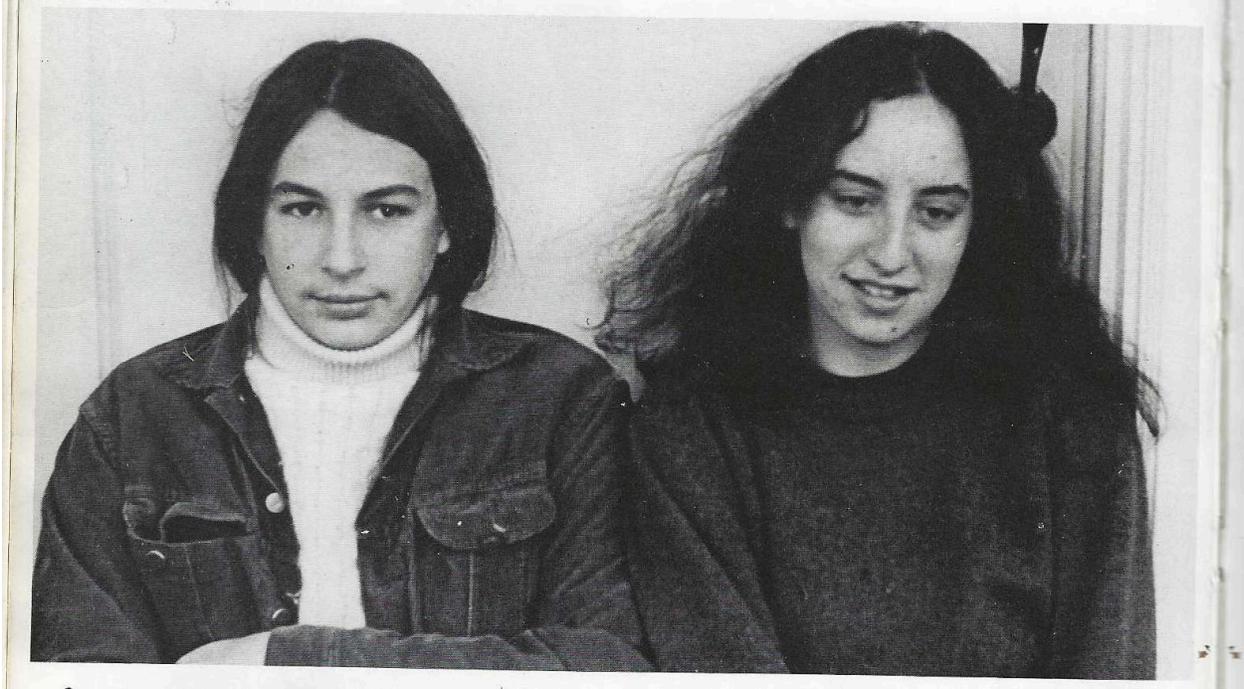
No, for freshman year I still had my street mentality.~

>>As a brief aside, Larry had found himself in some unbelievable gang wars, interactions, and encounters that were all off the record. But trust, this man has been around.

(04:30)~I got to be friends with this kid on my floor in the dorm and there was some big party towards the start of the year. These jocks showed up and they started harassing him and I took a bottle and broke it and went after the guy. Well, that got around to the administration of the school and I got called into one of the deans and they were like, Well, there's only one way we're going to let you stay, and that is if you get into some therapy. But once I got through that I still had really long hair and then junior year, some more jocks came up. There was a big all-campus party and it was it was a weird college; Hobart was all men and William Smith was all women, right, but they were all combined so, there was some co-ed dorms, but really it was that up the hill was sort of the women's campus and Down the hill was the men's. There was this big party up the hill at one of the women's dorms and I had gone into the bathroom and these jocks decided that they didn't like my hair and roughed me up, pushed my head into the urinal. And I was like, you know what, I'm done with the hair. And that's when I got my hair cut. So you saw the yearbook picture, I don't know if you remember.

Brandi Ocasio (05:45):

I do.



is my high school yearbook picture. I am with Karin, my gf at the time. I actually am still in touch with her, she lives in Oakland.

Larry Dome (05:53)

But it was (too long), even in college, my father was just all over me about it. And after I went to college, and had all that stuff happen, I had cut it down to about 30 as opposed to being here.

Brandi Ocasio (06:00)

Sure, and then even that was still too long.

Larry Dome (06:03)

Yeah. But, anyway, I got through college. That's where I met my first wife. And she was very focused and she knew what she wanted to do. She went off to grad school to get her degree in public administration and public policy. And I stuck around Geneva, did the radio show thing for a year and after a while of that, decided I was really done with this. I applied to grad schools and got into the new school for social research in New York. The original New School was founded by a bunch of commies that were coming out of Europe at the beginning of the fascist period and starting the Second World War. Let's just put it this way. I was at a kind of radical grad school. And so Lorie, who was my ex-wife, (07:03) was finishing up her degree. I was in New York the first year by myself and then we got married and she moved down to New York. And I had pretty much finished my masters and I had started on a PhD program and I was just... dumb. It was a master's in cultural anthropology and I was really interested in that. What I was studying would sort of become more social history as opposed to strictly speaking, anthropology. (08:03) I became very interested in nationalist movements especially with having my adopted parents. My mother was Irish, so I became very interested in Irish nationalism and the Irish movement and all

the troubles between the North and the South and the Brits. But then I realized again, that I had hit this point where I was done. It was over. I didn't want to do it anymore.~

>>And, let me say, I believe life would be much better for everyone if, whenever a person felt this *Im Done!* Feeling, they actually fell through, like Larry. You'll see this idea of *Im Done!* comes up relatively consistently. Perhaps that's what life is; staying centered and true to yourself, your wants, and your whims.

(07:26) ~And when I got to that point, Lorie freaked out. It came undone like this: I took this incomplete in this one course.

Brandi Ocasio (07:30)

Okay...

Larry Dome (07:56)

And she said, you have to finish it. And I'm like, not doing it! And after quite a lot of back and forth on this, she said: "if you're not doing it, then you need to *leave.*" And there was a lot of the partying and drinking and me showing up at early dawn hours, totally trashed. I was really good friends with this guy, Thomas, who actually has been living in Tokyo for 45 years now.

Brandi Ocasio (07:59)

Dope.

Larry Dome (08:26)

And he's actually the one that got me over being homophobic. He was gay and we were very good friends. And I used to go to the clubs with him.

Brandi Ocasio (08:36)

Yeah. (Laughs) Okay.

Larry Dome (08:36)

There were a couple gay bars that I would not go in with him. I saw the heavy duty leather SMM bars, and thought, nope, not doing that. No. I'm not going into some place where the only thing they have on is chaps.

Brandi Ocasio (08:40)

Yeah, I bet those gay clubs in the 70s and 80s did not care for any modesty.

Larry Dome (08:55)

Thomas and I showed up at one, at some club that was tame enough for me, what I think we really kind of clinched it for was we showed up at like 5: 30 one morning. This is like a Tuesday morning because we went to the clubs on Mondays because we didn't want that Long Island and New Jersey commuter crowds. We didn't care to have a club with them.

Brandi Ocasio (09:19)

Cant blame you.

Larry Dome (09:20)

But anyway, we made her breakfast and we had this little breakfast nook area. You could sit three people at the table, she was sitting at this point and Thomas was at one end and I was at the other and Thomas was so wasted he just sort of face planted into the food. .

Brandi Ocasio (09:36)

Oh my God, are you serious?

Larry Dome (09:39)

Serious. (He throws his hands up, laughing) She just looked at him and looked at me, got up and left.

Brandi Ocasio (09:41)

Yeah, I can respect that.

Larry Dome (09:43)

Yeah, I could too. As hurt as I was. I was just so happy that I was in love with her. While I shouldered my part of the responsibility, I was very disappointed that just because I wanted to quit grad school(...) and my *I-don't-know-yet,-but-I'll-figure-it-out's* weren't enough. She wasn't having that. We ended up getting divorced.

Brandi Ocasio (10:00)

Are you still in contact with her?

Larry Dome (10:09)

No, it was interesting. The divorce laws in New York State are such that if you're not suing for divorce, it means you're suing her because she cheated on you or she's suing me because I cheated on her or she's suing me because I was abusive. Essentially, they put you into a holding pattern for a year. So you can get legally separated, but you can't get legally divorced.

Brandi Ocasio (10:29)

That's stupid. I think; I've never been divorced.

Larry Dome (10:34)

She threw me out, but gave me a few weeks to figure it out. I went to Japan for four weeks instead and spent time with Thomas.~



a picture in Japan with my very dear friend from grad school. He is the one who helped me ditch homophobia and who I went clubbing with a lot!

And while I was away, my stepmother had been ill~

>>This is the tail end of the 2-3 year cancer journey she was suffering from that Larry had mentioned earlier.

~and I had asked her doctor and my father about the trip. I told them that I was going to be gone for a month, and they all said, *Oh no, she'll be okay. She'll get through, make it through the summer.* Well, of course, two weeks while I'm over there, she passed. And Thomas, Thomas is a little strange. He didn't have a cell phone. He did not have a phone in his apartment. So the only way to reach me for my father was to call Thomas's office. It took several days before my father was able to get through because most of the people in the office didn't speak English. I finally talked to my father and he said, "well, the funeral's tomorrow, don't change your plan. It's too late now. Just stick it out and you know, when you get back, we'll take you to the cemetery." (11:53) So I got back from Japan, Lorie threw me out. I found a sublet out in Park Slope in Brooklyn. And I had been in a Wang word processing class. Wang word processors were sort of like precursors to PCs. Except all they did was word processing. They were floppy disks that were like this big. (He holds up his hand, and wiggles his fingers)

Larry Dome (12:18)

And I was in this word processing class so that I could get a job, at least some sort of administrative job to pay for even the sublet. We were allowed to sit in on this or that or the other thing, and found myself in a lecture. I had a teacher in the back come up to me and ask, "So why are you doing this?" I said, "Well, I quit grad school." "And what were you in grad school?" "I

got a master's in anthropology.” “You have a master's in anthropology? There's another anthropologist sitting up front!” And so, I met this woman, who ended up being friends with Alexandra (my current wife).

Brandi Ocasio (12:40)

Cute!

Larry Dome (13:01)

She and I, this friend who later introduced me to my wife, she (Lorraine, was her name) had a car and she was actually an archaeologist. At some point after being friends with her for about seven or eight months, she said, “Well, I'm going on a dig down to Mexico and I'm leaving the cats with this friend of mine, Alexandra.” And it turned out, you know, she was probably a 15 minute walk from the sublet that I was at. Lorraine and I went over to her apartment for dinner when she dropped off the cats and Alexandra and I really hit it off. A couple weeks after that I called her up and asked her out on a date to go listen to a concert in Central Park. It was a Thursday, and she said yes. Well then I sort of tried to... (laughs) I called her up on Friday and said would you like to get together for a drink on Saturday? And I could tell (she) was like, *Maybe. Maybe. I'll have to sort of check and see what's going on on my calendar and blah.* (14:19) *blah blah blah. I'll call you back.* Click. So what she ended up obviously telling me was she was like, well, I didn't want to go out with you under this pre date because if I didn't like you then I was on the to go to the concert that she'd already committed to. But she did call back and she said, yeah, okay, we'll meet for a drink. And we had a drink. And we had lunch at the concert. And that's how we started our relationship. So we met in early August of 1984.

Brandi Ocasio (14:53)

Wow, big year.

Larry Dome (14:55)

So we started dating and we were in New York. She was working as an architect in Midtown and I ended up working at Sports Illustrated. Nothing to do with anthropology other than the guy who hired me was the technical director for the magazine and they wanted to get people off of typewriters and put them onto PCs.

Brandi Ocasio (15:12)

Okay.

Larry Dome (15:17)

And so he said, “I will send you to school to learn PCs. And then you need to figure out how to get all these writers and editors working on PCs.” So that's what I did for three years until I got fed up with the city. It was a mess. It was harsh and trying to get from Brooklyn into Midtown

because there were all these old trains. None of them were air conditioned. I literally had to keep and of course I had to wear a suit. (15:47) So I just kept a suit and tie in the office and wore shorts and a t-shirt because I would be sopping wet when I got in. Of course Sports Illustrated, there were showers so I could take a shower and...

Brandi Ocasio (15:56)

Right. Suit on first thing at work. That's so funny.

Larry Dome (15:58)

So I did that, but I got fed up with it and I told Alexandra I was out. I found this job up in Connecticut with this research company that followed the tech industry and it was a miserable place to work. Just horrible. It was called the Gartner Group and the management style was just, you know, ruthless and brutal. And the whole game was like a shark tank. And if you didn't survive, you didn't survive. Who cares? Really? So, but anyway, Alexandra was like, I don't really want to move up to Connecticut, but I'll come up with you and I'll help you look for an apartment. So we were looking around and the apartments were awful. They were like in Stamford and stuff and there were all these like little studios, maybe a one bedroom with little tiny windows. Alexandra kept saying they weren't good. And, they weren't. Then, we had this real estate agent showing us around and she said, I found this place. The landlord's really nice. He really likes helping out young people. (16:56) It was the first floor of his house. He had the second floor, but he was almost never there because he had a condo in Florida and a farm up in Massachusetts. So when he'd go back and forth, he'd just stop in. And so he said, just bring in my mail. He said, maintain the house and we're good. And so Alexander was walking around. She said, okay, maybe I will move. So she did. She decided she would move up.

Brandi Ocasio (17:05)

And then the rest was history.

Larry Dome (17:25)

We were in that house for a year, a little over a year. And then we bought a house in Norwalk. We were there for 13 years and then moved into Trumbull. Gartner Group almost killed me, but it taught me one lesson: *I would never let anybody abuse me like that in a workplace again.* And some places have tried it and I have told them, *if this doesn't change, I'm gone.* It's that simple. I'm not going to put up with this kind of thing.

Larry Dome (17:55)

So, but then after I left that company, the one benefit of it was it was sort of in the front row seat to what was going on in the tech business, including startups. So we had this thing called Five O'clock Meetings on Friday. (They'd bring in) these startup companies and pitch what they were about. It was so easy to tell which ones were going to make it. They all had great technology, but

some did not have any business sense in marketing where the market for what their technology (actually) was. Eventually, I had run across this company that I really, really thought they really knew what they were doing. And I had met a couple of the people who were officers in the company from just my work in communicating with other companies. These people had left companies that they had been at to help start this other one. And that's where I ended up. And it was a great company to work for—Loved it. And I worked there for about 13, 14 years. I just absolutely loved it. There was one little glitch. The guy who hired me got promoted. And so he handed me off to some other guy, a different manager. And he was a prick.

Brandi Ocasio (18:42)

Fuck.

Larry Dome (19:05)

And so I was in White Plains office and he used to call me up, not say hello, not say, ya know, *I'm calling you because I'm a little upset about what happened*. He'd call me up and start yelling. So I called up the guy who had initially hired me, and said, “Dennis, you got to get rid of it. I need to get away from this guy. If you can't get me away from him, I'm gone. I'm out of here.” And I'd already started to shine in that company. He fixed it for me.

Brandi Ocasio (19:15)

Thank God for that.

Larry Dome (19:33)

So I did very well. The company went public. I made a shit ton of money. I couldn't even believe it. A lot of it in stock.

Brandi Ocasio (19:41)

Mmm.

Larry Dome (19:43)

And Alexandra, when we moved up here, was commuting down to New York for a year and then kind of jumped around from architecture firm, from an architecture firm, and she made it. It was such a sexist driven industry.

>>At this point in the interview, I remind Larry about a funny interaction we had in high school. On top of being the math teacher at the school, he was also head of the Yearbook Club. I very quickly cemented myself as editor of the yearbook my sophomore year and stuck with it through my senior year. One late night in the yearbook club, I mentioned offhandedly that I was considering going into architecture, and Larry sat me down with a deathly serious stare, and made me promise I would never, ever take an architecture class. I kept that promise, even in college when my advisor was begging me to take one to flesh out my classes. He got a kick out of that.

Larry Dome (20:39)

So one of the things that first set (Alexandra) off, she was working at a pretty big firm in New Haven. And that's where she actually met our friend in Chicago who passed away and another friend who (we still talk to in) Massachusetts and another friend who lives in Madison. (Alexandra and these people) were like war buddies because this place was horrible. What finished it for her working at that place was she was bent over one of the file cabinets, ya know, big, big horizontal canvas where they can store all the blueprints and drawings and stuff. And one of the partners of the firm went back and smacked her on the butt. This is like 1988. (21:19) She turned around and gave him shit. Like the whole office is sitting there going, *what just happened?* (Now, we're both laughing) She didn't last much longer after that. And actually the main owner of the firm was an idiot and he ran it into the ground anyway. But (the main owner) bopped (Alexandra) into a couple other places but she was like, you know what? The last place she was at, basically, she made her in charge of copying like prints and stuff like that. They didn't give her any real architecture work because they didn't want to bother her little head. And so she's like, *I'm done!* I remember her lying in bed and she woke up and she was crying. I wake up, and ask her what's going on? "I can't do this anymore." (And so I tell her) "Quit. Just quit." "Really?" "Please quit. This is no way to live." And so she ended up quitting.

Larry Dome (23:15)

So at some point, the tech company I was in, we went from the first year I was there, we did about 12 million in revenue. And at its peak, we were almost at a billion dollars a year. Wow. And we did that at 12.

Brandi Ocasio (23:25)

That's unbelievable. Is it still functioning?

Larry Dome (23:36)

So the board in its infinite wisdom decided that the founders did not know how to take it up to the over billion dollar level. Basically, ShipCan, the entire executive staff, brought in all these professional management types from all these Silicon Valley companies and stuff. And it took them six to nine months to run it.

Brandi Ocasio (23:57)

Now, that's believable (laughs).

Larry Dome (23:59)

And I managed to do a very graceful (he poses for a moment, to cement this point) and financially lucrative exit. So at that point, I took a year where I didn't do anything except what the fuck I felt like when I got out of bed. It was a lot of fun. It was a little dangerous because the drinking and I was smoking some weed at that point and it was starting to, um...

Brandi Ocasio (24:24)

Become a little bit of a problem.

Larry Dome (24:25)

Yeah. Idle hands are the devil's work. I needed to be idle, though. For a while. (...) I needed to get a job at some point, so I needed to decide what I wanted to do. But, financially, I was set for the better part of two or three years with what I got out of the company. Also, at that point, Alexandra's father died. She was the only child. He never spent a dime. (24:51) So that's when I decided I'll teach.

Brandi Ocasio (24:56)

What exactly compelled you to do that? Just woke up one day?

Larry Dome (25:00)

The original goal of getting a PhD in anthropology (was that) I wanted to teach at a college level. So I started thinking about what I had liked the most when I was younger. And I remember really loving math and science. So I was like, you know what? I really, really liked math. I hadn't looked at math in years, so I was going to need some work and I had a moment where I realized, *I'm going to look at math forever*. I started taking some math classes up at Housatonic Community. (25:30) And it was absolutely heaven at the time of my life. Oh, yeah. And then I said, you know what? I think I'd really like to be a math teacher. I was faced with the decision of elementary school, middle school, high school. So I did volunteer work at an elementary school for a while. Loved the kids. Hated teaching elementary school math. It was just so boring to me. And what this was, the irony of it is that's what I ended up teaching at Common Ground (high school).

>>Common Ground High School is the leftist agriculture charter in the forests of New Haven I referenced earlier; they had a policy of meeting kids where they were at, thus putting Larry in a box to do mostly arithmetic, and not what he was truly interested in.

Larry Dome (26:00)

I also volunteered at middle schools and quickly realized *Oh god, these kids are horrible. No, not doing that* and then I did volunteer work at Common Ground, which is how it started. The first time I ever met Liz (Cox, the director of operations and principal) was like late July early August and I met her in the cafeteria.

Brandi Ocasio (26:08)

Really? That's how it started?

Larry Dome (26:30)

Uh huh. I said to her, "I really would like to do some volunteer work here." At that point, I was in Southern, so I could walk there. And she said, "The only thing I'll ask is, can you make the commitment for the year? I don't want kids to get attached and feel comfortable with you, and then you have to up and quit." And I said, no, I'll absolutely commit. (...) I had no clue what I

was doing. I hadn't talked to a teenager since I was a teenager. And (Alexandra and I) didn't have kids, you know. So it took me a lot of work to start to sort that out. (27:21) So a position opened up. And so they offered it to me and I was like, at that point I was supposed to do my student teaching at ~ Trumbull High. And I had really fallen in love with Common Ground (...) so, when I told Trumbull High that I was going with Common Ground, they were like: "You turned *us* down? You're going not only to a public school in New Haven, but some dinky little charter school?" (...) And I kind of like, yeah, that's exactly what I'm doing. Fuck you. I'm really glad I didn't go to Trumble.

Brandi Ocasio (30:33)

I have always been deeply curious about this: why math? If that makes sense?—because, from where I'm standing, it always kind of confused me that you were a math teacher.

Larry Dome (30:53)

I wasn't the typical man.

Brandi Ocasio (31:01)

Yeah! You're just really cool. So, Im curious. My freshman year roommate in college was a math student, actually and she was also an artist, and she believed very deeply that math was just a different type of art, and she would go on for hours about how beautiful it was. Do you agree? Do you feel like math is art?

Larry Dome (31:14)

I think it's very creative. Frankly I was not very good at it. I mean, I was very good at teaching it, but I was not much of a mathematician myself. I loved doing what I did. I loved when I got into some of the higher level courses (...) there's a thing called abstract algebra that you take in your grad school that is just...

Brandi Ocasio (31:34)

A nightmare.

Larry Dome (31:35)

A nightmare! It's all proofs. There's no numbers. And I barely got through that class. But, there was an advanced geometry course, non-Euclidean geometry, that I just absolutely love. I struggled in it too because the proofs were really hard. But non-Euclidean geometry, parallel lines do me. In Euclidean geometry, no they don't. (31:59) It was a really cool course. I did a really good project where I found this 19th century woman~

>>After touching base after the interview, Larry sent along his final paper on Sophia Germain. To quote Larry directly: "What I found at the library was a book that had one of the papers she wrote. The book had a collection of essays from various mathematicians. She was most famous for her work explaining the mathematical laws governing the vibrations of elastic surfaces, which produce beautiful patterns."

~who had really written the book on a lot of geometry and some other math stuff. We were supposed to find a mathematician that we admired. So I found her and some of her works, and a couple of her original copies were at the Southern Library. Original copies! And I actually managed to convince them to let me take them out. I saw it. I said, *I'll give you my first born. Give you all my blood. Let me do this.* And people thought it was really cool that I had found this one.

Brandi Ocasio (32:27)

Really? Whoa, yeah, it is really cool.

Larry Dome (32:46)

So there was just a lot of things about math that I loved and it helped me understand a lot more about science, particularly about physics and particularly astrophysics, which I've been fascinated with because Alexandra was really into astrophysics. (...) (35:46) We used to have lots of discussions about physics and talk about mathematical laws and how they apply to physics. I mean, because math is very complicated in physics. Did you take physics?

Brandi Ocasio (35:59)

I was so bad at it.

Larry Dome (36:34)

I mean, if you don't have a solid background in algebra, advanced algebra, geometry, you can't even start physics. (...) (37:21) And I don't know how I understood half that shit (Alexandra) was doing. Because I looked at it and she would ask me some math questions once in a while and some of them I could answer and some I was like, *nope, don't look at me.* And Stone and I~

>>Mr. Stone was a social history teacher who taught at Common Ground High School. Incredibly smart man; probably should have been a professor at Yale, but had a philosophy where he truly believed his brain best needed with the impoverished. Loved to make people squirm with thoughts they never considered. I miss him deeply. I think he's off the grid, now.

(38:00) ~used to have these real debates as to whether the mathematical laws were natural or whether they were manhandmade laws. And I used to always argue that they were natural laws, that the universe was.

>>It's here where we dive into a small discussion of one of my favorite films, [Mathmaticalland](#), and how math is in all things consistently and repeatedly, but I will cut it for sake of length. You should all watch it, though. It is remarkable.

Brandi Ocasio (42:08)

I am going to shift gears a bit and ask: well, first of all, I feel like your life has been filled with so many moments that any other person would be like, *this is the exact moment that radicalized me.* And I'm curious, did you ever have a distinct moment, something that you can pinpoint where you can say, this was when I was radicalized and this is when~

Larry Dome (42:35)

Really easy.

Brandi Ocasio (42: 38)

~ is it? Okay. Well, what was the point?

Larry Dome (42:46)

Well, you got to remember that when I entered high school, the Vietnam War was still raging. There was a draft. And I had a draft card.

Brandi Ocasio (42:56)

You did?

Larry Dome (42:59)

I sure did.

Brandi Ocasio (43:00)

You burned it?

Larry Dome (43:09)

I sure did! I would have—could have—I could have weaseled my way out of getting into the service because I was raised a Quaker. So I could have done it on religious grounds, but the Quakers had a real radical past. And so in seventh grade, so we're talking about 1968, 1969, the war was still really big. I mean, at that point, Nixon had started bombing Laos and Cambodia. (...) the carpet-bombing they were doing up in North Vietnam.

Brandi Ocasio (43:13)

Sure.

Larry Dome (43:29)

It was awful. Going to a Quaker school, they were teaching us civil disobedience because they wanted the students to help. They didn't force us, but they said if you want to participate, we're going to have an all-day protest at the school. So one of the first protests I ever did was all the students and faculty at the school made a solid line around the whole city block around the school. (43:55) They were drilling us on civil disobedience tactics. If somebody starts attacking you, what do you do? If the police come and spray tear gas, what do you do? So I was taught my earliest lessons of civil disobedience in seventh grade from my Quakers. And once I got to be a little bit older, like (44:23) when I got into ninth grade, I mean the war was starting to wind down, but there were still massive protests that were going on. So I started going into Center

City Philly because they used to do the big protest marches at the Independence Mall with the Liberty Bell and all that stuff. And we would regularly get chased by the riot police and getting tear gassed. But that's what I did. That's how I got in. That's how I grew up. (44:50) I got into politics because of my parents. My mother was Irish Catholic and my father was German Episcopalian. I don't know how the fuck my mother decided to become a Quaker. So I have no idea what her politics were but my father was just an asshole Republican. And most of his family... I had an aunt that was just a horrendous racist. (45:14) So I mean the n-word was flung around the house endlessly and I was being taught something very different from my Quakers and peers. And so I started rebelling against what I was seeing at home because I was like this stuff isn't (right) ~ And so I became more and more politicized and, at first, was around civil rights and racial issues in the war. At the time, I was severely homophobic and (45:42) really not very kind in my thoughts about gay people. Back then, it wasn't until... I went to New York and that changed. I gotta say, I think it was the last bit of prejudice that I started really addressing. A lot more of it got addressed through high school, despite all the drugs~

Brandi Ocasio (45:46): Haha. Despite the drugs.

Larry Dome (46:07)

~and in college. It was one of the reasons I became an anthropologist. (...) There are different people, there are different ways to think all over the place and nobody has got it all right. And I'm interested in embracing other people, other cultures. And so that's how I became politicized. And then there was kind of a lull for quite a while, especially when I was working in business. Because even at the tech company, there was (46:33) actually a tech company, one of the founders was a lesbian. And so it was fairly open to gay people at that point, but most business people were just awful. And so again, it was kind of a lull in my political engagement for a while, other than voting in elections until I got to common ground. Especially when Obama got elected.

>>Now, we reach the point in this saga that I reveal the interaction to Larry, to you, reader, and to myself, that originally started this project way back in 2015.

Brandi Ocasio (47:02)

I remember—I think about it a lot, actually—because I think it was the first time that I was like, *oh, this guy Mr. Dome is actually pretty all right*. It was the day that Trump got elected, the first time, back in 2016. I remember waking up and coming down the stairs and being absolutely *floored* that Clinton lost the electoral college. And I remember being on the public bus to go to school and the 243 was just full of kids from Common Ground and...a tangible hood of darkness was on us, you know? We had all agreed on the bus that we weren't doing work today. We were like, *we're just not, we're going to school because we have to*. Your class was the first class I had that day. And you used to have us start every class with a morning math program. You walked around the class, putting a piece of paper on all of our desks, and all of us were just sliding them back at you and letting them fall to the floor. (48:00) That's when you sighed, leaned back with

your arms crossed in front of the class, and I thought *Oh God, this is gonna be it. Hes gonna freak the fuck out.* But then...you just started crying. You went on a spiel and your activism, and you kept apologizing, and you cried that the world was just turning out *bad.* And I will never forget...you said: "The only thing we can do here is help each other. It sucks that we're all stuck in a math class right now, but we are here and we are here together. Let's all help each other."

>>Larry and I both are getting quite bleary eyed at this point. This is the heart of the interview, what started this project in the first place. Pay attention carefully as we continue.

(48:39) I guess all that is to say, that moment was so deeply fundamental to making me the person I am today. It was the moment I realized that politics is just so much more than *politics.* It's life. Its air. Its community. It's everything. It made me see my education in an entirely new light. I remember thinking, this is not only a place where people come to learn, it's a place to grow and foster. And I'm curious where you find yourself feeling in all of this, Dome, 10 years later?

Larry Dome (49:13)

Just so you know, that day after the election, Liz called the staff in early and said, *do what you need to do in the classes.* She said, *if you can teach, you can teach. If you don't want to teach, you don't have to teach. You can just have a talk to the kids about what's going on.* So me being me, I tried to teach and it took me about three seconds to realize: *No, this is not going to happen and I'm not going to be able to hold it together. (...)*

Larry Dome (50:15)

So, well, the first thing is I found out about this most recent election while I was in the fucking hospital.

Brandi Ocasio (50:17)

Oh my God...

Larry Dome (50:19)

I was operated on on November 1st and that election year, election day was on November 3rd. And so they had moved me downstairs to the regular cardiac unit and I decided on election night, I was not going to look at any of it. I was very worried that it was not going to go well. I'm just going to go to sleep. (...) I had to have a roommate next door. So I woke up in the morning and he had the TV going with the news. Obviously nothing but that on the TV. And it turned out (the neighbor) was a fucking Trumpian. It was funny though, as much as he had voted for Trump (51:13) He was having all these conversations with his daughter, because they were trying to sort out when or how he was going to be able to come home. And his daughter didn't live with him. But they'd get into these political discussions. And I could hear her scream. (51:29) So. You know. That's how I found out. It wasn't a surprise. It was deep, deeply disappointing. I had been running around with my hair on fire talking about Project 2025 to anybody that would listen. (51:50) They've gotten through 41 of the points of the other thing they want to implement. I

knew it was going to be really bad. And of course, with Trump, there is no bottom. It just keeps sinking further and further and there is no bottom. It's been horrifying, especially at my age, where I feel physically disabled. I can't go out and be active in protesting. I've been trying to sort out what I can do, whether it's making phone calls during elections, whether it's, I don't know, but I got to do something. I'm going to go out of my mind. If I can't walk and I can't gain some sense of peace with myself, that's how I did walking and working in the garden. I've got to do something about the politics because that's just, it's killing me.

Brandi Ocasio (52:46)

It's suffocating.

Larry Dome (52:47)

It's suffocating. I will only say this to you.

>>At the point in the interview, Larry shares a secret with me that I will not be providing here, or in the accompanying interview recording. Part of being in a community, and learning, and being a journalist, is remembering who to protect, and how to protect them. Keep your acquaintances close, your friends closest, and your enemies far, far away. As far as you can.

Larry Dome (53:06)

So I have to find some way that I can fight this and I'll figure it out. I've got to figure it out. It's just, I can't just let this ride without saying something. And on the internet there's no place to cry for it.

Brandi Ocasio (53:30)

I don't know how much you know what's going on with things like AI and stuff these days, but, first of all—TLDR—it's a shit show. Second of all, there's been a lot of studies coming out recently~

>>[Unmasking the fake MAGA accounts: Stolen photos and digital lies, Bots, disinformation, and the first impeachment of U.S. President Donald Trump](#), [A MAGA bot network on X](#), to source a few...
~that most of the right wing parrots online are strictly bots. And it's really, I don't know... it's really weird trying to find information these days that's accurate and from a person, which is insane. I talk to so many people my age or younger or even a bit older, like people under 30, and they kind of have the same perspective that you (Larry) do, you know? It's like, why would we keep trying when it's like this? And I think that, at least for me, the reason why I wanna keep trying is for all of these people who, like you, can't just get up and protest. It's something I often remind myself of. I might not have this drive, but so many other people who can't do anything do. I can take their drive and source it—does that make sense? I don't necessarily have a thesis statement for my feelings, but I know that the government is trying to make us feel powerless, hungry, and tired. And the biggest punch in the face to those assholes is to not feel like that.

Larry Dome (54:50)

Interestingly, the protests during the Vietnam War were violent. And some of it was initiated by the left. Throwing rocks and bottles and shit at the riot police. And if you do that now, they'll fucking shoot you. And they shot some people during my period. I don't know if you ever heard of Kent State. (...) Before people were shot at Kent it was, it was...stunning. Shocking. That this had ever happened. And now, it's commonplace.

Larry Dome(55:32)

It becomes an issue of, first of all, how do you organize yourself, especially in your generation? Going to the march is important but, being organized and how you attack an administration like this, how you fight administration like this without just blatant violence out in the street, is something that you folks are going to have to figure out. (56:00) I grew up in an era, where I showed up the moment the organizing was completed. The protests were made for me. I was a number. I showed up after it was all organized. And that was really nice. You know, and the Quakers had taught us a lot too about organizing and street tactics. But. That's, yeah, I mean, figuring out how you organize and how you fight it is going to be really important. I think a lot of that has to happen now. Don't worry about the whole fucking country. Worry about what's going on in New Haven. Like right now, I am just enraged at (Ned) Lamont. I've voted for him. I'm certainly not going to vote for a Republican, but I was actually pretty happy voting for him because he did a lot for the economy and (56:54) getting the budget to a point where Connecticut had money that it could do things for the people in the state, whether it could convince the state government to do it or not, that was a whole other issue. But he has been so fucking quiet. It's just appalling that there's shit going on in ICE in every city in this fucking state. And he's not saying a fucking word. (57:22) Alexandria has had a couple of conversations with Isa (a trans woman they're close with) and it's just so fucking scary. There's this other friend of (Alexandria's), Fran, and Fran...Fran transitioned as an adult, much later in life, and because she's a little bit younger than me, so she grew up in an age when, I mean, gay was bad enough. Trans? My God. And so it took her a long time to transition and it was very hard and very painful and very scary... She's terrified. She's absolutely terrified. (58:00) It's just horrible. It makes me so fucking mad. Frans a tough cookie, though. She will never let anybody bully her. She does this like, wheelie three-part meme thing on Facebook. Good for her. Oh my god, there's like 70 to 80 memes in each part. She's wonderful. She's a brilliant woman. I mean, absolutely brilliant. She actually was on Jeopardy!(58:56) She's a really interesting person. She's working, I don't know what she's doing at Yale now, but she had been in publishing and she had been working at the Sacramento Bee out in California and sort of started seeing the publishing business starting to go down the toilet. And she came out while she was out in California and so she moved back here and then struggled trying to find any kind of sort of publishing, writing kind of thing.

>>Reminder reader, I graduated from Bennington College with a literature degree in the middle of a recession. So I got a kick out of this.

Larry Dome (1:00:14)

The only real advice I can say is, try to get, start getting plugged in or try to start organizing people. One of the things they've done in Chicago is just gathering volunteers. They all bought these little “ice packets” as they call them. It has a whistle—I can't remember, it has a few things—and they just started handing them out to everybody. So if you see ice start blowing your whistles, start making noise, start taking you know videos of them. Some of it's gotten bad. (I have a friend) who was in that neighborhood where [they tear gassed little kids](#). (...) Bovino is that is that the fucking (1:01:40)Gestapo SS Nazi fuck who's running DHS. Just started tossing fucking tear gas in a residential neighborhood with kids out on the streets and elementary school across the street. And they gassed the whole fucking neighborhood. I don't know if you've ever been tear gas~

Brandi Ocasio (1:01:53)

Not yet.

Larry Dome (1:01:53)

~but it's pretty fucking painful, especially if you haven't taken precautions. If they start gassing, here what you do: So if you ever go to a protest, make sure you've got water bottles and a scarf, preferably kind of a woolish, something that's kind of thick. And if somebody starts shooting off tear gas, you soak the thing in water, and wrap it around your head. That's absolutely the right thing to do and then get the fuck out of there.

Larry Dome (1:03:24)

But anyway, so that's what I think has to go on. You got to start here. You got to organize. And I don't know how you get started with that other than talking to people. Even going online. (...) That's the only thing I can suggest. I would go to every march you can go to because that sort of visibility numbers mean something, sometimes more than action. And George Soros is paying you, right? So you get some money that way. (Laughs)

Brandi Ocasio (1:04:38)

Ugh, just so, so much money. (Laughs)

Brandi Ocasio (1:04:57)

So, my next question is weird, but I need to know your advice on this. I have been finding a lot of people my age—and it's certainly something I've been feeling a lot, too—where I am struggling with the need to stay civil, you know? I feel like at this point, there *is* a real and tangible call to violence, but I have been withholding that because we can't just have one person be violent, because then it's just one crazy person at a protest who ruins it for everybody else. It makes headlines. The city is shut down. Because one person acted on that urge we are all feeling. It seems to me that morality has been shifting really radically, especially with people my age. I believe people are becoming much more traditionally leftist. I'm curious about if you have any

real advice for this issue, as somebody who has been part of violent protests that arguably did change things very fast in the right direction. Do you think that these peaceful protests are truly working, or is there some basis to this being uncivil?

Larry Dome (1:06:00)

The problem is that we were not dealing, I mean, we were dealing with Nixon, who at the time we thought was horrible. He is but, I would take Nixon in the heartbeat over fucking Trump. And that's really saying something. But there was, there was a given back then Nixon wasn't about turning America into a fascist. He was about conservative policy, but he wasn't interested in violating the constitution and trying to embed himself as the lead autocrat for something.

Brandi Ocasio (1:06:33)

It was a completely different era for conservatism.

Larry Dome (1:06:36)

There wasn't the threat... There wasn't the same level of threat to people who were violently protesting. If they were violent they were not facing the consequences that you will be facing and your generation will be facing if it decides that violence is something that has to start to happen because it's the only thing. And it's interesting, being raised a Quaker; Quakers were not so naive, they're pacifists. Right. Somebody punches you in the face, they're really fine punching them right back. If you see somebody beating up a gay person or an immigrant or something like that as a Quaker there is no question in your mind that you can violently assault the person who's made the situation unsafe.

Brandi Ocasio (1:07:04)

It's the paradox of tolerance.

>>I recommend Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945) to any and all of you.

Larry Dome (1:07:22)

So I'm still kind of in wait mode. It's like I still want to see everything peaceful because it doesn't give them any ammunition. And if we somehow manage to get to the 2026 election, without him declaring martial law, we might have a chance of doing it nonviolently. But I'm afraid that what (the Government is) going to do is they're going to step up the violence. And at some point people are going to push back. Especially in the immigrant community in the really big cities like New York and Chicago and LA. They're in Philly, and Philly's pretty radicalized, right?

Brandi Ocasio (1:08:02)

I was gonna say, Philly's not the place to mess with right now.

Larry Dome (1:08:06)

Now, I mean, the suburbs are horrendously Republican or independent, but not very radicalized. But Philly itself is really radicalized right now. Yeah, you don't want to fuck with that city. That's been Chicago's attitude. And the governor of Illinois is like, we're not going to let you fuck with us. And it's certainly New York's attitude. Now—What's his name?

Brandi Ocasio (1:08:33)

Mamdani?

Larry Dome (1:08:32)

Right. What a good attitude. And it's like that because New Yorker turned into a shit show real fast. And it's going to be with Trump sending troops in and starting real trouble. It's a matter of timing. A matter of waiting for the first move. It's kind of like, I think ultimately it's going to come down to violence. These people, the MAGA people are so, so... (1:08:59) at this point, they don't see anything wrong with what they're doing. That there's no way to get (minorities) back in the box except to start beating the shit out of them, shoot them. We had the hiatus of the Biden years, and, what a relief. Oh my god, such a relief. I remember watching the inauguration. Can't remember the woman's name...the poet?

Brandi Ocasio (1:09:35)

Right, yes. Amanda Gorman, I believe.

Larry Dome (1:09:42)

Remarkable. Actually I was sitting at home because it was COVID. I was sitting at home and I was reading one of Obama's books about how he got elected in his first term in office. God, he's unbelievable. Have you ever read any of his books? I am not much for nonfiction. I was completely absorbed by his writing. So wonderful. But that's what I did during the inauguration day. I was reading Obama and listening to the speeches and watching Trump make a total fucking ass out of himself.

Brandi Ocasio (1:10:07)

When Biden got elected, it was my freshman year of college and it was... I don't know if you remember, but because it was COVID, it took quite a while to call the election. If I remember right, it took five or six days. And me and all of my friends were glued to our phones, tracking it. And we all hit a point where we were saying, *you know what? We'll give it a break.* We all starting walking to the dining hall, and as we walked over, it was announced and kids all over campus just started cheering and celebrating. Some kids stood on a bench and just hollered *BIDEN WOOOON!* Someone took out a loko from the backpack and shotgunned it. Then, the dining hall announced it was nuggets and fries for dinner, for such a special occasion. And it was a really great feeling, but was also weird, because, and I'm not trying to disgrace Biden's presidency by any means, because it *was* a breath of fresh air. But, that being said, a lot of people

my age, including myself, were not specifically motivated to vote for him. In fact, I didn't really care for his policies. He was just the lesser of two evils. And I believe that's where the Democrats really failed this election, trying to push Biden, especially at the height of the Gaza genocide, when liberals didn't want or care for him. Then, you know, he dropped out and Kamala didn't have a great run because of that.

Larry Dome (1:11:22)

Yeah. Also, I mean, dealing with the Middle Eastern war, the Gaza war was extremely difficult. It was very painful in so many ways. I think that, unfortunately, I think that significantly torpedoed Kamala because she had been toting Biden's, the administration's line. And I agree. I think they could have done a lot. Put a lot more pressure on Israel. Netanyahu is a monster. He's as bad as Trump in certain ways. I remember when Hamas attacked the Israelis and it was horrendous what they did. And after watching that, it's like, I knew what was coming. I knew, knew Netanyahu was going to level the Gaza Strip. And he did. (...) (1:12:34) my niece is has done a lot of volunteer work for some sort of Jewish organization and we had a very good conversation about a year ago about it and she was horrified! She was trying to get plugged into Jewish groups that were opposing the war because at a certain point it's like, okay, I can't remember the number of what it was... 2000 Jews were killed by Hamas, something like that. When you get up to 10,000, 15,000, 30,000 people killed and 60 % of them kids, when is it enough?

Brandi Ocasio (1:13:22)

It's simply not just an eye for an eye anymore.

Larry Dome (1:14:35)

(...) I guess I don't want to lord age and wisdom over anybody, but when you've been around for a while, you start to understand that politics is a long-term game and allowing Trump to get elected was a really dangerous thing. And I tried to convince lots of people how dangerous it was to let him get into office again. People who were younger, some people who were my age that were sort of independent and stuff, and it's like, I knew if he got in again, he was gonna be really hard to get rid of.

Brandi Ocasio (1:15:12)

Yeah, because even if, and there's a lot of ifs with the Trump presidency, unfortunately, especially now with the government being shut down~

>>This interview was conducted November 7th, 2025, marking the 38th day of the longest Government shutdown in United States history. We did not know at the time that it would be open again in 5 days. ~but, it makes me really nervous for the future because, even *if* we're all wrong, you know, and Trump will leave amicably when it's done and then we'll never hear from him again. Even *if* that happens, we still implemented his Supreme Court and all of these laws that are going to take, at minimum, months to dissolve but probably... decades.

Larry Dome (1:15:47) It's going to take your lifetime. It's probably going to be longer than you know and it's really scary to think about.

Brandi Ocasio (1:15:55)

I mean Reagan economics still controls our lives despite everybody knowing it's shit.

Larry Dome (1:16:12)

Ironically, I remember a time where a liberal Supreme Court made the ruling that big money could be thrown at politics willy-nilly. It's what I think had happened during Reagan, but that's one of the things that has to change. The money needs to come out. (1:16:29) I just, I hope you're not stuck for the better part of your life fighting the autocracy that he is developing because he's a fucking half vegetable now. If they don't, if they, if they, if they manage to get Marshall Law or they manage to win 2026, they're going to get rid of him.

Brandi Ocasio (1:16:41)

I mean, I think everybody is at least subconsciously aware that Trump is a puppet, and like, don't get me wrong, he's an awful, despicable person and so much of it is his fault, but, now, he's not there, you know, like you can't point fingers. There's too many cooks in the kitchen and he's so clearly suffering mental decline. There was this absolutely hilarious opinion piece, I think? Maybe an [interview](#), with Trump's niece. And she was like, *we gotta be easy on my uncle, he doesn't know where he is most of the time!* And people were like, *you mean like the president?* It's just...it's just ridiculous. It's like a circus.

Larry Dome (1:17:41)

He has, I think it's an aunt, or maybe it was a cousin, that has written *volumes* about what a monster he is. So, that family in itself is divided. I really hope that somehow you guys get out from this, it's going to take years of democratic or more liberal federal government Congress aid to get the Supreme Court squared away again, at least until it's balanced. But the other damage that they've done, it is going to take a long time. And that's if they start fixing it. (1:18:17) If this thing hangs on and you end up spending the better part of your most productive part of your life fighting autocracy, it could turn into that too.

Brandi Ocasio (1:18:28)

It could. At least from where I'm standing, I've always known that a good part of my life was going to be done fighting injustice. I just was pretty convinced it would be *environmental* justice. I didn't know. I didn't think it would be a whole new thing. In an odd way, it *is* kind of exciting that this is happening. At least it is for me, you know, because—and I don't I don't know if you would agree with this at all, as somebody who's older—but I feel like this year or, rather, this presidency, each day I get more patriotic. In the realest sense of the word. I just keep looking

around and thinking, *no, the founding fathers really did have a decent system proposed and they envisioned something that was so far from what we have.* We should go in the streets and try to fix it, you know? It's what this country was founded on.

Larry Dome (1:19:24)

Yeah, I mean, there were things that were wrong, like the Electoral College. That needs to be done away with. That's how they don't go after people's votes per se. They go after the electoral votes so that they can patch together a win. That's how people lose the popular vote, but win the presidency. And it should just be a straight up popular vote. But so there are things like that that were wrong that were compromises that were made while they were writing the constitution. (1:20:01) Because they were fighting battles between how much federal power should exist and how much state power should exist. That's how we ended up with the Senate. So you can have places like fucking Montana that have two senators that have the same power that the two senators from California have. The population difference is huge. And you'll look at that now, as a frontrunner, and see you can have, if you have enough small states, you can tie up the Senate with a lot of conservative politics, but that does not represent what the vast majority of people in this country want. So there are flaws, but it is still, for many years, one of the better working systems. I still now look more towards a lot of Northern European democratic socialist systems that seem to work really well, but even then some of those places are struggling now with sort of real right-wing movements. This right-wing thing is not... (...) (1:21:28) Alexandra could claim dual citizenship with Italy, but Italy's run by a fascist. I mean, not the same kind of fascist that this one is, but it's run by a fascist. You know, I would go to Scotland in a heartbeat. I'd love to live in Inverness. It's a really wonderful, beautiful, small, manageable city. It's just got so much stuff on it. And we've got friends there. but it's still part of the UK. Still being run by a lot of fucking assholes. So yeah, it's like, where do you go? I guess, New Zealand, if you can get in. (...) (1:24:26) Yep. yeah, it's very hard. I had a good friend, he lives in Texas, of all the forsaken places, but he's a real lefty. And he has been looking into leaving the country and he's looked at Portugal, I think a couple of Latin American countries. You'd never get me to move to Latin America. We've spent too many years fucking around down there to make it for me to feel safe. You know, that something could turn a dime down there and suddenly you're in a shitload of trouble being an American.

Brandi Ocasio (1:24:48)

Because that's another thing, right? What country doesn't hate Americans?

Larry Dome (1:25:03)

Not a whole lot of places, unfortunately. Iceland, but Iceland is another place that's hard to get into. (...) (1:28:31) I don't know where to go. I think if I could somehow figure out how to do it, because we also have friends in New Zealand, I would probably try to get to New Zealand, but that's a long haul. I mean, you're really, you're separating yourself from everything up

here. You're really committing and meaning that you I mean at least there's the internet but You're committing to not seeing a lot of people that you might want to see for very long periods of time

>>At this point, Larry and I get into a side discussion about the safety of planes in America. It's boring, and a little irrelevant, so I will cut it.

Brandi Ocasio (1:30:34)

Everything's so uncertain right now.

Larry Dome (1:30:36)

Yeah, you can't rely on anything. I even get scared of what they might do to Social Security and Medicare.

Brandi Ocasio (1:30:44)

That's a big reason why the shutdown's even happening, because they didn't know what they were gonna do with that. It's just so crazy.

Larry Dome (1:30:52)

And it's just heinous to think that they're still fighting about if they're going to give SNAP money and how quickly it's going to get rolled out. So let's starve a bunch of people for two weeks, four weeks.

Brandi Ocasio (1:31:06)

It's just crazy, because it feels, to me, really obvious that the starvation is a tool to call for civil or martial law, hell, even a civil war, because...why else do you want people hungry and upset, if not to take control of something?

Larry Dome (1:31:24)

Yeah, no, they definitely are going to pull every lever to infuriate the population because it's the only way they're going to be able to maintain, really be able to maintain power. We sort of went down that road. And like I said, to me, it's somewhat of a timing issue. It's like, let's see how it goes. Tuesday, the last election~

>>On November 4th, 2025, 3 days before this interview took place, and the off-year election included gubernatorial and state legislative elections in a handful of states, as well as numerous mayoral races and a sprinkling of other local offices on the ballot. Special elections to the United States Congress took place, as well. At the time of this interview, it showed a major uptick in democratic candidates. Now, we can confidently call the election a blue wave. And we can also confidently say the Democrats have no backbone, given they opened the government once they had public approval. Threw that public approval right out the fucking window.

~was at least a little glimmer of light for the first time since the last election. I was really, really happy with California doing prop 50.

Brandi Ocasio (1:31:51)

Yeah, this wave of elections, I would say is a good sign, tentatively, anyway. There were so many blue flips, like Virginia and New Jersey just both elected their first female governors, Mamdani in New York, of course, like...

Larry Dome (1:32:17)

And they did some damage in some state governments as well.

Brandi Ocasio (1:32:20)

Yeah, I saw a lot of seats flipped.

Larry Dome (1:32:23)

There's a ray of hope that might mean that sticking with a more pacifist approach could work. you know, if, if they, if enough people are willing to let themselves get kicked in the ass and not fight back and video it and just further enrage people who are like, *we got to get rid of them*. So they've been not giving any excuse at all to shut down the elections in 2026, but I just don't know whether it's going to be possible.

Brandi Ocasio (1:32:56)

Yeah, it's a long game, unfortunately. We keep coming back to that.

Larry Dome (1:32:59)

And it's very difficult to decide, to make a decision. So there was a group when I got involved with the (Vietnam) protests called the Weathermen. They were really a very radical, violent leftist group. There was also the Black Panthers, coming from a more civil rights and racial perspective, not caring nearly as much about the war. But a lot of African American kids got drafted because they didn't know how to get out of it, whereas a bunch of white kids did. But those violent groups never got a whole lot of traction. They did do some damage and some of them paid a pretty serious price for it. Some of the Weathermen got run out of the country and were never allowed to let back in. Some of them are still in prison. Same thing with some of the Black Panthers. So it's a really difficult decision to make. I almost feel like if I had any sort of physical capability to buy a couple (1:33:56) AK-47s and just start fucking shooting the shit out of them. They're all gonna kill me, but that's okay. I've had a pretty decent life.

Brandi Ocasio (1:34:03)

Yeah, exactly. It's like the people who have been setting themselves on fire, stuff like that.

Larry Dome (1:34:09)

Yeah, that was a big thing in the Buddhist community in Southeast Asia, Germany, during the Vietnam war. You'd see these films of these people doing it. And it was just, God, it just, it was horrifying to me. I mean, it's an incredible statement, but it's just like, I just can't imagine doing

that. So one of the things the school did was the American Friends Service Committee, which is a more politicized group of the Quakers that go out and do things internationally. They had sent people to monitor what was going on in the Vietnam War. And they would, they were able to get into some war zones, like up in the North and stuff, to see what the napalm bombing was doing and the carpet bombing was doing. And so all these videos came back, well, actually films, there was no such thing as a video back then. But all this film came back, and I can remember, they were starting, they showed us this one (1:35:06) film that was about 45 minutes long about the impact of various types of bombings in Vietnam and showing kids, you know, with blown off limbs, people where the napalm had just eaten chunks of their body away. We're watching this stuff. And I'm in seventh grade at that point. I was kind of like, *well, this looks pretty fucking horrible*. And I was sitting next to one of the English teachers and he passed out.

Brandi Ocasio (1:35:31)

Oh my God! Crazy!

Larry Dome (1:35:34)

My sister Jen and I always talk about that assembly. ... I'm debating on whether they should have done that. They did it with seventh and twelfth grade. They didn't do it with the elementary school kids. But I still was like, maybe the high school kids, but not the seventh and eighth graders. I can still see some of those images.

Larry Dome (1:35:59)

Jane Fonda was part of this group that went up and done the filming. And you know, she's still vilified.

Brandi Ocasio (1:36:03)

Even now were still facing that issue. And it's crazy, too, because, I feel like with the age of the internet, so many people get videos like that every single day, you know? I get those videos every single day. Kids do, too. And I think it created a really unfortunate desensitized environment in America—and for everybody, really—but it's like when you're seeing kids have their heads blown off every day, you're left with this feeling that's like, what *is* serious? What would be worthy of our action, if not this?

Larry Dome (1:36:32)

Or the fact that they won't let any fucking aid in starving these children. It's just horrible. And it's kind of like what happened at 9/11. We had a lot of empathy worldwide and internally for each other over what had happened there. And Bush frittered that away in a matter of nine or 10 months. Because he started the whole thing of invading Iraq. Which was completely made up. And I mean, if they were going to go anywhere, it was going to be Afghanistan, which they had

done. And they were making some progress there, and not just looking for Osama bin Laden, but they were also starting to provide aid and stuff to the population so that the Taliban would lose some of its control. Because the Taliban, unbelievable what they do to women. And then Bush just decides we got to go start a war in Iraq. And it was like, what the actual fuck.(1:37:38) Why would we do that? And it turned into a horrible shit show for the Iraqis. I mean, that's how (a girl who I went to high school with) ended up, and her family ended up in the States. In fact, I don't know if you ever tried to talk to (her older brother) about it, because he remembered some of the shit. And I tried to talk to him once and he would just break down. He couldn't do it.

Brandi Ocasio (1:37:48)

I can't even imagine.

Larry Dome (1:38:02)

But yeah, I mean, I just. I just hope that it's going to fall more on your generation to undo this. Us oldsters will do what we can, but it's going to fall on your generation. so, like I said, figuring out how to organize and organizing here.

Brandi Ocasio (1:38:13)

First step. I think that's really good advice.

Larry Dome (1:38:27)

(...) You must organize locally to have an impact globally. And that is really the truth. Cause the anti-war movement for Vietnam got started locally before it became a real national thing. What a time. I still remember things like that Chicago riots in '68. And it was at the Democratic convention. Everybody was really horrified when they decided they were going to have the most recent convention for the Democrats of Chicago. (1:39:12) But there was a completely different political situation in that city back then. Cause this guy named Daley was like, had been mayor for like, I don't know, 20 years or something. And it was kind of his little fiefdom and he was not a liberal.

Brandi Ocasio (1:39:27)

I guess politics doesn't really change much, huh? Or at least the trends.

Larry Dome (1:39:33)

You know, I used to be pretty cynical but I went through a stretch where I was really hopeful. I never thought I'd see a black president. I never thought I'd see gay marriage. I mean, those things were just, those things were not even something you conjure up in your head. And suddenly there was this black guy running the country. I was in tears. The school set up TVs in about four or five classrooms and we all just sat and watched the inauguration. And I just cried. I couldn't

believe it. I just couldn't believe it. And then everybody hated Obama, particularly the gay community, because he would not come out in favor of gay mayor when he first started. And it was one of those things, carrying the element in a lie. I have so many conversations like this. It's like, I keep saying, I know asking people to look at the long game is hard. They're not getting the rights that they should have. They're not being treated the way they should be. But sometimes you've got to wait it out until people are comfortable with the idea; this is a fucking backwards country. And you really got to wait until people get acclimated to demotion. They didn't get acclimated to Obama. I think that's one of the things that brought the Trumpian error upon us. They just couldn't stand having a Negro on the White House. They just couldn't deal with it. The gay marriage thing was a different thing. It really just suddenly, was like, there had been this fight, there had been lots of ways that people tried to educate other people about the gay community. You know, they weren't after their children and they weren't about converting people. And then, (1:41:26) suddenly the door opened one day and I was like, *Oh my God, what did they just do?* We used to stay in Churro up in the cave. This gay couple had a whole set of prodigies and they had fallen in love back in the 50s and they both worked for a radio, which is this huge sort of military, chemical kind of company. In other words, not a very safe place for gay people. And so they created a life for themselves out in the Cape. But they'd go back and forth going to work during the week and stuff. And then in the winter they would just be at their work. But they wouldn't live together. They lived like two houses down from each other. I can't remember the date. Don never told his mother. (1:42:21) She lived to like 100 or something. But the last time we saw them, Don was 90 and Paul was in his mid 80s. And they were still getting around pretty good. This is, well, 20 years ago, so I'm sure they're gone. But they were lovely people. And I remember when gay marriage got legalized. We went up, we were out there and at that point we had changed where we were staying. But we used to get together for dinner with them and we'd meet up there. We got together for dinner and were like, *So when's the wedding?!* And they looked at us like, we have sunk hundreds of thousand dollars to legally document what is, and what is going to happen to our states and to how it's going to off and who gets medical authority over. He said, *there's no point*. Because they had been together for, when we got to know them, they had already been together for 40 years. (1:43:24) And that was the last time we saw him. I knew these two other guys, Steven and Nick. Just a wonderful couple. Both these six foot somethings, blonde hair. I mean, they look like classic Aryans, but they are so fucking radical. But I remember when Stephen came out and I was walking with his dad (Paul) and his dad said, *You know, I got a letter from Stephen. He came out* and we're walking and Paul was very conservative. And anyway, I turned him on to PFLAG and some other organizations to sort of... And actually, he handled the fact that his son came out gay. He would say hes not *that* gay. Hes not *flaming*. In the meantime, Steven and Nick are up in P-town, you know?

Brandi Ocasio (1:44:20)

Not flaming! I've been to P-Town, I know what happens there.

Larry Dome (1:44:49)

But Paul voted for Trump in 2016 and kind of rubbed Stephen's nose in it. And Stephen's looking at him like, *what the fuck do you think you're doing?* This man would probably like to put us in prison camps, have our testicles cut off or some other horrible thing, but certainly they would like to dissolve our marriage. And Stephen pretty much stopped talking to his father after that. And it's this cultist mentality. (1:45:48) They're either willfully ignorant, stoopid, or they've really drunk the kool-aid, or some combination of all of the above.

Brandi Ocasio (1:45:56)

I think it's a bit of both for sure. That's something that I really, don't know, struggle to accept. I think I had my eyes opened up to it in college and meeting people in the area outside of the college. I went to Bennington college, in the middle of nowhere Vermont, you know? And obviously the campus was very liberal, but outside of that, it was not. And it was something that it was always like~

Larry Dome (1:46:21)

Republican governor, I don't think the Republicans would call him a Republican anymore.

Brandi Ocasio (1:46:24)

Probably wouldn't. But I feel like the idea that some people are a product of their environment it was something that I was always taught, and I knew it to be true because I was taught it. And that's something that I feel like Common Ground really drilled into us. We were told constantly that we were really very lucky to have the education we did. And I think it took me like, leaving and actively meeting people in new areas to know how true that was. Some people just don't have the tools to know how wrong this is, you know?~

>>For some context for this next segment, I met Trey, my partner, while I was in college. Trey is from Cambridge, New York, bumfuck nowhere New York. They have friends back there, of course, and while I was in school, would go out to some house parties or events with the people in this town.

~I would meet people, really try to like them, and like they're friends with Trey who all considered themselves very punk and so I figured political conversations would be on the table, you know? I'd be like, *well, how do you feel about this?* And they'd be like, *well, I love Trump.* And it's like, well, how can you be punk and love Trump?

Larry Dome (1:47:18)

These are two contradictions.

Brandi Ocasio (1:47:22)

It doesn't exist; No, exactly. It doesn't make sense. And you don't even know the difference because you've never had the tools to learn that. I don't know. It's such a complicated issue where I want to meet trumpets with empathy and sympathy, but it's so hard to be... understanding of that.

Larry Dome (1:47:26)

Yeah, man. Charlie Kirk got shot. I was trying not to be gleeful.

Brandi Ocasio (1:47:31)

It was very good, cool. I will admit that. I laughed. Told all my friends.

Larry Dome (1:47:34)

But I'm scared enough that I was not going to put anything online.

Brandi Ocasio (1:47:38)

Yeah, people were losing their jobs over that, it's crazy.

Larry Dome (1:47:42)

Madeline Janover was gone by the time you got (to Common Ground). She was a social studies teacher. She had been a very active union organizer when she was my age, you know, when she was a teenager and her early 20s and 30s and stuff. And I looked like a fucking drill sergeant, so



the kids thought I was some sort of real right wing conservative. And they would go up to Madeline and go, *what's with Donald? Does he have common grannies?* And Madeline goes, *oh, you have no idea. If you only knew.* And Madeline adopted this Chinese kid, Claire. And she used to bring Claire to school. (1:48:34) I got to know her and she got to know a lot of the teachers and stuff. And Claire was at Harvard. She was really, really bright, and right after the election, she had posted something about Black Lives Matter. And basically, she said... I can't remember exactly what it was, but she was like, *I'm going to stab you, I'm going to stab you, I'm going to stab you*, talking about the right wing. (1:49:02) And the backlash that she got, she literally had to go underground. She disappeared for a year. There was a GoFundMe page. I'm so glad Madeline had passed away at that point. Madeline would have been flipping out. But there was a GoFundMe page. So she's kind of lived off of that. She disappeared. She was just

completely gone. I didn't have any idea where she was. But what she did is she left the country. And she just started traveling around the world. I mean she went everywhere and I mean she did things like she'd stop someplace and work for a few weeks, earn some money, and then off she'd

go again, but she traveled everywhere. I mean it was an astounding thing to see. It's how she healed herself.

Larry Dome (1:50:29)

But anyway, that's why it's like, there are times when I really want to cut loose on my notes. But, I'm too well known. You Google my name, the Common Ground stuff comes up. Trumble comes up. The fact that I was on the board of my lake association comes up. It would be so easy to find me.

Brandi Ocasio (1:50:36)

It's the consequences. It's an unbelievably scary time to be alive. But, I think we touched a lot of bases here. I have a lot to reflect on. I have just one more question for you. Okay. It's a very easy one. Are you ready?

Larry Dome (1:50:57)

I'm ready.

Brandi Ocasio (1:51:00)

Do you know that you changed my life?

>>Now, reader, we found ourselves crying again.

Larry Dome (1:51:07)

Yeah, I hope I did. You did a lot. I hope for many people that I changed their lives.

Brandi Ocasio (1:51:15)

You did, for the better. And I love you a lot. I'm really glad that we got to do this. I feel like I learned a lot.

Larry Dome (1:51:23)

And if you want to do, find out more or anything, go deeper with any other thing, let me know.

At the end of the conversation, after I had stopped recording, Larry asked me if I still believed in God.

And I believe that I must; and if God does not exist, I shall will him to, because I can not go on without the promise of hell for some of you.