

World Focus – October 1, 2017

Matthew Hoh

Friends, we're very happy when we see a documentary film going up into the regular movie houses. That's what's happened with the film on *Paying the Price for Peace: The Story of S Brian Willson*. This is produced and directed by Bo Boudart and narrated by Peter Coyote. The associate producer is our dear friend Frank Dorrel. It will be shown in the Awareness Film Festival this year. The film is very special, and reaching a growing audience.

Brian has just written another great book called *Please Don't Thank Me For My Service*. Here's David Hartsough writing about it. "I believe it's the same caliber as Howard Zinn's *People's History of the US*, and shares a truth in story which needs to be heard by people of this and future generations." That's *Please Don't Thank Me For My Service* by the officer who lost both of his legs protesting war in Nicaragua at the Concord Naval Weapons station, where vigils were going on twenty four hours a day to stop the aid to the Contras who were devastating civilian life in that country. So we're proud of this, both the movie and the new book by Brian.

The great awakening continues. It's not only in football, that incredible, historic story that continued to unfold this past week. It's also at our bases. Seven drone protesters were arrested Monday morning at the Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in DeWitt. The Upstate Drone Action protesters blocked the entrance to the base with several large signs and banners, and refused to remove them.

"Officers from the base came out and told us to leave, and when we didn't, we were arrested," Upstate Drone Action founding member Ed Kinane said. "We're trying to make a statement about the war crimes being committed at the air base with drones that kill human beings." The protesters said they placed a "huge dollar sign dripping with blood in the main entrance way to the base. "The six-foot high dollar signs dramatize what the group believes determines the many overseas wars the Pentagon/CIA engages in: Corporate greed," Upstate Drone Action said in a news release announcing the arrests.

We're just very proud of the awakening that is taking place internationally. And friends, I have the good pleasure today of having a return visit from Matthew Hoh. Matthew Hoh is a Senior Fellow at the Center for International Policy and is the former Director of the Afghanistan Study Group, a network of foreign

and public policy experts and professionals advocating for a change in US strategy in Afghanistan. A former State Department official, Matthew resigned in protest from his post in Afghanistan over US strategic policy and goals in Afghanistan in September 2009. Prior to his assignment in Afghanistan, Matthew served in Iraq; first in 2004-5 in Salah ad Din Province with a State Department reconstruction and governance team and then in 2006-7 in Anbar Province as a Marine Corps company commander. When not deployed, Matthew worked on Afghanistan and Iraq policy and operations issues at the Pentagon and State Department from 2002-8. Matthew's writings have appeared in the Atlanta Journal Constitution, Defense News, the Guardian, the Huffington Post, USA Today, the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post. The Council on Foreign Relations has cited Matthew's resignation letter from his post in Afghanistan as an Essential Document. In 2010, Matthew was named the Ridenhour Prize Recipient for Truth Telling. Matthew is a member of the Board of Directors for Council for a Livable World and is an Advisory Board Member for Expose Facts ([exposefacts.org](http://exposefacts.org)). He writes on issues of war, peace and post-traumatic stress disorder recovery at [matthewhoh.com](http://matthewhoh.com).

Welcome, Matthew Hoh.

**Matthew:** Thank you for having me on, Blase.

**Blase:** I'm sorry you were too sick to participate in No War 2017. They were certainly expecting you, but everybody can get sick and it's always a surprise to us. But they got through this weekend, clearly demanding an end to the war system - just as George Washington said he wanted to see happen "more than anything" in his life, the end of the great stupidity of war. Do you have any comments on the conference, as you understand it?

**Matthew:** First I'd just want to refer back to what you said about Brian Willson and the film about him, *Paying Any Price*. I've seen the film; it's an incredible film, and what stood out to me - and I think it's a valuable piece of art and history, a terrific documentary - was that while the title deals a lot about Brian Willson, he's not the sole focus. Brian is a hero to so many of us and such an incredible person who has done so much for so many, given so much. What the film also does - what Frank Dorrel helped do with that film - is tell the story of the peace movement during the 1970s and 80s into the 90s, something that my generation doesn't know much about because we were kids then. So when I was playing guitar or riding bicycles, these men and women were doing incredible work for peace, staging these massive

demonstrations, doing really historic and sacrificial acts on our behalf. We now as adults, here and in other countries, are simply not aware of this great recent history. So the film is a terrific homage to Brian, and deservedly so, but it's also a great history of the peace movement in the 1980s. It really is, and it helps people like myself and those younger than me understand where the peace movement has been and to understand where we need to take it. It's just a valuable, valuable experience to watch and to learn. And it's a great work of filmmaking, done in such a way that if you're completely unaware of the peace movement's activities, it is a riveting film, so well done.

**Blase:** Yes, and we're so happy about it because we have to decide whether we're going to be the "empire" that our forefathers constantly talked about...I was reading the autobiography of Alexander Hamilton recently, a brilliant man who was really George Washington's right hand man, but they did foresee an empire, and I think we have to make a slight change of course to say that we will be a republic, a nation, but we will not be an idol to be worshipped or complain when there is protest, we will not say that our football players are evil and should all be fired...here are people non-violently protesting our air bases on our ball fields, and in the meantime the wars are going with no punishment whatsoever. Now, I think that we must remedy this situation and become a member of the global family. How are we going to do that?

**Matthew:** I think what we need to do, Blase, and I, like you, am so inspired to see what has occurred in the National Football League this week where about 200 players staged non-violent protests against racial oppression and injustice in this country. And I think what we need to do to move forward is - and you mentioned our brothers and sisters up at Hancock Air Base near Syracuse, New York, who were arrested this week for their action - what needs to occur is people need to really realize that the fundamental thing that those NFL players are protesting and what our brothers and sisters in New York were protesting, that militarized police and mass incarceration and the world's largest prison population, which the US has, and the murder by flying robots, the drone assassination program, and the fact that we've killed a million people overseas since 2001 in Muslim countries - we have to realize that those two things are connected, that they are intertwined, that the wars we have here at home are the same wars we have overseas. And we have been in this place and will continue to have a society that seeks violent solutions in order to maintain its wealth and to satisfy its greed, in order to enrich a few people while oppressing so many, we must confront it both at home and abroad. The actions of the football players and the folks up in Hancock from the Catholic Worker and others up there, the actions

of those two groups, as disparate as they may be, young African American men in the prime of their lives, early twenties, incredible athletes, multi-millionaires, while the folks up in Hancock - again, many from the Catholic Worker - tend to be older, not so wealthy, probably not going to be playing a game of football anytime soon- but what they are doing, what they are fighting against, that oppression, that violence, that hate, and what they are trying to achieve, is all united; the same fundamental system of injustice and oppression and violence serves as a foundation for both. We need to make sure that we no longer fight these things separately but fight them together.

**Blase:** Many people might not understand that these players were from across the country. We're talking about members of the Buffalo Bills, the Denver Broncos, the New York Saints, the Miami Dolphins, Cleveland Browns, Philadelphia Eagles, Seattle Seahawks - I'm only mentioning a few. This is awesome. This is historic. This is a statement to the world that we do not have a religion of state, that we do not have religiosity of government, that we do not worship idols. We do not worship flags. We simply have a flag that represents us, but the important concept in this country is We the People, not We the Flag, the flag is a symbol and we are not symbols. We are people who at this time are suffering greatly because we don't have the healthcare or education of civilized countries. We have one of the highest illiteracy rates in the industrialized world, we incarcerate two million people, the highest in the world, we deny food to hungry people - this is all because we buy things with our taxes that we have no say over. Countries like Germany list what the money was spent for. Now, when it comes round for April 15, they ought to say this amount went for cluster bombs, this for napalm, and the largest amount is going for nuclear weapons that are likely to destroy the planet. We are entirely out of our minds. The president is breaking the law when he speaks and threatens millions of people in a country about the size of California. Here he's threatening them and *committing a crime* in front of the whole world. You don't threaten people. It's a crime. It's a part of preparations to initiate a war of aggression, and it has to be dealt with.

We can't allow banks to immorally take homes away from five million people. We can't allow our tax money to be used to bail out the banks that can't even handle the money they've stolen. All of this is waiting to be done while we listen to the president commit crimes. Today is the day we celebrate the life of Stanislav Petrov, who saved the world by refusing an order to allow a nuclear weapon to be fired by the Soviet Union. He saved our lives by saying that is an immoral order, that is an illegal order. And now a film is coming out with Kevin Costner and Matt Damon to celebrate the life of Stanislav Petrov.

We must take our heroes where we can find them. Our people, our troops, cannot obey illegal orders. They are forbidden to. And here we are apt to receive this illegal order, and they must not obey it. We're in a rather critical moment, don't you think?

**Matthew:** We are. And it's wonderful to hear that film is being made, I didn't know. A film about Petrov. It's so great that he's getting the recognition. We are at a critical moment. I think, you know, none of this started with President Trump. It's no coincidence that the Black Lives Matter movement had to occur while we had our first black president. The system of racism and oppression, the system of greed, it feels threatened, and when it feels threatened it reacts, it reacts violently and tries to suppress and oppress. That's what we're seeing right now. And what occurred with the NFL players is that they've been threatened themselves. They realize that just because they play for the premier sports league in the world, and are among the world's greatest athletes, and multi-millionaires, does not exclude them from the wrath of this injustice, oppression and hate. If they step out of line, they will be put back into it - and that's why you saw the president saying what he says to these young men (and there were not many, at that point, who had protested over the last year or two). When the president felt threatened by the actions of a few, he then threatened the many - and they responded. A great thing. And the other thing is that earlier this month Michael Bennett, a professional football player who has been very vocal in his protest and his support for work against racial injustice and oppression, he was a victim of police aggression in Las Vegas not so long ago, this summer back in August. They put a gun to his head and threatened to blow his head off if he moved, all because Michael Bennett was a large black man and in the wrong place at the wrong time. So I think for the professional football players, they are not immune from this system of racism and hatred and greed and violence. And that's why you've seen so many speak out. It is just wonderful to see this movement moving forward.

**Blase:** We see the great work of Bill Moyers. He did a lengthy interview with Dr. Robert Jay Lifton on the Goldwater Rule. And it's a duty to warn if someone might be dangerous to others. And here he is applying it to the president. He says,

“There will not be a book published this fall more urgent, important, or controversial than *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*, the work of 27 psychiatrists, psychologists and mental health experts to assess President Trump’s mental health. They had come together last March at a conference at Yale University to wrestle with two questions. One was on countless minds across

the country: "What's wrong with him?" The second was directed to their own code of ethics: "Does Professional Responsibility Include a Duty to Warn" if they conclude the president to be dangerously unfit?"

Now this is a very high level, professional approach to this problem. Just as we need desperately these wonderful football players, we need those in the professions as well to come out. The lawyers. Make it clear that a threat is a crime, and a threat of aggressive war is a massive crime. All this has to come out now. We can't sustain our nation and continue in the direction we're going.

As we read, North and South Korea want a peace treaty. That's what they want. And we must join them. They've wanted it for a long time. They want the war to be over. And now we're threatening their country as never before. Is there enough interest at this time in that problem?

**Matthew:** I think what we've had this six months with Donald Trump, and particularly this last week or two where he had stood at the United Nations before world leaders and delegations and spoke so casually and yet so forcefully about destroying an entire people, about laying waste to tens of millions of people, without flinching, without any suggestion on his part that there may be something like a soul in him that would resist such an idea. I think that has really struck many people who haven't been struck by how heinous our system has become overall. We have to look at the whole system. If we remove Trump, we still have an awful system in place that's based on racism and oppression and hate. But this system has allowed us to put a man into power who is willing to threaten the deaths of millions and millions of people, with the thousands and thousands of nuclear weapons he has. And he has many people who will do his bidding. That is what is equally terrifying - not only is this man threatening in unlawful ways, as you put it so well, but there are so many others standing behind him who simply look at their feet when he makes these remarks. The fact that we have a man who threatens the death and destruction of millions of people with nuclear weapons. And nobody stands up and says, this is wrong - this is the most alarming thing to me, the fact that we have this man who can carry forward as he pleases without the rise to stop him that needs to be done - but I think that is coming. We can see it in the actions that have occurred, such as the actions of the football players. People are recognizing that we live in a world in which what happens to other people happens to us, that we're tied together. I talk often about how we have our endless wars now, we have these military generals, three of them who are in positions in the White House. Secretary of Defense, National Security Advisor, and the White House

Chief of Staff. All generals, and they view the world through military eyes. So we now have military objectives around the world that are only for the military themselves, so that is what these endless wars have created, strictly military policies that only have military objectives solely for the benefit of the war itself in a continuous cycle. We have to talk about what the consequences of climate change will be because we are enduring those consequences now - and this is what the consequences of endless war are. Overseas we are killing people every day, with our drones and our air strikes, we're supporting other armies that are doing so, or over here where we are letting people die without the care they need or putting them in prison in a massive incarceration system that is just oppressing vast segments of our population. It is all tied together, and I think that the imagery of this man standing at the United Nations, this man Donald Trump threatening - this image holds it all together.

**Blase:** We see the workers getting into it with the demonstrations at the drone base. We see the doctors getting into it with Dr. Robert Jay Lifton warning us that he and his colleagues have a duty to warn that this man is dangerous. And the Lawyers Guild by way of Marjorie Cohn, that the courts have to hold the executive branch accountable for drone strikes. Now this is entirely doable, and this goes back to Marbury v Madison; the court can declare an act of the president unconstitutional and do the same to the congress. It has the power of judicial review, and the lawyers are saying let the Supreme Court get into this and declare that what is being done is illegal. They have that authority, they've used it previously, and it's been with us for over two hundred years. It goes way back to I believe 1803.

So we have a serious legal situation going on in the midst of these threats and rumors of war. It sounds like chapter 24 of the Gospel of Matthew - war and rumors of war, famines and floods in various places, nation shall rise against nation, my God! I want to go out with a sign that reads, the end of the world is near! It's really a serious situation that we find ourselves in at this precise moment. So, on the Korean issue, I wonder if people understand that when you're talking about two nations that are in lock step together, they're sealed at the hip, and you used weapons of mass destruction against the "bad one," you're going to kill everybody in the "good one" too. Does anyone understand that? And that's not even to mention the Chinese and the Japanese. One of our senators, Lindsay Graham, said he didn't care if it killed everyone in South Korea, Japan, China, we have to stop this. I mean - my God. I think we can stop it by another way. So what are your thoughts at this time on the Korean situation?

**Matthew:** You reference Matthew 24 there. I just reread it the other day with the idea that the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, which was an awful experience for the Jews 2000 years ago - the Romans came in and just obliterated Jerusalem. But reading that again for me, my take away was that the corruption that had existed between the Jewish authorities and the Roman Empire and the selling out of the Jewish law and the Jewish God to the Roman Empire, as corrupt and evil as it was as well, and then the second half of that, the corollary to that was that the response to that oppression, to that corruption and violence, that awful system, this unity of a corrupt Jewish religious authority and a corrupt Roman Empire, was a violent rebellion, which resulted in the complete desolation of Jerusalem and the temple. So by trying to save and fix through violence, the Jewish rebels ultimately set the conditions for the destruction of what they were trying to save. It was an important thing for me to read to re-emphasize the need for us, however we go forward, to do it in a non-violent manner, and to do it with the divine spirit that motivates us to fight oppression, to fight against racism and violence. We cannot become those forces ourselves, because it will lead to our own destruction. It's interesting that you reference that, Blase, because I had really just read Matthew 24 a couple of days ago. So it really heartens me to be able to speak about that and to note that what we are going through now is not any different than what other peoples have gone through in history. We can overcome, we have the ability to overcome and to fight these despots, these systems of violence, these injustices. We have the ability to do that, and people have done it before. But we have to remember to do it in a manner that is consistent with the purposes that we are trying to achieve. Otherwise, we become like the very thing we're trying to bring down. It's important for us to remember that. And to keep it foremost in our thoughts as we go forward.

I'm so glad you brought up those provisions in the NDAA that President Obama supported and his utilization of rendition and the kidnapping and assassination of people. Supposedly Obama wouldn't misuse this power. Well, now we have a man who will misuse it, and just recently they reduced the oversight and the regulation surrounding the drone and manned airstrike assassination program. Whereas before people who were assassinated by our drones or aircraft, that had to be approved at the presidential level. Now it can be approved by people many levels down from the president. They have the authority to assassinate people without presidential approval, so we are so far gone from a place of due process and judicial review and so into this military authorized assassination program, these military authorized killings and the mass murder that they involve. It's just another vein or avenue that the system has now used to enable itself to utilize. American military officers can choose to assassinate



people around the world without our political system being involved. It was heinous enough before when the political system was involved with assassinations with complete disregard for judicial process and our constitution and our values and beliefs in life and human rights. But now we have devolved down to where military officers can kill people at will. It really is a very scary place for us to be.

**Blase:** This is classic imperial behavior. Whether people are believers or unbelievers, or people who like Jefferson who looked at it and tried to take every section of the New Testament that he could make sense of and put it down in my thinking. If we do that at this time, it can be very helpful to agnostics, to atheists, to people who call themselves Christians but are frequently an embarrassment to all of us. We can take a look at what is spiritual. The use of the word "world" is a very negative thing in these writings. It refers to greed, to war, to hunger and the evils we see today - so the world is a negative, and the objective is to do the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. We don't have to put heaven in order; we have to work for the world, which is out of order. Then we look at the amazing writing of Paul, and we find that his metaphors are practically all either military or sporting. He constantly uses those terms. I run toward the prize. My entire attention is on the finish line. And the things of this world have to be put down. Dismiss all anxiety. Rejoice and fight. He is constantly using these references as a spiritual warrior. Once again, in Guatemala we were called guerillas of peace. Here he's talking about spiritual warriors and he calls them my companions in work and battle. It's a metaphor for fighting the good fight in peace and non-violence. And then I see in your writings a reference to the peace movement as "divine." Now that's a most interesting phrase for you to use, Matthew.

**Matthew:** I'm not a believer myself. I am an adherent of Jesus, but I'm not a Christian. What I've found over the last years, as I have worked with Veterans for Peace both here in the United States and abroad, and have been a part of delegations from Veterans for Peace that has joined with resistance groups in Okinawa, Japan, in Palestine, in Standing Rock, and of course in action in Charlottesville VA after the violence had occurred there back in August with Iraq Veterans Against the War, which is now called About Face - what I have seen, and what united these resistance groups around the world is something beyond the human experience. What drives them forward and makes them steadfast and unwilling to submit or be coopted by the same forces that are oppressing them, is universal and goes across time - it's something that I could not put my finger on or describe with any other words than the word divine because it was something that was beyond our human experience. It was something supernatural to us as material physical and cultural people. It seemed so in contrast to these people who were fighting

against militarism, against violence, who were seeking to protect human beings, their air and their water, the resources that keep them alive, that will keep their children alive, is this presence that is so antithetical to the forces that they are fighting against. I had to use the word divine to satisfy the description. As these people allow you to walk with them and be in solidarity with them, and for myself, as a white man who served in the US military and was an occupier in Iraq and Afghanistan in pretty senior and effective ways, to allow me to come in and be with them where I am the very prototypical person who has been leading the oppression against them whether they be the Okinawans, the Palestinians, the Native Americans, the African Americans, and to be so welcome and to be made a part of their resistance with no questions asked, that graciousness is something that again is so antithetical to the things they are fighting...it can only come from a place outside of human explanation. So that's why I used the word divine. These people cannot and will not be defeated, and this element of the divine explains why they don't succumb to using violence and why they don't succumb to the forces that are trying to coopt them. They are united across continents, across races and religions, and across time. It has been an incredible experience to participate and to extend solidarity over the last year or so.

**Blase:** Well, I think you say that so well because what ruined religions is a focus on dogmas which are telling people "I know all about God." The only answer is, no you don't, you don't know anything. We haven't even begun to understand. What leads us to fight - Protestant, Catholic, Sunni, Shia, Hindu, Muslim etc - the real guts of the whole thing are what are called the divine fruits of the spirit, which are love and compassion and courage, and engagement with people. We find that in music, I mean just looking at something here - this could be right out of biblical literature, and perhaps it's better than a lot of that writing, Bob Dylan's "Come You Masters of War, you that build all the guns, you that build the death planes, you that hide behind walls, you that hide behind desks, I want you to know that I can see through your masks. Let me ask you one question. Is your money that good? Will it buy you forgiveness? Do you think that it could? I think you will find, when your death takes its toll, all the money you've made will never buy back your soul." Now that is divine.

**Matthew:** Absolutely. And it ties into the importance of the word "worldly" and the material things that the system uses, what people filled with hate and greed use to split us. And by using worldly resources, or worldly privileges, or worldly possessions, we are forced to divide ourselves into have and have nots, to protestants and catholics, black and white, to ensure that me and mine receive more than they and

those. It really is such an important thing to remember and to recall that difference between the spiritual, the divine, the otherworldly, if you will, and the material, the physical. What side are you on?

**Blase:** The president is asking us to take a mode of idol worship, which is common in imperial situations, you look at the divinity of the government and worship the idols of the government to focus on being upset by kneeling before the flag in protest to something higher than that is a spiritual act and should be praised. People going around assassinating others with drones are being praised, and here our football players are being called filthy names insulting their mothers and them because they don't believe in idol worship. We do not worship our flag. The people are an autonomous group that has the power to get rid of a criminal president and to get rid of all criminals in government and to establish a republic, not an empire, and live with the 96 percent of people who do not live in the United States, to live with them in peace, and to understand that we are a planet of colors, we have a lot of colors, I've never met anyone who was completely white who was not dead, so we all have colors, so we can't fight over stupidities, over what are called accidents in philosophy, we must deal with the essentials of peace and justice...and a sense of compassion and of creating what Dr. King called a Beloved Community. It is entirely possible. Sometimes there has been some success in it, and we're extremely happy to see that, we're happy to see people who know that they will never obey an illegal order. And any use of a nuclear weapon is ILLEGAL. *We are not allowed to commit genocide. We are not allowed to engage in aggressive war.*

We should be able to understand all of this and see that as a result of this, as Paul says, peace will be with you - the concept of the coming of the Messiah was peace on earth, goodwill to everyone. Well, where is it? That's what they called for - peace on earth with goodwill to everyone. You can lovingly put someone in to some kind of restraint if they are a psychopathic killer. It can be done with love, not hate. You can create a beloved community, and that is what our goals and objectives are as we stand on the verge of a terrible war.

Another book just coming out here is called *The Great White Hoax: Donald Trump and the Politics of Race and Class in America*, which features Tim Wise, who has written so much on race. He's one of the nation's most prominent anti-racist writers. He wrote *White Like Me, Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*.

So I hope you're not feeling too badly today, and hope you feel better as a result of this discussion!

**Matthew:** Oh yes, I feel better - these last few days I just got hit by this bug. I was in New York when it hit, and the United Nations General Assembly was occurring, and I actually saw Donald Trump drive by; my cousin and I were drinking a cup of coffee on 51st street, and Donald Trump and his motorcade drove by on Thursday. They closed the street off. For anyone who has not seen a presidential motorcade drive by, it is just a massive, massive display of vehicles and 25 or 30 motorcycle cops and tow trucks and ambulances and secret service vehicles and men with rifles and swat teams...it just goes on and on. And you can see Trump waving, just at the height of his personal power, a man who just loves threatening the world with violence.

**Blase:** We're very happy that some of those who are experts on race and have spent much of their lives on race consider this action of the football players as extremely positive. Harry Edwards, a professor at the University of California, puts it well. "Mr. Trump has managed to precipitate something that all of us activists and intellectuals and media types would never have been able to achieve. Through his ignorance, impulsiveness and vindictiveness, he has done more to put our movement on track and move it forward than any other individual in history." Here is someone who has spent his whole life on this problem, and he says, well, Mr. Trump first of all threw the owners under the bus, and forced them to choose between the alt-right and their own players, and they knew that if they didn't stand on the right side of these issues and stand with their players, they signed their last free agent, they probably would have had a great deal of difficulty signing their draft choices, and they'd have tremendous problems in the locker room because of the perception of what the owners stood for who took Mr. Trump's advice. The owners were afraid of the players.

**Matthew:** I also think that many of the owners are close to the players. So all these white owners have a relationship with these young men and their families that many people don't have. And as these young men were so courageously taking a knee, and as they were booed and you heard the filthy awful racist things that were yelled at them - it was clear that none of them actually have relationships with African Americans. So a lot of it came down to this - the owners were not only put on the spot, but I think it became personal to them as well because they know their players and they know that they are good people who share the common presence of humanity that they share as well. So what Trump did with these billionaires, these super rich people who own football teams, that spark of humanity was touched

because Trump forced them to realize that his racist hatred and rhetoric was being directed against people they knew and loved.

**Blase:** Well, Matthew Hoh, we're out of time, and I have been so happy to have you on the show today.

**Matthew:** Thank you, Blase.

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