

Make Me Smart September 2, 2021 transcript

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Kai Ryssdal: Lip smack to get this going. I don't even know what that was. Hey, everybody. Welcome back to Make Me Smart, where we try our very, very best to make today make sense.

Molly Wood: Mouth noises and all. Just so you know, mouth noise is a technical engineering term in the radio business. The noise is almost, the term is almost as upsetting as the noise. I'm Molly Wood. Thanks for joining us. It is, thank you to radio engineers everywhere who have to de-mouth noise the things that we say, thanks for joining us.

Kai Ryssdal: There was a director of the radio show a number of years ago who used to get on me for teeth clicks. And I'm like, that's the way I talk. Shut up. Leave me alone.

Molly Wood: They, they click, what, how do you stop that? How do you even stop that?

Kai Ryssdal: She's like, alright, we have to get rid of that teeth click and I'm like, no, go away.

Molly Wood: They hear everything and I'm so sorry in advance forever and for all eternity for all the weird noises that apparently our mouths make. Alright, we are off the rails already. It's hollowed out shell Thursday. As usual, we are going to do the news. Hopefully by the end, we will be smiling. In case you are wondering about the state of the shell.

Kai Ryssdal: Not good. Pretty, pretty hollow. You want to go?

Molly Wood: Yeah, we, this is one of those episodes where I was like, I'm so hollowed out about what is happening in Texas that I want to dodge it and yet I can't. So what I'm going to say to everyone is, you know, things are bad when I actually tweet about it. And I am talking, by the way, for those of you who are not extremely online, about the furor in America over this Texas abortion law, that effectively outlaws almost all of abortion in that state, deputizes people in the state, and frankly outside of the state anywhere in America, to snitch on clergy members, doctors, clinicians, women, people who talk about having an abortion, and or women who actually have one. And what is notable about it, other than the extremity of it, is that the United States, is that it's patently unconstitutional, according to current law. But the US Supreme Court and the Texas Supreme Court both allowed it to go into effect, which is not how things are usually done in the legal system. If there is a doubt about something being constitutional, the standard procedure is to put it on hold while you figure it out, not let it go into effect so that you have giant lines at abortion clinics, and, you know, women just basically ending up without that

as an option for whatever their reasons are, if they cannot afford to leave the state. And it feels like going back in time.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, yeah. So, so we'll give this a nod, then we'll move on. But we will also say that on Tuesday on our deep dive, we're going to do this story our way, which is to say reproductive rights as an economic story, which it undeniably is, but, but number one, I associate myself with the remarks of my co-host completely. I also command your attention to a different podcast, not this one, although this one's good. But a podcast called Strict Scrutiny, which has an episode out, it dropped last night before the Supreme Court ruled, but it's really good background on what Molly was talking about, about the process and procedure of how this case came to be before the Supreme Court. And they have Steve Vladek from the University of Texas, also Kate Shah from I don't know where she is, at a school in New York. Anyway, it's really good. It's called Strict Scrutiny, and I recommend it highly. And they're just, they're just so many things that are just wild about the way this entire thing has gone down, setting aside for a moment the fact that a constitution, constitutionally protected medical procedure has been abrogated with, without a peep from the Supreme Court. They're just like,

Molly Wood: Without a peep from the organization in charge of upholding the Constitution. Yeah. So everybody who was warned about this?

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, right. Yeah. Well, that's right. Let's call Susan Collins. It's really, the decision itself last night, and the dissents, they're really short. Read them. Totally interesting. But anyway, we might, I thought we couldn't not talk about that just a little bit today. So we did. And there it was, that's what we talked about.

Molly Wood: And we will again because without a doubt, women's rights are economic rights, reproductive rights are economic rights, and it is, it is, it has a profound impact on the economy and people's quality of lives when you have women who are forced to give birth, that is the effect of this law, is to force women to give birth against their will and suffer all of the lifelong economic consequences that come along with that.

Kai Ryssdal: Yep, yep.

Molly Wood: So more to come on Tuesday.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, more to come. Alright, so my other actual news item, and maybe this is me just being pie in the sky. But I saw this headline in the New York Times today about the storms last night in New York City, holy cow, and also the damage it did down on the Gulf Coast. And also, you know, the wildfires out here, blah blah blah. Headline in the New York Times today, one of them anyway, in its live section, and I don't really like the way they do that because it's all bullet sized and pre digested. I hate that. But anyway, yes. In storm's wake, leaders acknowledge need to confront climate change. So number one, duh. Number two, I wonder if much as George Floyd seemed to be at the time, and I think still is a tipping point for the recognition of systemic racism in this economy and the society, and the need to act with some

urgency that we all felt last summer. And hopefully some of us do still feel. I wonder if this storm and the events of this summer and the wildfires and New York City being underwater. I mean, you've seen the pictures is that way, I just kind of wonder if this is going to be the moment everybody says, oh, holy crap. Got to do something. I don't know. Maybe I'm, maybe I'm just being a little pie in the sky. I don't know.

Molly Wood: I mean, I don't think you are completely. I think, I think that George Floyd comparison could be very interesting and or depressing. Cause certainly that was a moment, everybody said, wow, we really have to do something. And then at a systemic level, we didn't, like we all yelled at each other over, like Twitter handles or, you know, lots of things that don't actually add up to systemic change. And then we left a lot of the systems in place. And so hopefully, both that and this will lead to actual sustaining change. But yeah, I mean, it's easy to get pretty dark about climate change. And yet, I mean, there's nothing like a straight up existential threat to prod people into action. So yeah, I hope. I hope that I mean, it certainly has to be, right. It's like, it's now or never. But man, are we not ready for it as evidenced by all of that. Also, and I hate, I hate that this is the case. But the fact that it's happening, you know, here you have in New Orleans and Louisiana, all these people still without power, slow rolling death moving through that state. And now it's like, wait, it happened in New York and Brooklyn and New Jersey. Oh, we're on it.

Kai Ryssdal: I know. I know. I know. Oh, my God, Brooklyn's under water. Yeah, no, I know.

Molly Wood: But hey, maybe now the, you know, the regular old media will be like, dang, this is a pretty big story. Turns out, climate change. I just liked this. This is a little bit pie in the sky too. But I was delighted to see a bunch of billionaires have to pay big tax bills. The executives at the hedge fund, like this is a great story. Wall Street Journal reporting afternoon that executives of hedge fund Renaissance Technologies LLC will personally pay \$7 billion in back taxes, interest and penalties to settle a long running dispute. It includes James Simons, also Robert Mercer who is the billionaire who's behind a bunch of these, he's a big, big, big Trump supporter, and he and his daughter, a bunch of, behind a bunch of really, really conservative media stuff. And also evidently, some tax dodging, and they have had to pay that bill. And it just is like yet another reminder that we actually have all the money that we need in this country if we just enforced our tax laws.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, for sure. Trillions of dollars.

Molly Wood: And maybe didn't spend two trillion dollars on like the 20-year war. But yes, the tax hole. It's a big one. So that was a, that was a pretty good. Just take it with like a shovel analogy. That was a pretty good sized scoop of dirt right there. Yes, and I was, frankly, kind of happy to see it. I also, I'm just so fascinated by Apple planning to digitize driver's licenses and state IDs. So, you know, Apple's got the wallet feature. It's been a long time since I just did some straight up tech, but I feel like it cuz they, you know, you had digital boarding passes, and then like your tickets, and you put in your little while and then you had your credit card and subway tickets. And so now Apple's like, I'm going to digitize driver's license and state IDs. And

this is one of those things that I've been complaining about for years. I'm like, man, the only flaw with the mobile boarding pass situation is your stupid license, which you have to get out of the wallet and I don't know about you but I always get like, stabbed in the cuticle because my credit card hits me when I try to get it out, and then you got to put it back and then that slows up the line. And it's just like, it's a mess. And yet, so I was like, this should be so great, except that everybody's so worried about privacy, and reasonably made the point that like several people on Twitter were saying there's no way, including Eli Patel from The Verge, he's like there is no chance whatsoever that I, if I got pulled over for speeding would hand an officer my phone to take back to his car. Yep, and same with the TSA most likely and it's just like, it's kind of one of those things that probably is a terrible idea even though it's just so, such a great, it would be so great.

Kai Ryssdal: That, that, that, handing the cop your phone thing is a really good insight, cause yeah, I don't want to do that.

Molly Wood: Right, like sure, yeah. Take this back to your car and you know, I'm sure they, I'm sure you wouldn't be able to--and Apple just hasn't been particularly transparent about how they would protect you in that case. And I'm like, but I do wanna scan everything at once.

Kai Ryssdal: Plug it into that little spot. Yeah, it's unlocked so you can plug all that special equipment you have and download my entire life. Thank you, no. Thank you, no.

Molly Wood: I know, and yet I want it and then I you know even if I was like if the government digitize my ID it would be totally fine. No it wouldn't! Ugh. This is why we can't have nice things because everything just gets abused. Yeah, it is as Bridget Bodnar just said in our Slack, a great and terrible idea. The perfect idea for our time.

Kai Ryssdal: Right. Exactly. Exactly. Right. Exactly.

Molly Wood: All right. Make us smile.

Kai Ryssdal: Oh, my god, you've got three make me smiles. You've got three.

Molly Wood: I was, I was trying hard. Well actually, one is to, one is related and what is actually make me smile. Good eye. There's been this video circulating of a little, of just a rat living his best life swimming around in flood waters. And people, the second link is to say that people were like oh, this is from the New York flooding, and it's actually not, evidently it's from the Philippines. But it's also just this little rat swimming along and they set it to Claire de Lune and it's so relaxing to see this like little happy rat and just take a minute and be like, I love it, it's such a beautiful song and this rat is having so much fun, he's not even drowning, he's just loving it, swimming along, go little rat, you are all of us. You are all of us. And then who posted this in the make me smart slack, it was Bridget posting about the McDonald's broken ice cream machine is reportedly being part of an FTC investigation. Like this is consumer harm, people. We need to make a McFlurry, and if that's the case at the federal, great.

Kai Ryssdal: You know when you go to order a t McFlurry, the machine is always down, the Federal Trade Commission, Lina Khan, chairperson is in charge of fixing your McFlurry machine. That's what's gonna be happening. Yeah. Mine is, is musical in nature. I know, how about this. So the picture on, on Twitter today that went along with this story was them in the motion capture shirts and their suits. ABBA is doing a new studio album, first studio album in 40 years, and as part of that is going to do a virtual concert presentation. So they took a picture of them dressed up in in these motion capture suits and they're going to be played like next spring at Wembley in some virtual concert thing. The album drops in November. Virtual concerts in the spring. And look, ABBA is fun music.

Molly Wood: I mean, come on, man.

Kai Ryssdal: Stop. Stop, stop, stop.

Molly Wood: I mean, you really thought you were gonna bring ABBA and there wasn't gonna be singing?

Kai Ryssdal: I knew there was gonna be singing. There was really just the question of which song it was gonna be.

Molly Wood: Oh my god. See? Now we're done. Perfect. Boom. We'll be back tomorrow. I know. It seems like we're already having tequila but we'll be back tomorrow for economics on tap and the YouTube livestream and I do not have kid pickup and there will be bourbon. 3:30pm Pacific, 6:30 Eastern, maybe some ABBA. Keep sending your questions our way, makemesmart@marketplace.org or leave us a voicemail. Our number is 508-827-6278, 508-UB-SMART.

Kai Ryssdal: It's good music. Make Me Smart is produced by Marissa Cabrera. Today's episode was engineered by Juan Carlos Torrado. Marque Greene is writing in our newsletter this week despite all that pumpkin spice stuff in the Slack channel. Yo. You're just lucky you still have a job.

Molly Wood: Not okay with the ranch. Bridget Bodnar is senior producer and the executive director of on demand is Sitara Nieves. I'm not a purist about very many things, but ranch? Ranch dressing is sacred.

Kai Ryssdal: Yes. Don't mess it up. There we go.

Molly Wood: I feel like, by the way, we've never even acknowledged that it's September now.