

This is a transcript of a Zoom chat recorded on 8 July 2023, between Barbara Williams (BW) and Jack Mazingira. We were discussing a recent objection expressed against Jack's [video](#) about the ecosystems tragedy unfolding in his home village. The video had been found to be offensive to someone who regarded it as 'insensitive and racist'. The times relate to the 'audio' track which runs about 1 minute behind the times on the video, because of a silent part early on the zoom, the full zoom recording is available at this [link](#). Particular sections of relevance have been highlighted

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BW Silence. Okay? You look a bit intent and worried.

Jack - Yes, kind of. About the film,

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BW yes, I was just amazed at that. That is really, really interesting. It might just have been the title 'Climate and Population' that was enough to put them off. They might not even have watched the rest of it. But the thing is, with this organization, the Wellbeing Economy Alliance, we are in discussion at the moment. So we're having a zoom on the 17th of July to, you know, they're worried about where I'm coming from. They find my suggestions offensive. And they're trying to accommodate me because they're trying to be inclusive. And I've got some support. So we'll see. We'll speak more about the film. I've got a chap I'm seeing on Monday, the chap who's backing me up, so I'll show him your film and, you know, it's ridiculous really, but hopefully they will see the sense. But I think it's incredibly valuable because it's stirred up a debate. So really worthwhile, all the investment

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Jack - imagine what would have happened if you shared the one contraceptives awareness unless we act, was more flooding, it was more, you know, the impact that has been caused than, you know, so should you share that one, then it could have been more, the reaction would have been more intense than unless we act.

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BW - Well, I don't know. I'm really very, very surprised at that reaction. So, the thing is, I know I have a certain, they do have a certain amount of respect for me, I know that. So I was going to suggest to ask you to be on standby on the 17th in case in case it's helpful to have you actually come and talk to them directly so I'll send you details of when it is if you could just make sure that you're available in case. I won't suggest it in advance because I think they're a bit set up with me. So, and I think things are moving very quickly in terms of awareness. There's a lot going on. So it might be that in a week's time, time they might have changed their position because they're trying to decide what they're aiming for. And I'm part of that discussion that's going on. The 17th is a private chat with me, a Dutch chap who

backs me up, and either a couple of the administrators from the Wellbeing Economy Alliance and then the following day they've got a wider Zoom which is a lot of people talking about what the Wellbeing Economy Alliance represents. So I think they want to make sure that I don't step out of line too much in that in the Zoom that

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the zoom that follows the following day.

Jack - Now are they not happy with you? Are they just concerned about you because you're talking about issues

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consumerism?

BW - Well they just think I'm too radical for them. That's what I normally find. They are a really important organization, because if I can persuade them to be more ambitious with their vision, it's a huge, huge achievement. And so the fact that they're keeping me in the conversation rather than shutting me out is extremely promising. So it's all very civilized at the moment. Well, I'm sure it will stay civilized. And whether or not I shall win through, it's hard to tell. A while back I almost asked you to join because you could... I'm joined up as Poems for Parliament and you could join up as Towards Green Environment because it's an alliance of lots of different organisations. They might be less inclined to let you join because they know of your association with me now, so you're a bit tarnished by being associated with me. So anyway, in some ways I think this is really promising. I think that the film is pretty powerful. It gets a really powerful message across, partly because the climate change is so evident, and also because of your awareness of the population issues. So the two combined make it a very unusual film.

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Jack - I was a bit concerned because I shared it with another group.

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BW - And what happened?

Jack - Did you get that?

BW - You said you shared it with another group?

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Jack - Yeah, I shared with another group through a friend.

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Jack - You remember the lady that I wanted to introduce you to?

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Jack - Her name is Jamaica Stevens, and she's involved in organizing international conferences and all that. She's an American. So when I shared that with her today in the morning, she shared a message with me on WhatsApp, and she was really congratulating me for the same and saying, this is very good. And she's going to share it again with other groups. So I was wondering, like, how offensive could that be? But again, I came to realize because it's the aspect of population that is population suppression that is what is a turn off to so many people.

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BW - Yes, and I think that, like I say, I think they just saw 'climate and population' and thought, oh, we don't want to admit that the two are connected.

Jack - Exactly. I was telling, I was in some panel the other day and I was telling people that you cannot separate the two. It's something that is a bit new to people who are advocating for climate action and environmental conservationists. So when you talk to them about it, I try to tell them you cannot detach population from environmental change. It's one of the serious causes. And it's like the mother causes like that. If it is addressed, then the rest will just fall in line. And the message is being received so well, because at first I used to fear because of culture. You remember I used to tell you that even the meetings you're having with the ladies, you know, we do want to disclose them because you don't know how you're going to be judged and all that. But right now, things are moving swiftly and pretty well. The message has been received across. And when you do an activity here, another group wants you to go to the other side and all that. The same message. And people are getting, you know, to understand the importance of not, you know, siring as many children as they can. Or as it used to be, you know, the normal around here. But I'm worried about the other side of the world, the African nations, that I thought the message could be received very well compared to here. So that really got me concerned. It really got me worried. I didn't have a nice sleep, to be honest. Like people say it's racism. So, you know, that was a very strong point for him, you know.

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BW I know, I know. I'm just astounded. It was not something I anticipated at all. I mean, it was one of the reasons when I started out on this campaign all those years ago that it was so good to get associated with you, with someone on the other side of the world who understood. Although I understood the reason I started my work was because I knew of the, the mind block that we had in the global north about talking about overpopulation. It was very, very challenging to start with because Extinction Rebellion didn't want anything to do

with me and, you know, a lot of environmental groups claiming to be worried about the environment, they absolutely did not want to make that connection with the size of the population. So, they have moved a lot from the situation in 2019 when I first met you, but with your film coming from your side of the world, you talking about your own culture in your own village, how that can be possibly deemed to be racist is really strange.

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Jack - I worked all through again to maybe to get to understand if maybe I used an offensive language against the communities of, you know, color, race, and all that. But it wasn't there, so I was a little worried. I said, you know, whoever said that must be very mean.

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BW - I'm gonna put something in the chat which you might have come across before. The 'Overton Window'. A chap who was in marketing called Overton, and he identified there are social rules. And if you talk about something that is outside of the domain of those social rules, then you, you're stepping outside of this window. And I think the link between climate and population has been outside the discussion, and environment and population. That discussion has been closed down over the years, for decades, because people didn't know how to deal with it. They didn't want to challenge the traditional culture, which is throughout the world about the family unit and how important it is to have children and raise children and nobody wanted to challenge those

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Jack - Again what is the point but again what is the point of not challenging such when all of you are going to perish. What is the point when you're losing everything you know you're preserving culture that is not going to last longer at the expense of not addressing what is going to kill humanity. You know, that is what I don't understand. And that's why it's really going to take time before we realize this massive change, because a lot of people still do not want to speak the truth.

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BW - I love the way that you're putting it. What I'll do is because we're recording this conversation, I will load it into YouTube and send it to the administrators so that, because basically you're putting your case why you've made the film film and you and I have always felt the same that what is the point of bringing children into a world that is collapsing, that they've got no chance of survival. This is where we're coming from, things are only going to get worse and worse and we're not doing anything to alleviate the situation. So I mean, what I'm suggesting is a global birth strike for five years while we try and sort ourselves out in a better way than what we're doing at the moment because we're a complete mess at the moment on every level, financially and we've got our values all wrong.

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Jack - I wish people experience the kind of life that is on this side of the world, then that alone should speak to them and make some serious hard decisions. You know, I read an email on the Degrowthers mail list. Someone was arguing that, you know, I think workmanship, manpower, they want maybe to have children provide for them in the future and such kind of things. But again, to me, that is fine. That used to be okay.

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BW - Oh, that was recent. That was a recent email, wasn't it? Yes. Yes, Mike, Mike, I think. Yes, I remember.

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Jack - So that that used to be fine. And in fact, if you come from this side of the world in Africa, basically, you know, people would have bigger families, such that when it will come a time where there will be farming, then that will be providing labor automatically for them. That is long gone now because one, there are no lands to be cultivated.

BW - Running out of land.

Jack - Yes, everything is collapsing. So what do you need the labour for? Are we really going to perish, all of us, holding on to culture? So we perish with our culture, rather than salvaging the planet first, before other things. I think that is what is most important right now. the planet first before the things. I think that is what is most important right now, whereby we have to salvage first before the things come. You know, culture can wait. You know, comfort can wait. If we really that our problem is overconsumption that comes as a result of, you know, the urge, you know, for comfort, then we can let go of that. If we realize that population, you know, is one of the issues that is resulting into us collapsing and going extinct as humanity, then why not make some hard decisions, you know, and solving the situation, and the rest shall follow. argument based on the past, you know, without considering the future. That's a problem I'm having with people.

BW - You've put it brilliantly, Jack, and yes, I'm tempted to stop the recording here

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because how long... we've been talking about 20 minutes. I think you've put your case really brilliantly. Was there much else that you wanted to chat about? I'm wondering because this would make a nice package for me to send to the Wellbeing Economy Alliance. No, it's okay. You can just end the recording and then maybe you can edit and share. It's fine. Oh, I suppose I could edit it. Yeah. But we could just start the Zoom again, but it takes a little bit to download onto my computer. Okay. Okay. Yeah, so like in Africa for example. Just repeat what you

- *At this point we paused the recording. When Jack later started talking about the gender discrimination in the Luo community, we restarted the recording.*

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Jack – say you don't have children, so your family will sit you down and ask you to remarry or to get another woman who will give you male children. So young people used to be very, very, very, very cruel, very resistant with men. The question they used to ask is fine, how do you expect me to keep my lineage going if you're not going to allow me to have children? I don't think I can subscribe to your kind of theory, I don't want to do that. But that is something that is very open. Like in my community, there is a man who has only daughters and his is punished for that. I think we can do a story around that. And he's been denied everything from his family, land, he can't get anything.

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BW - Oh, because he's only got daughters?

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Jack - He's only got daughters. Number two, I have another woman who reached out to me, she lost her husband, I think two two years ago, and the extended family have come out very violent with her. You know, they're trying to reclaim everything, because she only have female children, about five of them, she doesn't have a male one. So, she's losing everything because of that. **So, it's culture, and that's why I was asking, are we going to hold to culture at the expense of the planet, you know? We can make hard decisions now and salvage the situation and then the rest can follow. Culture is not that important than life itself. Life is more important than culture. Okay, actually it's life that informs culture. Culture does not inform life, you know.** So, this is kind of information will go well in the global north. You know, it won't force this system, because here in the global south, we know that white people, we call them wazungos, we know that white people are known to be having very small families. And from our side, President Obama, he has a lineage of the low community that is known to be giving birth to very many children, you know, building very big families. And we used to say that if President Obama, the guy who was the most powerful on earth after God, you know, can only manage to have a very small family of two females, you know, and is not worried about his land. What about us who own nothing? You have nothing. You're just giving, you're gambling, you know, with the lives of these children because there used to be a narrative that, you know, I need to give birth to maybe about 10. Out of those 10, I can, at the end of the day, I can maybe end up finding two that would be very helpful, you know. So, you're gambling with the lives of, you know, these children. So, we used to say, like, if President Obama can have two children, and to make it even worse, they are females, you know? He is not worried about the gender of the children that he is serving. What about us? We can follow suit. This is one of us. He is one of our own, you know? Yes. *(Note that Barak Obama was from the Luo tribe in Kenya as is Jack)*

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Jack - A brother from our culture.

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Jack - Yes. A little father (*meaning the father of a small family*). Why can't we follow that, you know? Yes. So, I was really worried because the white people have always been known to have very small children, you know, not very many.

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BW - Small families.

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Jack - Yes. So us, we used to be, we used to having very many big families, like whereby you find one man is married to about 10, 15 women, you know, a big family. There was one from the Luhu community, he used to be called a Kukudanja. The guy married over 100 plus women and he has a very big family. He has children that he doesn't even know their names. You know. Yes. So I was expecting that this kind of information would be received well in the global north, you know, at the expense of the global south, you know. So that is what really got me worried and really got the concern. But this is something serious that we must talk about it. We're not going to relent because of a few people that do not want to face the truth. You know, this is the truth of a population as one of the serious problems as far as the issues of environmental change is concerned. So we must talk about it. We must address it. It is the truth.

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BW - Very well said. You put it better than I do. Thank you. I'm so impressed with you, Jack. And yes, you cheered me up. No end. And I'm sure this recording will be very useful. I'll pause it again. OK.

*We resumed when Jack started sharing his experience of participating in an online course run by Oxford University. 'The Oxford School for Climate'. Jack puts a case against all the emissions that are wasted on the international COP events, arguing that these conversations could be carried out virtually. He also points out how the 'recognised' climate activists from the global South use their activism as a means to earn a living, and live 'big' own a car etc.*

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Jack - Yes, the Oxford School of climate, when I asked them about, you know, the politics around climate crisis because these conferences that people are attending last semester, about 185 grams of CO<sub>2</sub>, you know, per kilometer.

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Okay.

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And I was trying to imagine how many emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>, you know, are put out there in the atmosphere when world leaders, politicians, whoever attend these conferences annually. So to my thinking, it was like we are a meeting to go and discuss about emissions. It doesn't make sense to me. So I was asking that, OK, if that is the thing and this conference is very important that we must attend it, why can't we embrace technology and we do them virtually? It will save on the money, it will save on the emissions that it will take. Because if you look at the amount of money that is being spent during that time, it's a lot. And they could not answer that. They could not answer that. They could not answer that. They could not, you know, tell me why that needs to be done, you know. Look at COP28 that is coming. Who is going to be in charge? The guy who has been in charge of the oil business and all of that, we expect him to do something. He was in Kenya, I think a few weeks ago, and people are rushing to attend and people don't want to ask questions. It is not that his business is doing away with his business. It's actually, he's increasing the business. And this is the person that we're trusting to go and and solve such kind of problems. It doesn't make sense to me what is happening unless there is something that the politicians and the world leaders are not telling us, you know, behind this crisis. Unless there's something that is being hidden, you know, because they really need to stop speaking and act. There's no way you're going to travel, you know, increase the carbon emissions, and then you're going there to discuss about the missions itself. It doesn't make sense, you know, even a child you can explain that to a child convincing. Usually ask about about such kind of, you know. They keep giving people hopes. So, people are leaving, knowing that it is not as bad as it is being, you know, said. You know, finding the first business and all that. So, you don't expect much from the media that's why I encourage you. They don't watch news I don't watch news I lost (*trust*). I lost that I want to commit to a state of sort of that. Yes, so that is the thing. Something is not adding up, and people are not being truthful. And I asked the same again about my last my first semester class, and I asked my lecturer, Dr Chambody, and he became very honest with me, and he told me that he has a friend who always ensures that he attends these international conferences because the allowances are very big. The allowances are very big because he'll be given allowances for attending. He'll be given allowances for accommodation that amounts to maybe about a million Kenyan money and then what he'll do, he has friends overseas, and then he'll talk to friends, and they will accommodate him and then he pockets the money. So I came also to realize it's about business again. There are people doing business and making a lot of money out of these conferences, and that's why they won't allow these things to be held the other way, you know. So it's really worrying me. It's really worrying me. Number three, it's also about the so-called activists, especially the ones that are coming from the global south, that have made it, you know, out there to be known as activists, the media following them, you know, they meet world leaders, they meet all that. If you see the kind of lifestyle that they are living



down here, then you get worried. Because they're driving big cars, you know, gutless. Okay, they're living large. You know, their consumption is quite high. Okay, so they're doing nothing. Rather, they're taking that as a career. You know, so I don't seem to understand how things, you know, are working around that. I really don't understand about that. So those are my major concerns as far as these issues are concerned. My major concerns. I really get concerned about that. Yes.

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BW - Oh yes. It's all pigs with their noses in the trough, I'm afraid. trade, people making money out of the climate crisis. There was a chap called Bill McKibben, have you ever come across him? A journalist who exposed, I'll put it in the chat, Bill McKibben. I went to London to listen to him give a talk and he was so smug. He'd earned a very rich living from writing books about the corruption in the oil industry and he had no sensible suggestions as to how we should actually... he didn't recognize the need for degrowth. But he has now changed his tune. He's recently put an article in the New Yorker, which is specifically about degrowth. So that tells me that .. Because the USA are very much behind behind the curve in understanding what the problems are So the fact that someone as rich as Bill McKibben who's made a career out of climate change has finally begun to realize that we are the problem is quite promising in my eyes. So yeah, certainly you can't blame the activists who are making money out of it, not from the global South, because they're being told stories by the white people who sponsor them I'm afraid

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Jack - why do governments especially the global North you know allows the use of contraceptives? Why was it invented in the first place why why is it still in place why is it still there? It is to curb population that is the truth it has no other use that is the use yes. So if it is a bad thing then the government should start coming out by banning it you know; and getting rid of it in health facilities and issuing stern warnings to people don't use this you know why is it in place? why is it there? Yes, those are some hard questions that we really needed to ask. You know, there are people who have been going around, bloggers, social media and all that, poisoning the minds of people, you know. There's nothing wrong, there's nothing wrong with having children, but you need to do it responsibly, you know what I tell people from this side of the world, because I need to keep it as simple as I can. And I try to use the aspect of poverty to bring that message home. You ask people, like you ask them, like in one of the trainings, you get to get to understand, I was asking them that if you're a family of five people, okay? What amount of food do you consume in a day? And they tell me a lot, a lot, you know, you need to use about five packets of, or three packets of meat flour, you know, you're cooking oil, you know, a lot of food, you know. And then I'm asking them, okay, then if you're only two of you, if you only two, or if you only a family of maybe four people, where a husband, a wife and two children, what will you consume. What are you consuming, they admit less. And that will mean you'll be working less. extraction of

resources. Okay. And that will mean we'll give an environment a breather. So that is how these things are tied.

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Jack - You know, and people get it in the sense,

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Jack - if you have a bigger family, there's need for a large amount of food consumption. That will mean a lot of work. That will mean environmental stress. Okay. stress. Okay, you bring that to the environmental state, a lot of, you know, resource extraction will mean emissions will be more production more production will be more emissions, you know. So you need to ask them such hard questions, why are we still have that? Why is it still there? If it is a bad thing, then we need to get rid of all that at once. So people really need to come back to their senses and stop calling a spade a big spoon. People don't understand. So we have been lied to, we have been lied to. And this thing. Also, I don't like this aspect of humanity, always being on top of the pyramid. You know, and other forms of life, which is not the case. You know, yes, so we need to speak the truth, ask them the ones who are telling you what to put you off. Ask them why that is still existing. health facilities to go away with all that if it is a bad thing.

BW - That's a very good point Jack.

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BW -Oh wow. Oh wow. Anyway it has been fascinating as usual talking to you. I'll pause again.