

## The Twitter Tax Break: How AOC-West Sold Out SOMA

### TRANSCRIPT

Title Intro: This is Sad Francisco

Toshio: Welcome to Sad Francisco where Bernie Sanders' top California ally gave Twitter a multi-million dollar tax break so Elon Musk's current nightmare could gentrify one of the last remaining refuges for Black people in the city, allowing white nation techies move into new luxury condos that, ten years later, are nearly empty. I am Toshio Meronek, I am a journalist who has reported for Truthout, Al Jazeera, and The Nation, and I also have a book coming out in March. It's called Miss Major Speaks, it will be out on Verso in March, and it's in a collaboration with Black trans revolutionary Miss Major Griffin-Gracy. You can preorder it now anywhere you can buy a book. I'm honored to welcome back to the show someone who has, I checked, has more than 10 times the amount of Twitter followers as me, Jemma DeCristo.

Jemma: All 10 of them. Hello and thank you for having me. I am Jemma DeCristo, my instruction is to write a 2-sentence short bio. Um, I'm just going to say that I'll start this episode the way I end it. I'm going to encourage people to squat all of the vacant buildings that are littering our cities, condos, and office spaces. Not to jump ahead.

Toshio: No. If you look up on any given night, you are going to see lots of lights out, although, I have heard that the landlords are kind of getting wise to the fact that cities and counties, like the power utilities are actually measuring whether or not a place like that is empty, you know, using whether or not the gas or the electricity in a place has been turned on. Just as an aside, so now that we have the technology to with the click of a button across the world.

Jemma: Yeah, smart houses, yeah.

Toshio: Yeah, on the electricity, and make it seem like we're home, maybe we'll have more lights on in empty homes.

Jemma: That, and I also think that people having Postmates to do it.

Toshio: Oh yeah! Mhmmm. Task Rabbit.

Jemma: I guess it's 'cause you could turn on the lights, leave them on for a day, and have them come back. And it's... I don't want to give people ideas. If you're listening to this podcast, hopefully you're not...

Toshio: All of the landlords, shout out.

Jemma: ...one of those people. Hopefully no landlords are listening to this podcast. Whatever is the opposite of a shoutout to landlords.

Toshio: Right. A call-in. So, today we're calling in Jane Kim, who locally maybe the name is known. We're also calling in Elon Musk, who...

Jemma: Cache.

Toshio: ...is somewhere here in the city. I can't say where, I know that he...

Jemma: I don't know if he lives here. I guess the performances make you think he lives here. Carrying the sink and things, yeah.

Toshio: He brought that sink into the Twitter HQ in San Francisco on his first day as CEO. I know that he pledged to pull a bunch of online hackers in the early weeks. It's only been like 5 weeks since he took over twitter HQ. Have you been by the Twitter building recently?

Jemma: When you watched my lovely dog. It was a little Corgi.

Toshio: Ollie.

Jemma: Ollie, Yeah. We love her here, this is an Ollie Stan Podcast.

Toshio: Mhmmm.

Jemma: When I walked her, when I brought her over to your house, I did notice that you know the building looked pretty vacant. You could see the little, what do you call that, like an electric sign? That I'm sure there's a term for that.

Toshio: A marquee?

Jemma: Yeah I guess, like a moving marquee, that famously was like, "Oooh Boo Elon Musk." I saw that, it was... The flame was out. There was no oil in the lamps.

Toshio: Awww

Jemma: Yeah. Which I, you know, of course, "Boo Elon Musk" but I don't know why they had no problem with the horrible white millionaire billionaires that owned Twitter.

Toshio: Jack. Yeah.

Jemma: Jack, and everyone else, they're all horrible.

Toshio: Mhmmm. Yeah. I don't know either. Why are we piling on Elon? I mean, he's pretty loath-able.

Jemma: It's low-hanging fruit. Which is good, you know.

Toshio: It's true.

Jemma: Yeah, but all of them are horrible. It's just something like what we'll talk a little bit about today is the entity. The behemoth, the force of Twitter, but of course that can kind of stand in as a placeholder for a lot of tech companies and what they've done to San Francisco and the Bay Area.

Toshio: Right, because today we're not just talking about Twitter. We are talking about about a bunch of other companies with names that are not derivative of any famous...

Jemma: Household names.

Toshio: They're the kind of thing that you enter into a website that spits out tech company names. So we're gonna be talking about Twitter, but we'll also be talking about Zeusk, we'll talk about Zen Desk, we'll talk about Yammer, we'll talk about 21 Tech. I don't know if any of these names ring any bells with you?

Jemma: They don't, but I'd also like to call, what's the one with the giant tower... I almost said Square Space. But Salesforce.

Toshio: Oh yeah, mhmmm.

Jemma: I'd like to call Salesforce into the room.

Toshio. Yeah. Absolutely. They are apart of this story as well, as well as Marc Benioff, who is the founder of Salesforce and went to the same Hawaiian... He was a white dude born in Hawaii. He went to the same high school as someone else I know, it's this private high school, that graduates 15 people each year.

Jemma: Wow. See, I thought you were going a different way, because we brought up Elon Musk, I thought you were going to say, "he went to the same school of white settler man in colonized country because of course Hawaii is also occupied by the U.S., very similar to the way that South Africa is occupied by the wars and the British.

Toshio: (laughing) No I mean I'm sure.

Jemma: There's an absolute parallel, too.

Toshio: There's absolutely a parallel because they both benefitted from colonizers, whether it is the islands of Hawaii or South Africa. And as we record this, it is still 2022, people are still mourning Twitter since Nepo Baby and diamond mine heir Elon Musk, and a couple of group of friends like the notable incel investor, Jason Kalakanis. This is the one name I didn't look up.

Jemma: It's Greek. It's OK, I'm sure it happens to him a lot. I don't think he'll take offense.

Toshio: I mean, I would assume not many people think about this guy. Because he just doesn't have whatever it is, that je ne sais quoi that Elon Musk has. Jason Kalakanis sold a bunch of blogs to America Online years ago, and that's how he created his fortune.

Jemma: Wow, creative. That's great.

Toshio: He's one of the many Elon Musks. I think the story is being told that he is the one that singularly purchased this monstrosity that's called Twitter, but it didn't happen without a bunch of other friends from luminary companies like AOL, also Jason was the founder of a bunch of blogs, including the blog Joystiq with a Q. But yeah, Twitter is still on a tear, still banning accounts like Eli Lily, Miss Chiquita, The Queen of Fruit. People are still boycotting. They're leaving, they're returning to the platform, they're writing, they're deleting Substack memorandums about how Twitter's over and it's back. So, while Twitter is still burning and will be for the foreseeable future, what better than time than now but to remind listeners about how politicians are not to be trusted regardless of whether they are voted Hottest Korean American in California politics?

Jemma: Which is a distinction neither of us have.

Toshio: Not yet.

Jemma: Mostly not being Koreans and not politicians, has kept us out of the running from that. But it's a noteworthy award.

Toshio: Sure, I bet I could maybe pass for Korean? Certainly I pass as a Japanese native until I open my fat mouth. So today, the name we're going to be talking about today is Jane Kim, who had the look.

Jemma: She has the look.

Toshio: She has the generational wealth hailing from New York City and she also had the willingness to dye, what was at the time, her blue hair back to black. And I feel...

Jemma: Took the pronouns out of the bio. No more blue hair.

Toshio: (laughs) Exactly. As a result, I think was the level we're dealing with as far as politicians who are signaling how far they are going to go to support the will of the people who voted her in, and who she represented, during her time.

Jemma: And maybe before we... because we glossed over the Prettiest Korean American award, I think and also the New York vibe. I think she is also a pre AOC.

Toshio: I would agree.

Jemma: Because she kinda seems to come from nowhere, for people who are not from San Francisco listening to this. She's very much a made-in-a-lab kind of WOC Democracy party funded kind of invention. A generic kind of cosmopolitan. Not so much realness as AOC pretends to have.

Toshio: Yeah, not as much...

Toshio: Maybe if she had been more active on Twitter like AOC, we would know a little bit more about her because of what kind of amounts to journalism in today's world is "so-and-so said this on Twitter." Jane has never been that active on Twitter, even though Twitter owes its existence, basically to her in some ways, because what Jane J. Kim did as a city supervisor. That's like a politician below the Mayor that represents a neighborhood in San Francisco. Jane sold out the residents of the area that she was supervisor for, in the very middle of the city, to Twitter and these other tech companies we'll get into. She did it all to move on to become Mayor, which was a fate that... I don't know if the city would be better off if Jane was Mayor vs. London. But she did not win.

Jemma: It was not in the fates.

Toshio: It was not in the fates, it was not in the tarot, and it won't be in the local mythology going forward.

Jemma: I don't think there'll be much local mythology for her. I think we're. Another way to say what we're going to be talking about today is Jane Kim's legacy, I think, because there really isn't a lot. And also, for context too, right, she also came in as this time like Ethnic Studies, really, like, socialist-y kind of, you know, the product of a "progressive education." Not, again, very similar to AOC.

Toshio: But she didn't garner the same, maybe because it's San Francisco. Maybe just because AOC is in New York where so much more media is based. I'm not really sure. Because they are similar in so many ways, and Jane just wasn't able to ride it out to the heights of an AOC.

Jemma: Yeah, and I think that maybe this will probably be someone's terrible Ethnic Studies conference pay for that, and ASA, but I don't know that there is this sort of realness

performance reservoir, for her being Korean as there is for AOC from being Latinx. Or is she Puerto Rican or Dominican, what is she?

Toshio: I know that she lived in the same town as Mariah Carey. Mariah Carey.

Jemma: Is she everyone? I don't know.

Toshio: Mariah Carey in Connecticut.

Jemma: Right. Right. Yeah. So I was saying, I think maybe there was less, I don't know the extent that we have, background on the handlers that invented both of these people, but they must have been asleep at the switch a little bit with Jane Kim and maybe just didn't quite...

Toshio: Well, I did work for one of those handlers. I call him The Senator in these parts. Enrique Pierce, didn't think his name would be coming up so early on the lifetime of this podcast, but political consultant who I briefly worked for before he was...

Jemma: He was charged...

Toshio: Yeah, I guess he was charged, he worked for the mayor, he worked on the mayor's campaign, he worked on Jane Kim's campaign. He was the one to ask her to please dye her hair back to black and he was her roommate for some time. But Enrique Pierce ended up being on the cover of one of the local papers because he was involved... He was the victim of an FBI sting around child porn. Well, that's all I'll say about him for now, but in any case, he had his fingers a little in allotted pies, he has his fingers in Jane's own pie as well.

Jemma: Which we mean as a metaphor and not as a...

Toshio: (laughs) Jesus Christ...

Jemma: Lewd...

Toshio: Yeah, that's horrible. No, this guy is a gay and who had gotten married at the Asian Art Museum shortly after he was released.

Jemma: I like that he... he's gay. He's gay.

Toshio: I know, he's gay, he's a full-on gay.

Jemma: Don't worry about it, we never intended any misogyny.

Toshio: I know, he would never. Some of them... You know, gay people are probably among the most misogynist...

Jemma: Right, right.

Toshio: people, if you're gonna like talk about like, demographically.

Jemma: If you're in a fantasy misogyny league and you're drafting teams, don't sleep on the gay men.

Toshio: You want to...

Jemma: Some of them are worthy of a first-round pick. Now we're getting into sports, like we're at High Tops.

Toshio: (laughs) We are, OK. Welcome to our very own franchise

Jemma: Our fantasy football draft. Now back to Jane kim. In the invention of her, the legacy, the Twitter tax break... what happened, why did she rise and fall, and how did Twitter rise and fall?

Toshio: Thank you. Yeah, no, that's actually a good way to summarize it. In 2011, she had just recently graduated from, she was at Berkeley, and she was at Stanford prior to that. Again, hailed from New York where she went to prep school. In 2011, however, it could have really been any year in recent history because the story is like so many stories. But travel back to 2011 with me and imagine, you're in San Francisco, and maybe you're a real estate developer who's looking for somewhere to redevelop in this small city of our 7x7 mile square. Maybe you're a tech CEO who is looking for a new way to avoid paying taxes...

Jemma: A bright-eyed kid looking to avoid paying taxes.

Toshio: Sure, sure, as many tech CEOs want to do, they were eyeing this capital of Silicon Valley as some would call it, "Capital North" of Silicon Valley, enter the central area of San Francisco, which is branded by the redevelopers as "Mid-market" around this time. And also enter Jane Kim, who is the political supervisor for this area. Back in 2011, Twitter was exploring a move to Brisbane, not Australia. It's a small town just south of the city. Basically, it exists for no other reason than to offer a tax haven to companies that don't want to pay certain taxes such as payroll taxes, which San Francisco does have...

Jemma: Does have...

Toshio: ... some sort of tax. A lot of these companies love to threaten to move because they're eyeing tax breaks. A funny thing... it's not funny actually, at all, but they end up paying no taxes regardless, I mean so many of their subsidiaries are like pieces of the company are portioned out in such a way that they are all based in tax havens, whether it's Delaware, Ireland, which part of Twitter was based in and paid taxes in for quite a while. It's some Pacific Island that we may not know the name of. San Francisco needed its own little patch of a haven that was

tax-free and so Mid-Market was it in 2011. So instead of moving to Brisbane, which I mean, let's be honest, they wanted to keep attracting the tech crowd...

Jemma: ...the youthful...

Toshio: The 30-and-under techies, like Brisbane is not there on the list of places you wanna... you wanna see before you die.

Jemma: You wanna have your drunken party busts, which people may remember, if you were outside are area from The Last Black Man in San Francisco.

Toshio: Mhmmm... the cable car.

Jemma: The party cable car...

Toshio: Right, exactly.

Jemma: I also think it had to do with, which we'll maybe talk about too, I think the first dotcom boom had a significant impact here in terms of real estate and other things. But there was very much this kind of political animus toward San Francisco amongst tech people. Like it still hasn't been completely cracked or broken or penetrated.

Toshio: Yeah.

Jemma: Which, I'm sure would be the way they look at it. By kind of more market, right-wing ideas right. Because not unlike maybe some other cities that have kind of a... it still had culture.

Toshio: I actually had an itch to do an episode revisiting what happened to some of the early Nay-or-do-wells in the tech industry who were decrying the fact that San Francisco had this culture and it wasn't New York, you know, it wasn't SoHo. SOMA wasn't SoHo, basically. By that, I mean, it wasn't completely gentrified and it wasn't like anywhere USA.

Jemma: Yeah, there was also, there is such a consistent collective and collectives of I guess energy of political resistance to gentrification and speculation here, moreso, we will shit on New York in other cases on this, too, that there is in New York. I think New York is a much more free-marketeer's paradise right. It's much more, development tends to go on much more unchecked. Here, there was always, even in the '80s, there was fears that one of the SF papers would say Manhattanization. There was always this sense that San Francisco wouldn't give up, quite become that kind of city, even though that's what the capitalists would love.

Toshio: So that's what they half-heartedly did in Mid-Market. I guess the one thing I would say, sorry to go back to New York, you have public housing. Which...

Jemma: That's what's working for it.



Toshio: But other than that, I think you're right.

Jemma: I think you're right, that there's a long history of building public housing, beyond just the 1940s.

Toshio: And that's like the one thing that they might have on us in terms of the tenant organizing movement. I would say that LA has been upping the anti a bit with their work down there, like around downtown, just because the city is just so... Just been like a Draconian situation of cops being ordered to sweep people all around, like Central LA.

Jemma: Which, again, as a parallel to the context we are about to talk about...

Toshio: Yeah.

Jemma: ...The use of removing houseless folks, the permanent "To make the business district."

Toshio: Right, because that's what this is all about, basically. The area that we're speaking about is very central within SF on the main drag of San Francisco people may know as Market Street. It became this tax haven thanks to Jane Kim and her friends at City Hall were able to broker a deal with the CEOs at places like Twitter to allow companies like Twitter to remain in San Francisco, that was how it was couched at the time. And the end saved these million dollar companies, they saved them about \$71million in tax breaks. Which, I mean, what is money? But it was...

Jemma: What is money?

Toshio: It certainly could have housed a lot of people during that time.

Jemma: Right.

Toshio: But who... who was Jane Kim, and I think you're right, and she's a footnote, kind of like the thing she will be remembered for is this tax break that she brokered for these billionaires. She had done all these things on her way up the political ladder, she moved through the world with this Pan-Asian vibe which worked for San Francisco. Liberals, she ordered a helicopter with one of the other supervisors, I remember, one day, on her way to Burning Man, just to show her

Jemma: Innovation for the people.

Toshio: Yeah, so she was a kind of Burning Man ally. It's actually kind of the way, if I was ever to go to Burning Man, which I'm not planning it, but helicopter in and out in a day, seems like the only way to do it.

Jemma: I don't know if that has enough CO2 emissions for me, I think I have to go private jet, because if I'm gonna...

Toshio: You're gonna go Taylor Swift and Jay Z.

Jemma: ...play Indigenous and roofie people, then I'm going CO2... I was saying Taylor Swift, going the private jet. That's what Burning Man is all about.

Toshio: Get to it in under an hour.

Jemma: Yeah... So yeah, helicopter doesn't do it for me.

Toshio: Well... I'll take the helicopter, you can take the PJ.

Jemma: We'll see who gets there faster.

Toshio: You know, she had been on the school board, she made her way onto the supervisors board in the city, the board of supervisors. No one calls it the supervisors' board. But after a failed campaign, she did become Bernie Sanders' #1 face in California during his 2020 presidential campaign. As far as things that she did here, this is what she's going to be remembered for.

Jemma: Absolutely.

Toshio: This is... there are some other things that will be less remarkable probably to people outside of the city, but...

Jemma: Outside the city, the fence, the McCoppin hub fence, which still stands to this day. May become the Defensive Architecture fence.

Toshio: Right, picture, some park benches and some flowers and picture it being a public park and public using that park.

Jemma: I'm picturing it.

Toshio: She took what is a 250 sq feet, a tiny park, she put a tiny fence around it because...

Jemma: There were homeless people sitting there.

Toshio: They were sitting on the benches.

Jemma: Which is the worst thing you can do to a bench, in our current society. Is sit on it.

Toshio: That's why we can't have benches in this city, honestly.

Jemma: Yeah.

Toshio: But yeah, she was one of the people behind the charge to remove benches from San Francisco, including the, I don't know if you would call them benches, but certainly they were seats. Do you remember on Market Street somewhere they had the chess tables?

Jemma: Right, and then they replaced them with ugly art installations.

Toshio: That's correct. Yeah. That's correct.

Jemma: Which is... a lot of public art is defensive architecture.

Toshio: Mhmmm. Absolutely. So there was this area where people would play chess that was removed because it was too close to these tech companies that were moving in. I believed they moved it to Yerba Buena Park, that whatever urban community formed around the people that were playing chess. That kind of died. Those people are nowhere to be found at Yerba Buena Park these days.

Jemma: Yeah. And for McCoppin Hub, which she put the fencing around, I walked by recently with my partner and its basically... she basically turned it into a trashcan. Because it just sectioned it off so no one could use it, So people just throw trash in there. Which is a really apt representation of what it kind of did to public space. It's not even, like, yeah, a representation. It just is.

Toshio: Some company that makes fences.

Jemma: The sponsorship. This podcast is sponsored...

Toshio: Yeah, I mean. Some Hurricane Fence company.

Jemma: By JJ's Fence & Pull.

Toshio: At first it was just the Hurricane Fences, just the fences. And then they became the real intense steel fences that have more foreboding, "Don't Enter."

Jemma: I wonder... also wouldn't the smartest... This is like a Nathan For You, wouldn't the smartest fence company be a company that just does panoptic fences like art murals or other things that like make people ashamed to enter a space.

Toshio: I love that.

Jemma: Because so many things aren't a fence that are. You know, a lot of what we talk about on this podcast is the humanized objects that displace and attack us moreso than the

conventionally speaking hostile ones. So the difference between techies or Jane Kim even for that matter, and kind of that AOC, you know politician versus the faceless politician in the suit, the cackling real estate developer as opposed the fun, "I'm just like one of you" real estate develop... I'm fascinated, I don't want to give any ideas away to our frenemies.

Toshio: I know. We're working on it.

Jemma: The fence industry has gotten wind of what artists have been doing for the last like...

Toshio: I mean, it's really true, because what was so striking about this was that it was a fence that was put up that was unmistakably a fence, whereas San Francisco is the kind of town you would expect an art installation to act as a fence.

Jemma: An art installation, yeah.

Toshio: You know, I think it was put in there by the type of neoliberal or liberal politician Jane Kim who, you're right, she looks the part of a San Francisco politician in that she has the ethnic thing going for, she doesn't speak too loud about her Stanford, prep school, Manhattan pedigree unless you're the right kind of donor. Maybe you can connect on that with her. But... another example of how public space is kind of endangered in San Francisco, and that's thanks to people who put on these costumes as kind of progressives, I suppose. That was kind of not even as bad as what's to come for SOMA, I would say. Because the final thing she did as supervisor, as politician before she joined the Bernie campaign, was to broker another real estate deal to basically redevelop all of SOMA and its called the South of Market neighborhood. It's the redevelopment plan that has been in the works since many years and as somebody who ran as a progressive, there was this expectation that she would be someone who fought against what will be the raising of rent controlled buildings and what will be the raising of any kind of housing that's affordable to anyone except for the super rich and let kind of her developer backers cash in on the area. She was kind of taking a page out of the book of her supporter Willie Brown, who's always got his fingers in pies as well. I got to think of a new metaphor.

Jemma: We need new metaphors. Yeah. Also, maybe cakes? Do people put their fingers in cakes?

Toshio: Is there like a pastry that's like really hot right now?

Jemma: Gender... hot? Like macarons? Or 10 years ago? But we're talking about 2012.

Toshio: That's true, yeah, the cronut was new on the scene I believe. Or maybe that was 2009. Write in, if you can correct our timeline.

Jemma: Write into the podcast, mail us letters to correct us. Because maybe you know this time, you still write letters.

Toshio: One thing I do remember is that there was a lot of us around the Twitter building at this time.

Jemma: And in SOMA. In SOMA there is a big history displacing Black and Filipinx. I don't mean actually, Jesse told me it's "Filipinos" that's gender-neutral by the language, I guess. Yeah. So there is a long history of places like Yerba Buena Gardens and a lot of them, where we might see movies in San Francisco, like the Metreon. A lot of that displaced a lot of Filipino people in the '60s I think, '50s, '60s. Kind of a parallel to LA and Dodger Stadium and things like that. Yeah, it displaced a lot of... So that's one of the communities in SOMA that was fighting against what is basically Urban Renewal 2.0 that Jane Kim was instrumental to spearheading, yeah.

Toshio: Yeah, yeah. That's absolutely the case. And so, Jane Kim, Jane's backers within the local political machine, and tech, and in real estate investments. They devised this plan to not only give tax breaks to Twitter, which I believe there's been one year that Twitter just claimed to be profitable. The claim that they used to broker this deal and sell to the public was that it was going to renew this area.

Jemma: Well, and one of the fake promises too, right, like a lot of the companies, which is this is older than tech companies, that, "We're going to hire local people" you know, job creation, type of things was also...

Toshio: Yeah, job creation was one of the things.

Jemma: So of course, most people in tech from you know, MIT, Harvard...

Toshio: Right, they're not coming from anywhere locally. And that's a huge joke that always ends up appearing in these contracts with companies when they say they are going to do something that is vague within these contracts and its being sold by the politicians and the media as these companies are going to be engaging with the local communities to hire them. I do credit San Francisco Public Press and a local publication with following up after the tax break went through in 2011. They looked into whether or not Twitter or these other companies, 21Tech, Zeusk, ZenDesk Yammer, 1 King's Lane, all had hired locally. The response they got was, "No." They couldn't even find a janitor to put on the list. And that makes sense because a lot of these companies actually contract in their like service workers anyways. They're not full employees so they don't have to give them benefits and they're importing tech workers from all over...

Jemma: The world, really.

Toshio: The world, really, yeah, rather than hiring locally. You know, it was just in Arkansas, and the joke is on these other places. In Texas, in West Virginia, these schemes where the local politicians are offering tech workers specifically thousands of dollars to move now that remote work is a thing.

Jemma: So Arkansas is trying to get techies to move there?

Toshio: Oh yeah.

Jemma: That's horrible.

Toshio: \$10,000 and a mountain bike to move. I guess the mountain bike is...

Jemma: Well with \$10,000, I was gonna say no. But you threw in that Diamondback. Let me tell you something, is it a hardtail? Is it a Santa Cruz? I know my bikes.

Toshio: Yeah, I know you do. I'm sure it's whatever was cheapest. I guess the gag is no one took them up on it. Not many people, in any case. And they had spent all of this money advertising these campaigns and...

Jemma: And it says a lot, what you're talking about, too, what Arkansas is doing, because it parallels with San Francisco. kind of what the tax break did to the other thing it did write to all the techies and all the other companies, "Well, this area is dangerous and it doesn't really have a lot of things our employees would like." There's a lot of hole-in-the-wall Vietnamese restaurants, which are really good and otherwise getting shut down by the health department, which, you know, means they're good.

Toshio: Yeah.

Jemma: I mean people don't want to eat at these places, and so they kind of also, kind of like a college, or like near Columbia, you know like curated all the stores and businesses that would be around there that are like whiter and more upwardly-mobile-friendly and less ethnic. It was also a really...it adds to what you were saying. Not only were they not hiring people, they really actively pushed out, not to say businesses will not save us, there shouldn't be any businesses, but... even pushed out, you know, poor minority businesses that might've benefited from the consumer culture that would theoretically develop because of techies. And now you see other cities are trying to cater to this, "Come buy our local food." When, of course, they'll destroy the local culture.

Toshio: Right, and just the restrictions around getting \$10,000 and a mountain bike in Arkansas, you had to be new to the area. So, the companies that came into Mid-Market, the new kind of like, techie-serving businesses, they all got these small business grants from the city. But if you were an already-existing business, this wasn't a thing that was offered to you. So just like, in Arkansas, I guess the locals, they get the promise of jobs and people that will shop at their local businesses but the reality, yeah. Exactly. This is offering cash to people who are relocating and businesses that are new to the area.

Jemma: Right. And usually there will be some kind of like... I don't know how off-topic we are or off-schedule, but you know, usually, there will be some kind of local lynchpin to get these... local

business lynchpin. I think of... also thankfully this never happened, but when Uber was going to move into Oakland... Downtown Oakland. I'm gonna call them out.

Toshio: How dare!

Jemma: (laughs) And Red Bay Coffee...

Toshio: Ooooh!

Jemma: A local, I think Black-owned coffee place was like, "Oh, well we'll be in the Sears... I don't know if they came to the Red Bay... Well it doesn't matter right, but "We can put you in the Sears building on the bottom floor with a coffee shop and people would buy your coffee." They agreed to it, but the deal never went through, Uber never moved their headquarters to Oakland. But that was a terrifying thing. I remember being in an organizing group at the time that was like, "We're going to have to organize against Red Bay Coffee." We'll have to organize with the local collaborators with gentrification which is, I'm sure we'll...

Toshio: Yeah, I remember the protest against the redevelopment against that Sears and it's pretty empty down there, downtown. Just like in Market. In addition to the straight up tax breaks, there's, of course, always these like nonprofit and bureaucratic administrative violence elements, where they're wasting people's time, they're wasting funding that could go to things that might actually help people that are in the area or this organization called TechSF was really propped up during this time. They offered online courses in tech and coding, let's see... Python, Java Script, something called Hyper-Networking. And also Salesforce, of course. Because, you have to. Salesforce is SF born and bred.

Jemma: She's a local girl!

Toshio: And one of the biggest donors to local politicians as well. Twitter did not move to Brisbane, it was an empty threat. These companies got \$71 million in tax breaks... can I actually ask you what you would guess that these companies do? I'm gonna lay it on ya.

Jemma: What these companies do? Like the ones you mentioned? Zeusk, ZenDesk, Yammer, Grindr, Scruff, Christian Mingle...

Toshio: Yeah. What does 21 Tech evoke, if you had to guess? If you didn't know a thing.

Jemma: Well, I'm looking at the same script as you... If I'm not, they sound like delivery apps maybe. Or like Yammer...

Toshio: Wrong, wrong. 21 Tech: Asset Management Services Consulting. Obviously! Okay. Zeusk. What is Zeusk?

Jemma: Zeusk. Their emblem is a dog...

Toshio: (laughs)

Jemma: Named Zeusk... They all kind of make me think of Zynga, that's my guess, that they're all kind of gaming... They sell shoelaces and the logistics to getting them to you quicker.

Toshio: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

Jemma: Um it's an app that blows on your coffee for you.

Toshio: So it's not too hot.

Jemma: It goes, "Zeeeuuskkk." Yeah, I don't know.

Toshio: It's actually a dating app that still exists somehow. Never heard of it.

Jemma: Well, because we're both on Raya, obviously.

Toshio: Well, yeah, I mean...

Jemma: Yeah.

Toshio: I'm busy talking to, I don't know...

Jemma: We got to get you to think about a gay celebrity off the top of your head.

Toshio: Who's the guy on Bros?

Jemma: Oh, Billy Eichner?

Toshio: (laughs) Ugh, gross.

Jemma: Yeah. That's terrible.

Toshio: I'm busy talking to Billy Eichner on Raya, so I don't have time to download Zeusk.

Jemma: Or watch his movie!

Toshio: Yeah, well, as we all shouldn't because how are we going to know our allies??

Jemma: The first gay movie that's ever been made.

Toshio: Right. ZenDesk? What do you think that could be?



Jemma: So I'm going to guess that's like a go-between... I could see it being like maybe someone who does some kind of business management software...

Toshio: Close, close, close. They are a company that I remember because they were right on Market Street and they had a banner facing outwards that was like, #MeToo for a long time.

Jemma: So they are a radical organization.

Toshio: Yes, very radical. Very #TimesUp vibe. And they also recently left the area.

Jemma: I noticed that you were using past tense, yeah.

Toshio: Yammer is another one that received millions. Can you guess what that...

Jemma: Yammer I'm going to guess, translation, maybe?

Toshio: Mhmmm... Yeah, that's actually... that sounds like. Well, it would be too easy if it made sense in that way. It's actually a Slack-like app that connects employees, but it's Microsoft's version of Slack. The last one on the list we have here is 1 Kings Lane.

Jemma: Well, that sounds very British. So I'm gonna guess that is an app that shows you where the nearest beans and toast is.

Toshio: The local pub! Mhmmm, mhmmm.

Jemma: Yeah, the local pub. I think that's what I'm gonna go with.

Toshio: Yeah, like on FourSquare. You could become the mayor of The Pig & The Whistle or something like that.

Jemma: There you go.

Toshio: But yeah, unfortunately, wrong. Wrong again. It was kind of like Groupon but for furniture specifically.

Jemma: Shocking to think that more than one person had the idea for Groupon.

Toshio: It is... Moving towards our conclusion, I promise... After this big deal had been brokered, the tech companies promised that they would engage with local community, they signed a contract, they very publicly had these press conferences where hands were shake, like Jane Kim, with Mayor Ed Lee at the time.

Jemma: RIP.

Toshio: Yeah, he's up there in heaven somewhere.

Jemma: Somewhere dead in a Safeway.

Toshio: Yeah, saying that, they'd be good stewards of their new home in Mid Market, that they'd hire local, but, of course we know now, none of that was true. And quote, "Good faith and effort" that the city had asked of them was just tossed in the trash—

Jemma: The McCoppin Hub fence.

Toshio: Yeah. Over the fence.

Jemma: Just right over the McCoppin Hub fence.

Toshio: There are these partnerships with these organizations like Tech SF at the time the mayor, bless his heart, Ed Lee...

Jemma: Bless his heart, he needed blessings.

Toshio: "We are seeing the beginning of a renaissance." I don't know if he had that written for him, just because...

Jemma: I also... I could see him saying, "Ren-AY-ssance."

Toshio: (laughing)

Jemma: You know, adding a lot of...

Toshio: He turned to his daughters for advice on this one, because it was contentious at the time: you had a Filipino community inside SOMA coming together for these protests outside of what would become the Twitter headquarters, fairly often. Because they knew that it would spell doom for local businesses and existing communities, including theirs, but Mayor Ed Lee asked his daughters because he didn't use Twitter and they did. Hence they were...you know, young people!

Jemma: I thought he asked his daughters, "Should I help displace these people?"

Toshio: (laughing) That's not the question. I mean, that was the question, that was the underlying the jist.

Jemma: The subtext.

Toshio: In fact, they said that he had to. That it would actually be a mistake not to. Because Twitter was going to be huge.

Jemma: It was totally cool.

Toshio: It would become huge with the help of all of these tax breaks and you know, fake promises about hiring locally.

Jemma: And fake valuations!

Toshio: True that.

Jemma: Anytime someone gives you a financial literacy or management exercise and is like, "You can't just wish and hope your way through life." Remember that's what all the politicians are doing. Because the valuations are fake, just like the market. And they are betting on nothing too.

Toshio: Mhmmm, mhmmm. Yeah. I do like looking back at some of the local press around this move. So for example, The Chronicle, the San Francisco Chronicle cities own Gray Lady...

Jemma: Now bought by techies, right?

Toshio: You know, it actually returned to the Hearst family after being owned by like some kind of hedgefund.

Jemma: GROWSF or something?

Toshio: Oh they bought the Bold Italic. They already have SF Standard, The YIMBYs, and now they have Bold Italic, which is more of a thought-PC kind of blog.

Jemma: Right...

Toshio: Medium-ish. This renaissance for the mayor, The Chronicle also hailed it, you know, "It was a rundown neighborhood. Now being revived with 19 firms signing up for the tax break. And for decades, city leaders pushed for improvements; it never materialized in the area, leaving the blocks unsafe, unsightly, and underused." I guess "U" isn't a great letter for alliteration.

Jemma: No...

Toshio: With the break... Sorry, Chronicle. With the break, some 3,000 new jobs landed in this "dead zone," helping to push down the city's jobless rate to 4.4%. So that was the SF Chronicle just hailing it as a success, Jane Kim's Twitter tax break. And then, of course, post-mortem, when the tax break was ended under 10 years later, the Chronicle didn't really reference the fact that they had...

Jemma: Been instrumental to promoting it...

Toshio: ...yeah, basically. And basically hailed it as a success less than a year after it happened, and came out with a very different point of view. They so far as to, find Jane Kim after Bernie lost the presidential ticket to Biden and she said...actually, will you read Jane?

Jemma: Oh, sure. I'll do Jane. Should I do a New York accent? Does she have a New York accent? I'll do that anyways, she doesn't talk like this. (Heavy NY accent) I'm a San Francisco Native, Jane Kim coming atcha. "Did the tax break fulfill the goal of revitalizing Mid-Market and helping turn their economy around? To an extend, yes! I don't think the Mid-Market tax exclusion can take all of the blame for what happened later, ya know, I also think it can take all the praise."

Toshio: Perfect. Jane Kim, everyone. Thank you, Jane.

Jemma: Thank you, yeah. Anytime.

Toshio: So yeah, in the words of Bay hailed politician saying so much... so many words...

Jemma: Kitten heel enthusiast.

Toshio: And yet saying so little in terms of media. Now a self-identified member of the Working Families Party, which is sort of where the DSA went.

Jemma: We also should say, can we call out... Is it even worth calling out the DSA? They were also instrumental to making her, too. Very similar to AOC, that was totally her grassroots, even though most of the DSA here, probably like other places, is well-off white transplants from legacy, from Ivys.

Toshio: Yeah.

Jemma: Yeah, and they were instrumental to being like "Oh look, she's so great." They would always spin whatever things she said, including the Twitter tax break. They were very. Or at least, I don't remember them being against it.

Toshio: Oh no, they were like absolutely defenders until the end. It was a very, like... you know, she was the home team, and you couldn't say a negative thing about her, or you'd get the drunken soccer World Cup fans... Although, I guess, not allowed to drink this year, so have the kind of feverish...

Jemma: You couldn't show your face in a craft brewery around town when you besmirched the DSA.

Toshio: Yeah, uh-huh, uh-huh. Just like AOC has her defenders for whom she could do no wrong in her recent vote around the rails strike and voting against workers getting a single day of vacation.

Jemma: We're talking about AOC?

Toshio: AOC, yeah. Defenders til the end.

Jemma: Or they'll find another terrible politician and be like, "I'm sure it'll work out this time."

Toshio: Right.

Jemma: Or when someone gives... if you're poor and listening to someone give these speeches down to you and gives you advice like, "Oh, how could you waste your money or your energy doing whatever it is you could be doing in your life... just remember you can take time out of your day to support politicians in the world."

Toshio: Oh, yeah, oh my god.

Jemma: And they can't tell you anything about that.

Toshio: What a sad, sad waste of energy. And the gentrification was pretty deep. A lot of people were displaced, whether they were forced to leave because their landlords upped the rent on a non-rent-controlled home or the area where they were might have been able to put up a tent, is constantly under the watch of the city-contracted additional layer of police known as Urban Alchemy. For so many reasons like, the area is changed. This quote from Jane kinda says it all, this is a really roundabout way to end it so I don't know...

Jemma: We're dwindling to the end... The one thing that I want to say is that we hated Twitter before some of you all. Before Elon. So we been on the train.

Toshio: Yeah.

Jemma: In this story, hopefully, this has been a long time coming.

Toshio: We hated first.

Jemma: We hated first.

Toshio: That's basically the short answer.

Jemma: At the end of the day, these are also corporations, that, many of which function on state department funding and things... They're basically just giant surveillance platforms and people have these really deep emotional attachments to them, just like they do with politicians. These weird parasocial relationships. And they should all burn.

Toshio: Yeah, I know. The way that politicians have become the new celebrities. It's...

Jemma: I know. Tax the Rich. She said it, with her dress. I don't know if we'll ever see Jane Kim again.

Toshio: Yeah, she might be back in Manhattan, she might be in Vermont with Bernie.

Jemma: You just texted me... occasionally she is a judge at a poetry slam.

Toshio: If we do run into her, we might catch her at a poetry slam here in town. I'm sure.

Jemma: Is that high for you? I know Eric is listening to this, I don't want to stoke controversy with this, is that higher or lower than a Ru Paul's Drag Race judge?

Toshio: (laughing) I need some time to think on that.

Jemma: We'll leave on that controversial, yeah..

Toshio: It's that Stanford degree, you need a Stanford degree on that judging panel when it comes to a poetry slam. I think Jane is available.

Jemma: To tax break other things in a place near you. And yeah, I think so, that the other thing is too, in the context for those that have lived here longer than twitter existed or longer than at least existed in San Francisco for sure, they give this big tax break to this company that is probably going to be gone, at least from the area. Right, it looks like it. That's the legacy of selling out to corporations.

Toshio: Mhmmm.

Jemma: It's that it'll never support the people and it will always, whether or not we want to say abandon the town, it will always leave.

Toshio: They say they love you and then they leave you when...

Jemma: That sounds like a country song!

Toshio: ...they've had enough of you. It is funny that they also threatened to leave when the tax break was rescinded and yet... they stayed.

Jemma: At least we didn't say, "They're still fucking here."

Jemma & Toshio: (laughing)

Toshio: They're still fucking here, it's true though!

Jemma: Miss Major!

Toshio: Bringing it back to my book now available for preorder! And Twitter is still fucking here!  
Thank you to Jemma.

Jemma: Thank you to you, Toshio.

Toshio: Thank you for spending time in Sad Francisco, which is a podcast produced by Toshio Meronek and Caitlin Wood. We release a new episode every week with bonus episodes for subscribers of the show. If you like the show and have a few dollars to spare, go to [patreon.com/sadfrancisco](https://patreon.com/sadfrancisco) to help cover the editing and the transcriptions for the show and we'll see you next time.