

MSNBC's *The ReidOut*

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7:15:43 p.m. [TEASE]

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JOY REID: Plus, my pal Chris Matthews is here. Perfect night for him to here for his very first television interview for brand new book *This Country: My Life in Politics and History*. And boy, do we have lot to catch up on, Republican cowardice, how President Biden is doing, Puppet Kevin McCarthy, and a lot more. Do not go anywhere. Chris is coming up.

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7:27:06 p.m. [TEASE]

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REID: And still ahead, Chris Matthews is here. I'm going to talk to him about his new book, *This Country*, and so much more. There he is. Cannot wait. We'll be right back.

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7:31:01 p.m.

13 minute and 42 seconds

REID: Given the continued onslaught on voting rights and the Republican party's eagerness to whitewash the events of January 6th, more than 100 scholars who study democracy for a living have issued a frantic warning. They write that anti-voting initiatives "are transforming several states into political systems that no longer meet the conditions for free and fair elections, hence entire democracy is at risk." And time not on democracy's side. Given how Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has vowed to block Biden administration every step. Another hurdle? The eight or so Democratic senators, including Senators Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema, who are so far refusing to touch the Jim Crow relic — the filibuster — even to save democracy. And who better to talk about the state of politics than my friend and former colleague Chris Matthews, who has a new, sweeping new memoir about his life in and out of politics. The book is called *This Country* and it is out today. Chris Matthews joins me now. Christopher, so good to see you, sir.

CHRIS MATTHEWS: Well, Joy, I'm glad to see you in that seat. You've certainly earned it. And when I left, I'm glad you came. Thank you very much for having me on tonight.

REID: Thank — thank you so —

MATTHEWS: I spent my life — has been — the glory and chance of my life has been done inside of politics. I've been inside, flying around Air Force One with a President fighting for his life politically, I worked with the Speaker of the House, Tip O'Neill, every morning with him and I love American democracy and —

REID: Yep.

MATTHEWS: — I've seen it at its best, deals made in best sense. And I've seen something terrible happen lately. And it's — I saw — you did — you're not as old as me to see firsthand the people fighting to bring down the Berlin Wall so they have could votes in Germany —

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: — so they could actually have a democracy or see apartheid torn down by an election in South Africa. I was there with Archbishop Tutu when he got the vote —

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: — for the first time in the — at the age of 623, he yelled “yippee, I'm voting.”

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: You have to treasure this democracy. Maybe the Democratic Party —

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: — should change its name to democracy party, lower case.

REID: Yeah, maybe.

MATTHEWS: This is the party that believes in democracy, and I'm —

REID: Well, Chris, I got to — I got to ask you cause you — you did this biography and you went through all these jobs. One job you left out and it is on page 83 of your book, it is you also worked at capitol Police officer.

MATTHEWS: Great.

REID: I did want to ask you —

MATTHEWS: Sure.

REID: — to — what was your reaction, as someone who worked at that Capitol, not just worked for speaker at that level but working as a police officer, what was your visceral reaction to that insurrection on January 6th?

MATTHEWS: I felt violated, I felt the place I had worked and people I worked, devoted their lives too, including the police officers, and to see these people come in there and basically mess — massacre the place to death — and desecrate — it's a good word — it's a — it's a religious term, but that's appropriate here. They wanted to climb on ceilings and put up signs and they

wanted to wear stupid costumes and act like — act like crazy people to show their content — they were looking for human beings and god knows what they would have done if they got them, including Mike Pence, Mr. Vice President, they were looking for you

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS:— and they were looking for the speaker and they were looking for — to do what with? What were they going to — tar and feather them? Were they going to kill them? Were they going to make fun of them? What were they going to do? They were looking for them and it was police officers, in the end, and the staff people that got them and out of danger — and out of danger.

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: And I'm telling you. That's a scary thing. And then I hear about a — a — high-ranking general who took the oath to this Constitution, talking about — I don't know when he's going to explain himself — I don't know to explain using the word "should" in the same preposition with military coup? What are you talking about? And they were cheering what they thought he meant —

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: — and what he probably did mean. And this is nuts. This is what's really scary. Nobody was shocked by what Michael Flynn said the other day. Nobody was shocked.

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: This is a continuum and one advantage of being away from daily television, being on it, and having talk everyday about what happened that day like I was in the Peace Corps in Africa, you see a pattern developing. I'm in the Peace Corps —

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: — in Africa and I'm watching the bitterness grow at home against the Vietnam War. I — you could sense it by the growing dots on the screen. What are the dots on the screen in the last several months? Well, you had a President who, to start with, who said our previous President was an illegal immigrant, he was not President. He couldn't be. Here was here illegally. He snuck in the country — an absurd, awful, racist comment. And then you have a President — former President now, thankly [sic] — thankfully —who calls this President illegal — who says he's not President. He's got two-thirds —

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: — of the Republican Party — the party of Lincoln — saying that Joe Biden's not President!

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: It's gotten to be worse and worse and they go from relying on the Electoral College because they can't get a popular vote. They lost the popular vote in '16 by almost four million. They lost it again in '20. They think it's cute to win by the Electoral College.

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: Of course it's constitutional, but now they don't even believe in the Electoral College. Trump doesn't even believe he lost in the Electoral College.

REID: Right.

MATTHEWS: You know, democracy, as Jefferson taught — with all Jefferson's faults, slavery and the rest — he did give us all people — all men are created equal. He did give us a goal, ironically, a goal.

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: And this crowd doesn't understand democracy. If you ask the average Republican who likes Trump, do you really want the majority to rule in this country? Simple question.

REID: Probably not. Yeah.

MATTHEWS: Including minorities, do you think majority of American citizens should rule this country? A simple, democratic vote question. Do you think they're going to say yes? No, they're going to say —

REID: No.

MATTHEWS: — let's reduce the number of minority voters, let's reduce the number of young voters too while we're at it. And you know, you've been in politics and you've followed it more — as much as I have, despite being different ages, and I got to tell you — what was biggest call of our lives? Get out the vote.

REID: Right.

MATTHEWS: We were thrilled for people to vote. We begged them for months on this network, begged people for months before —

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: — each, get out and vote, vote, vote. Said it to everybody. Whatever you are, conservative, whatever, get out there and vote. We wanted everybody to vote and then they voted and then they said it doesn't count.

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: — in the 2020 election. It doesn't count, so our guy lost.

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: And, by the way, Donald Trump knows he lost. He lost by four million votes, and not just the electoral college. He lost in the same in the states he happened to squeak in in '16. He lost Pennsylvania. He lost Wisconsin. He lost — he lost Michigan. I'm sorry Mr. President, you're not Mr. President anymore, and you've got to wake up. And I do think —

REID: Let me ask you this.

MATTHEWS: — you were talking about my Texas guy.

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: I love this guy down there, Senator Chris. The thing is Democrats have gotten to be better politicians. I mean, I got to tell you. I'm doing right now like I did in the book. You know what I did when Republican leader opposed our infrastructure bill in 1982 right before an election? Well, he said it was big spending, leaf-raking jobs thing they always say. So, I called up chief engineer of his hometown, Peoria, Illinois. I asked the chief engineer, who happened to be a Democrat, which was just my luck. And I said, give me the name of all bridges below safety standards in the — that Republican's district, all the dangerous bridges. Give me all the danger. He gave me a list of the addresses, the names of the bridges. Tip O'Neill got on the floor of the house and listed all the dangerous bridges in the home district of the Republican leader and he was scared to hell.

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: He went racing to the back of the forum, which — we won that vote. We won 26 seats in the next election. Why don't the Democrats go to Kentucky and count the bridges below safety standards. Why don't they do out there?

REID: Well, hold on, Chris cause I don't think that — here's the problem —

MATTHEWS: Why don't they do that today?

REID: — I'm not sure that would work. And I do want to ask you about this because, when you talk about stuff like that and the way you used to be able to achieve bipartisanship by cajoling people, you know, with infrastructure pressure —

MATTHEWS: No, by scaring people too.

REID: — or scaring people, it doesn't work anymore. This is the one-year anniversary of Donald

Trump holding up the Bible, pretending to be Christian. Christians are completely impervious to it. People like Mitch McConnell don't care about bridges in Kentucky. What they care about is power for Mitch McConnell. So, I wonder what —

MATTHEWS: Well, maybe —

REID: — they can see the Q-Anon thing just like you can see it and I can see it, what do you think is happening with them and with people like Joe Manchin —

MATTHEWS: — well —

REID: — saying we don't care. We just won't change.

MATTHEWS: You've had more recent experience with this crowd, but I got to tell you. Usually, local politicians think it's all local and when they hear that the school bus at three o'clock this afternoon is going running across this dangerous bridge, they get some calls from the parents. And I do think that's how you get to people. You get them when they're home and then they say: "This isn't about ideology or left versus right. Are you going to fix the damned bridge or not? Are you going to fix it? Cause if anything happens to that bridge, it's your fault. So, I think old politics does work sometimes if you get them. I don't what the life of — Kevin McCarthy embarrasses me. He embarrasses me —

REID: Yeah.

REID: — because I think having become leader he is capable of leading — at least conceptually — but the great thing about Reagan and this is an odd thing to say for me, and the great thing about Tip O'Neill is, when they led, they led.

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: And that they said, we'll fix Social Security for good, they — their people followed. Is Kevin McCarthy a leader —

REID: No.

MATTHEWS: — or a follower? And that's a question that I think they — why don't they pick leaders, the Republicans? It would seem like a smart move, but they don't want to do it.

REID: Well, what about Joe Manchin? If you were Chuck Schumer right now, what do you think you could say to somebody like Manchin, who apparently loves the filibuster more than he apparently loves democracy?

MATTHEWS: Well, you're being optimistic here. I think I've caught you as an optimist. Do you think he and Sinema of Arizona are only two that aren't against —

REID: Aw no.

MATTHEWS: — getting rid of the filibuster?

REID: No, of course not.

MATTHEWS: Are you thinking —

REID: They are the —

MATTHEWS: — have you talked with —

REID: — no. They're — they're standing —

MATTHEWS: — Dianne Feinstein lately?

REID: Oh, no. I think they're standing

MATTHEWS: Check with Feinstein.

REID: — in front of at least nine other — there's at least nine of them and they're letting Kyrsten Sinema and Joe Manchin stand out in front and take all of the bullets. I think that's clear. They're just covering for other people.

MATTHEWS: Yeah they're [INAUDIBLE]

REID: But then what moves them?

MATTHEWS: Well, here's the question, ask this. You got voting rights coming up. It has to be passed by legislation, and under the current law, you have to get a cloture for it. A filibuster could kill it. You know you have to do police reform, you have to do guns, what else? You got to do infrastructure except right be able to get infrastructure without — without cloture, without getting rid of the filibuster, but everything Biden is talking about needs 60 votes right now

REID: That's right.

MATTHEWS: — unless you get rid of the filibuster. Are you willing to go to the next voters — polls next November with nothing?

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: Because that is also Mitch McConnell's goal.

REID: It is.

MATTHEWS: He wants the Democrats to get nothing done — that's why he's using the filibuster — so he can go to the regular middle of the road, you know, deciding voter next November and say the following — crime's up, inflation's up, the border's not under control. He wants to use the old Republican trick of three issues all about your opponent, all negative, with nothing else to talk about. That's what they want. And if they get — they'll get that if we have no program, if there's no agenda met —

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: — there's nothing passed. What's Biden going to say? Well, we're not so bad on inflation. We're not so bad on crime. We're not so bad on the border? It's all playing defense. You can't win playing defense.

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: You got to pass stuff.

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: So far, Covid relief was very smart. The economy — if it's coming back and it is coming back — it's because of that. If they get a real obstruction — construction — I just don't — you know what? I don't like the word infrastructure. I like the word construction. Build.

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: As New Yorkers used to say, replace the smell of the cape with the smell of construction.

REID: With the smell of construction.

MATTHEWS: Dirt being moved. Dirt being moved. People like that feel.

REID: A classic Chris Matthews staying. So, we got — we got a little bit of time left. I definitely want to get in a final bit about the book, you talk about everything, including, you know, leaving here, which, you know, was not in —

MATTHEWS: Yeah, I didn't.

REID: — what you originally planned on doing. But tell me about that. Tell me about what you — you know —

MATTHEWS: Well, I —

REID: — what is sort of the upshot of that for you?



MATTHEWS: — well, the reality of — the upshot is I've been having a lot of people come up and say, "I miss you personally." They like you but they miss — they miss me. We had good company together. And they also say things like they said they liked how you didn't let them get away with anything, which I love too. I was touched. But I think the reason — I know the reason I left is somebody reported that I complimented somebody — actually, you know — I'm going to use the right words here. I commented, remarked on somebody's appearance in the makeup room and I shouldn't have done that. Nobody has to come defend me. And, by the way, I've kept all my friends, but nobody needs to defend me. I did something wrong, so I'm going to move on from that. I accepted — I took ownership of it, using a nice, modern phrase. I took complete ownership. I did not deny it. I lost my show over it. That's it. So, that's the truth. The good news is I've spent — I've never had, in my life, two years to sit down and write about my 70 years, which is to talk about an incredible life that I've been so lucky to have, to be on the inside of American politics looking out. From Air Force One with Jimmy Carter — who I really love — fighting for his life against Reagan, Tip O'Neill fighting against Reagan from the back room everyday, being at the Berlin Wall on the communist side when the wall was coming down and having a young guy say to me, when I asked him, "what does freedom mean to you" — "was is Freiheit" — you know what he said? "Talking to you."

REID: Wow.

MATTHEWS: Freedom is great. Democracy is great. And being with Archbishop Tutu, the great leader in South Africa, walking with him to the polls the first time in his life at the age of 62, he gets to vote, it was an amazing experience to work within democracy and to see parts of the world fighting for democracy like Nelson Mandela and — and —

REID: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: — bringing down Berlin Wall, I got to see it all in one lifetime. I Want to share with the people who watched my show so faithfully all those years. That's my gift in this book.

REID: And you do a brilliant job. Here's my copy. My autographed copy. I'm so glad that —

MATTHEWS: And your blurb was great.

REID: — I'm so —

MATTHEWS: You said it's love letter to the American people and the American government. You're so right. Thank you.

REID: Hey listen, let me tell you something. Yes, my blurb is on the back because one of the friends you kept is me and I'm so grateful for that, Chris.

MATTHEWS: Aw, I treasure that.

REID: You gave me break before anybody else in this business. I love you, my friend. I thank

you so much for coming on tonight. This book is great, y'all. You really should check it out. You'll learn a lot. We share a love of the content of South African history and you will just learn a lot about Chris. It is a fantastic book. Chris, thank you, my friend. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Joy Reid, thank you. Thank you so much.

REID: Thank you so much. The book is here. It's called *This Country*. You should check it out.