

# WE ARE REALLY BIG HUGGERS



**SERIES 3 EPISODE 1**

@mothersinvent



## We Are Really Big Huggers

Thimali: Maeve and I were both camping out at our families' homes.

Mary: Yeah...

Thimali: Back living with our parents.

Mary: That's hard.. on the parents.

Thimali: Uh! Did you hear that Maeve?

Maeve: I did actually. I heard that loud and clear and I think my parents would probably agree...

All: *[Laughs].*

***(THEME MUSIC)***

Thimali: Yes, welcome back to season three of Mothers of Invention, everyone. I'm Thimali Kodikara, series producer of this excellent show.

Maeve: And between global existential crises, I am Maeve Higgins. What I do is I write stories that help us get through these crises together.

Mary: And I'm Mary Robinson. As a former president, former UN high commissioner and realtime Elder, I have had to manage a few existential crises in my lifetime.

Maeve: And of course we hope that everybody listening at home is safe and well. How have you been Mary? I know that lockdown has been really strict there in Ireland.

Mary: Well, I've been lucky because I've been locked down with the man that I'm marking my 50th anniversary with my husband, Nick. So we still like each other and indeed love each other, which is always helpful. And I do actually feel, for those who really are finding it difficult, they've lost a job. There are small businesses are closing -

Thimali: Totally.

Mary: And I feel very much for the abusive household for, women and children in particular, in abusive households. This is really a hard time for everyone. There's no doubt about it. And we've been fine. We can do a little bit of exercise locally and we've learned new tricks like shopping online for food, especially at the beginning, when we didn't want to go into shops. And so that's all been, good.

Thimali: I mean, Maeve it wasn't until I read your amazing article in the New York Times that I realized that we were both defected from Brooklyn and you were living in Ireland.

Maeve: I left New York, I think, you know that second weekend in March when everybody started to panic and it started to become clear that like it was going to be dangerous here. So I left, uh, I think it was cause the Irish government cancelled St Patrick's day. And that was like this bat signal to like Irish people -

Thimali: *[Laughs]*. It's bad!

Maeve: Like come home! Things are like a green Shamrock in the sky or something. So yeah, I was surprised at myself. I literally like booked a flight and got out of New York. Even though I've lived here for eight years. So I'm back now in New York. I came back through Mexico because of the travel ban.

Thimali: I can think there are worse places to do lock down than Mexico city.

Maeve: Absolutely. But the thing is I left Ireland, which, you know, at that time had the lowest Covid rates in Western Europe.

Thimali: Right Oh my goodness. Yeah.

Maeve: And then I wasn't allowed back into the US directly. So I flew to Mexico city, which was at the time, the epicenter, of the coronavirus. And then, back here to New York where thank goodness we've just celebrated the first day without any COVID deaths. So it's been, kind of a trip. What about you Thimali?

Thimali: Well cos, you know I live in Brooklyn too, and I have lived in the States for 16 years, you know so I'd gone back to London for like a consolidated, work - family trip. Cause I had a big birthday, umm

Maeve: Mary did you hear that? Thimali had a big birthday.

Mary: Yes I did. Yes I actually sent you a nice note about that there is life after that age, you thought to got to..that is so... I can tell you, you have lots of time to go.

All: *[Laughs].*

Thimali: That's good. That's good.

Thimali: Cause, I feel wholly arthritic now...

Maeve: No!

Thimali: Just from crossing that border. Yes. It's really glamorous.

Maeve: How was your, how was your fortieth? Tell us!

Thimali: Well, yeah, so, it was also in that first second week of March and my friends took me out for a, beautiful supper. We had a lovely time, you know, we were like, 'okay, this is the last time we're going out'. Cause lockdown is surely around the corner. And then six of us caught the virus at dinner!

Maeve: Oh my god.

Thimali: So I proceeded to spend my 40th birthday face down in a couch with coronavirus.

Maeve: Oh no!

Thimali: Think of the total opposite of the St. Lucia beach vacay that I planned. And that was basically my 40th birthday. But all

my bad karma for the whole of my forties dealt with in one fail swoop.

Maeve: And how are you feeling now?

Thimali: I feel like a million bucks. I do.

Maeve: You do. You look great.

Thimali: I'm back in New York, which is so nice after living in a carry on suitcase for four months.

Maeve: You just had to carry on? You didn't have -

Thimali: Yes, just a carry on suitcase. I looked at the suitcase every day and I was like, 'when I get home I'm just going to empty this entire suitcase out to the floor and set the whole thing on fire!'

Maeve: Although, Mary's been doing that! She's like an inspirational traveler in that way. Don't you just travel with carry-on, Mary? and two blazers and pearls?

Mary: No, I don't just travel with a carry on Maeve, As you well know, I travel with a large suitcase

All: *[Laughs]*

Mary: But actually Thimali, more seriously we have to remember that, it affects people at all different ages. The fact that you're feeling great now is wonderful. We rightly think of the more vulnerable in my age group and older and people with underlying conditions, but it can affect healthy people like you and it can be quite significant.

Thimali: 100%.

Maeve: It's interesting though, to kind of draw the line between COVID and the climate crisis, like fighting on all of these different fronts. And I think, like you said, Mary, it can and it does affect everybody. Maybe not to the same degree, maybe not deadly, but it's, all of us are in this together and we're very connected by these two crises, you know. Except with the climate crisis, we cannot socially distance from that.

Mary: You know, in January of this year, quite honestly, I was almost in despair, which is not allowed as chair of The

Elders. I have to bring hope, you know, that's important, but actually I wasn't feeling it.

Maeve: Really?

Mary: Because we were at 2020, the start the year where we were supposed to be more ambitious about climate change and I didn't see countries willing to step up with ambition and it really worried me and then COVID hit in such a devastating way. As I say, a health crisis then an economic, a political, a personal, every crisis you could think of and yet in some ways I'm more hopeful now, believe it or not, because I see the lessons from COVID. The fact that it's 'people's power', that's protecting us from the COVID.

Mary: We don't have a vaccine. So it's the collective willingness to comply with lockdown, comply with social distancing, comply with hand-washing and so on that is helping countries that do that come out much more quickly. Secondly, we know now, that leadership and government absolutely matters. Thirdly, science matters because we're listening to the health experts. When we are on our way out of this, we have to come back to listening to the climate scientists, the climate experts much more than we were [previously] doing.

And you know, South Korea was the first country to have a general election during the COVID 19 outbreak. And after a successful recovery, the government there, have won a second term on the premise of rebuilding the economy with a Green New Deal. So the world is starting to recognise that we can't go back to how things were, it's going to take years to build back our economies, but we need to do it in the right way in a respectful, sustainable, non extractive nature-based inclusive way.

Thimali: Totally.

Maeve: Yes and what I find so special about this moment is how exciting it's been to see women's leadership, like really all over the world,

Mary: Yay! Yay! Yay!

All: *[Laughs]*

Maeve: Like the Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, and then in New Zealand we have, um, what's her name?

Thimali: Jacinda! Jacinda Ardern!

Maeve: Yes. Yeah. Sorry. Um, President Jacobs of Sint Maarten.

Thimali: Oh she's hilarious, she's amazing.

Maeve: And then the Norwegian prime minister,

Thimali: Thailand?!

Maeve: Right, Yeah. Um, and then there's regional initiatives too, like KK Shailaja, incredible success in Kerala in India.

Thimali: Oh yeah, totally.

Maeve: Do you like what I said in India? Like you didn't know maybe where that was *[Laughs]*.

Mary: I'm not really so happy with this list.

Maeve: Why?

Thimali: Why?

Mary: Because When I'm talking about women's leadership - And I do it quite a bit. I say Angela Merkel from Germany.

Maeve: Yes!

Mary: The Prime Ministers of Denmark, Finland, Iceland.

Maeve: Oh wow.

Mary: In other words, it's an incomplete list.

Maeve: Okay. Noted - And I give myself an 'F'.

All: *[Laughs]*

Mary: You know, I mean the reality is it's even better than this list.

Maeve: Yeah, that's really cool. Yeah.

Maeve: Our friend, um, Katherine Wilkinson, she said recently the climate crisis has a leadership problem. Why do you think women's leadership is so powerful in a crisis, Mary?

Mary: Well I can actually speak from experience that it's obviously not skill or creativity or intelligence. To me, the differentiating factor is without question, governing on the principle of care and compassion, taking the tough decisions and specifically care before turning a profit. With that common understanding, which ultimately became the political trait that kept us safe and healthy, women broadly have the foresight to visualize a safe future that includes everyone. And actually on that note, I would also want to acknowledge Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi, the inspiring women leaders behind the Black Lives Matter movement and what a movement it is.

Maeve: Yeah. Seven years old now I think, and one of the biggest ever in the U.S.

Mary: And much broader now than it was, but, you know, black people have suffered immeasurably for generations yet have continued to survive these constant traumas. Enough is most certainly enough. And I've been so impressed and inspired by black communities all over the world who've been empowered and energized by this movement. In fact, the resilience of black people and the patience and black women particularly is something to really honor and to behold.

Thimali: It's amazing.

Mary: And, you know, I've also felt a new wind of hope because of the white communities that engage the responsibility to listen and to learn, and actually to make space for equality of thought and experience - not to come up with answers, but actually to listen. For Black people and for all people of color and not just in America, but all over the world, as the conversations around colonization and slavery, are forced to take an honest approach. As white people, we're not going to get it right the first time and perhaps not even the second or the third time either, but it is imperative that we don't get lazy and that we keep showing up and that we keep listening with humility at this stage. It's a moment when the world can do better and I believe it will.

Thimali: It's amazing.

Maeve: Yeah. I really agree, Mary, I really appreciate you saying that, especially about listening, because, being white in America, like I am, it's funny because there's this urge to

kind of prove - Thimali you're going to laugh now - but like 'I'm one of the good ones', you know, like, 'Hey everyone, I don't have a racist bone in my body and I'm one of the good ones'. And you're so busy thinking that and saying that, and being noisy about how great you are at that you're not listening and you're not learning. And when I say 'you' - I mean me.

Thimali:

I couldn't agree more. The truth and reconciliation processes, that Mary I'm sure saw, in South Africa as apartheid was falling was probably the only real way to longlasting change.

Mary:

Absolutely.

Mary:

I remember watching on live television while I was in South Africa, that's when I was president of Ireland, watching Archbishop Tutu crying at the evidence he was listening to. It was just too much and he suffered so much and he was so open to the suffering of others, and I loved him for it that he was literally weeping as he was listening. And, that's what a Truth and Reconciliation process does. And it's something that's been done, not just in South Africa, but in so many countries in the world. And actually apology matters - people listen to that kind of deep apology and, I think it's important that we make space for the voices of those who aren't included enough in decision making or panels. I'm asked to go on a lot of high level panels. I'm now asking, have you a young person? Have you a person of color? Have you an indigenous person on that panel? Or I won't go on and I think more and more, we have to do that.

Thimali:

Exactly and I think, the extent of the damage that has been caused over hundreds of years at this point, really, it just has to be acknowledged fully and that reckoning felt in the gut before we really know how to fix it. So, I think it only follows that we choose to be led by people who've not only been marginalized by the violence, but found ways to survive it as well.

Mary:

Mmm.

Thimali:

So, my bright spot in all of this darkness has really been working on this show because *Mothers of Invention* is grown out of intersectionally feminist principles. And that means that we believe that toxic masculinity and white supremacy and heteronormativity, and these cis- centric realities are absurd and violent but a real feminism means



we can and should afford ourselves the time to talk about things like love and care and kindness because it, stops us from living fearfully as we're going about doing this work.

And it actually can help us grow and sustain. And so I'm actually taking guidance here from amazing black women leaders and thinkers like Angela Davis and Adrienne Maree Brown, who makes direct links back to nature and organizing principles and social justice.

Mary: Very well said Thimali. And don't forget that those words 'grow' and 'sustain' are very green words. They're all about the future.

Thimali: You're totally right. And it's not a coincidence I don't think Mary, we, we've got a lot to learn from nature in terms of how we, we care and enact self care. So this season, while we fight for climate justice, we're going to make sure we fight for ourselves and for each other as well.

***(MUSIC TRANSITION)***

Thimali: So, our first episode of the season is going to explore how we think more deeply about our health and how we can avoid pandemics from occurring in the first place but also how we can plan for a regenerative future in its aftermath as well.

Maeve: Well, I'm really glad that we're covering this because all these years of health research is being implemented into practice really at incredible speed.

Mary: Yes, that's true. I mean the World Health Organization's chief scientist, has said that scientists agree there are no markers in the COVID-19 genome that indicate it's a synthesized gene and that means it occurred naturally. So although COVID-19, wasn't a direct byproduct of climate change, it was the direct byproduct of the same factors that cause climate change and therefore it can, and may recur. There are massive quantities of research on the connections between novel diseases and the destruction of natural landscapes through our consumption and production choices.

Mary: Countless viruses exist naturally in certain animal species, but deforestation and the disruption of animal environments by poor land use, by mining, by dam building, by road development, and the wildlife trade, increase the odds of these zoonotic diseases coming into contact with us. So it's

truly imperative that we invest all our energy in not fraying these ancient borders between animal and human habitats in order to prevent future pandemics while also protecting the quality of the air that we breathe.

Thimali: That's so true, Mary. For that same reason, I wanted us to look a level deeper at the nature-forward measures that we can take to stop global pandemics from taking place at all, rather than just managing them.

Thimali: So it is my great honor to welcome Daiara Tukano of the Tukano people in the Northern Brazilian Amazon. Daiara is a researcher, an activist and a prolific speaker on indigenous issues in Brazil.

Brazil has of course been coping with the enormous challenge of Jair Bolsonaro's leadership. Since we all sat in horror watching the Amazon burn last summer, he has encouraged deforesters and continues to intimidate environmentalists working to protect the rainforest...the lungs of our earth.

It is always a risk for Daiara to be speaking out publicly on these very critical issues. So I'm extremely grateful she's here to share with us. Please welcome her to the show, our inaugural guest, Daiara Tukano.

Maeve & Mary: Hello, welcome, Daiara. Hi. Thank you for joining us!

Mary: We're so pleased to have the opportunity to listen to you. And you know, there have been a shocking series of events in Brazil in recent times, but let's begin with where you are now - Where exactly are you?

Daiara: I am in Brasilia, that is the capital of Brazil.

Mary: I know Brasilia, yes, I've been there. So you're not at the moment with your people with the Tukano, how far is it?

Daiara: Wow, it's really far away. We live in the border between Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela.

Mary: Ok ok, that's far, that's far.

Daiara: Yeah.

Mary: It's a difficult time I would think to be apart from the Tukano because I know they were also, uh, one of the first peoples to contact the COVID-19. Can you speak a little to that?

Daiara: COVID-19 came really fast to the Amazon region.

Mary: Yeah.

Daiara: So the first big city that was like really in a very problematic situation was Manaus, the capital of the state of the Amazonas. And that is the big gate to that region.

Mary: Yeah

Daiara: Covid, arrived by like crossing the borders and because of the trespassing of illegal mining and that sort of people. And, until now the Amazonas State is the state that is the most affected in Brazil.

Mary: And have you lost family members?

Daiara: Yeah, I already lost like five uncles.

Mary: Oh my goodness.

Thimali: I'm so sorry.

Mary: Oh dear. What a terrible tragedy.

Thimali: What are the most dramatic changes between before and after COVID for you?

Daiara: The nature of this disease is really violent to our way of living because in indigenous cultures we really share everything, eh, peoples live together in a big house. They share like the food and the drinks in the same recipients. And, uh, we are really big huggers. And, uh, and it's really difficult to tell people that they cannot share anymore but at the same time, it has been like 500 years of, uh, diseases and epidemics for us.

Daiara: And we are facing such trouble with the Brazilian government that is anti-indigenous with the will of invading our territories or exploiting the natural resources that are within. And it's some mix of everything is the mix of the, the pandemic, of the COVID, it's the mix of the politics of hate against us and we cannot count with any support of the

State. So, um, it's a very important time to reorganize the indigenous movement.

Maeve: Can you speak to the political landscape, like, could you help us understand what it's like there politically, for the indigenous people?

Daiara: Oh, it's such a long story.

Maeve: Yeah of course.

Daiara: My nation, my people lived here like forever and one day, uh, folks arrived from Europe and called us 'Indians', like if they were going to India, but they get lost.

Daiara: And actually, it was estimated that in the 1500's, we were more than a 1000 different indigenous nations. And now we are reduced to 350.

Thimali: Wow.

Daiara: Yeah. And the actual population, if you consider, it was literally decimated. We were 10 million before the Portuguese came. And now we are, we are considered to be like less than a million. And eh, actually we still need to have many indigenous territories recognized. The largest ones are in what is considered to be the legal Amazon that is a biosphere, like a 'bioma'.

Maeve: Yeah.

Daiara: And those territories protect the main part of the biodiversity that we have in Brazil, like indigenous territories all over the world preserve like more than 80% of biodiversity worldwide.

Maeve: Incredible. Yeah I think that is worth repeating actually. Would you say that again? Cause that blows my mind.

Daiara: Indigenous territories protect more than 80% of biodiversity worldwide.

Maeve: Wow.

Daiara: It's like, it's really important. And at the same time that, that means that those indigenous territories are facing all, kinds of attacks.

Maeve: Right.

Maeve: It's so valuable, extractive industries want that.

Daiara: Yeah. Yeah. They want to exploit and extract and eh, like, or build for agribusiness, like, um, yeah. For cattle or mining and -

Mary: And that started the terrible fires. Yeah. Could you tell us about the terrible fires recently? Cause that's very shocking.

Daiara: The fires yeah is the continuity of the story of colonization, of the invasion of our territory. So for us, it has never ended. For us we still live on a war against a state that don't recognize our freedom, our civilian rights. Or even if it's on the paper in practice in the daily life - it's not there.

Thimali: We talk a lot obviously about, about feminism, we're a show about feminist solutions to climate change, but we're not very subtle in our beliefs that feminist leadership is rooted in care and compassion but do you see that reflected in Brazil Daiara and if so how do you feel supported by it?

Daiara: Actually, I am coordinator of an indigenous radio so I work with communication within the indigenous movement and in our generation, we are really, happily surprised with the presence of many, many wonderful, intelligent warriors that are indigenous women. They are the matriarchs, they bring the family together and they bring some subjects that are really fundamental to discuss.

Daiara: An example is like uh for facing the pandemics of the COVID 19, the first campaign that was organised - was organised by women. And the campaign is named like eh, the 'Rio Negro'. Like, it means like 'black river' in English. We take care. Who take care? The women take care because actually they always take care of everything. And so it's a campaign where they are collecting funds to try to get food and hygiene, tools and etcetera for facing the COVID and trying to educate people on how to survive on these pandemics.

Daiara: So they have a nature to communicate between communities that is different from the way that that is used, like in male politics, you know?

Maeve: *[Laughs]* We're all like, we know what you mean. We know exactly what you mean.

Maeve: *[Laughs]* You're being very diplomatic there, but yeah, I understand.

Mary: Talking about male politics, you have very bad leadership at the moment in Brazil. This must be very disheartening, even in tackling COVID, but also in protecting the Amazon, it's all gone badly.

Daiara: Denouncing Bolsonaro and, it's really, it's really difficult. I have followed like for the last five years, the national Congress, and I have seen this man growing.

Maeve & Thimali: Hmm.

Daiara: And, uh, in the beginning he was like a, sort of a clown that appeared with big scandals or little phrases. And those phrases were mostly racist or misogynist or homophobic.

Thimali: Sounds familiar, Daiara.

Daiara: And, and suddenly, we didn't not quite understand how he managed to get there, but he's the actual president. And in his style, the politics style - he doesn't care too much about any kind of oppression. He was even talking about breaking international treaties that were already signed by the national Congress.

Thimali: I mean, Bolsonaro is a perfect example of leadership that does not have care or compassion.

Mary: He has a Northern neighbor who might be giving him a bad example.

Daiara: Yes, yes, yes. And so he doesn't care about what is, what can be an organization as the United Nations or, or other international spaces. He doesn't care and the only way to make a pressure on that kind of politics and politician is really like through the pockets.

Thimali: I also wanted to ask what you are seeing as old and new strategies that indigenous peoples in Brazil are taking to protect themselves from pandemics and what you feel that us in the global North can be learning from that kind of wisdom.

Daiara: I think the first immediate strategy is communication. And so it's really important to follow and listen and paying attention to what indigenous peoples are telling all over the world, not just in Brazil, but all over the world, using this, uh, technology of social media, uh, to understand what is our reality and also what is our vision, or how is the way that we relate to the world that is different from eh western culture. This pandemic has put us on the crisis of the anthropocene.

Thimali: Anthro-po-cene

Anthro-po-cene

Daiara: Yeah, it's the crisis of the Anthropocene.

Maeve: You say it better than me.

Maeve: Wait, I have to even, I need to check what that means, honestly, it's like, it's the age of humans. Is that right?

Daiara: No, it's like the idea that these really, really European that men are the center of everything and the masters of nature.

Maeve & Thimali: Ergh.

Daiara: No, you're not, no, the Western culture that is a patriarchal and racist and colonialist and etcetera. No no no, that is the Anthropocene that has put this kind of society in relation to the world that provokes all this crisis. The climate crisis we are facing - the sixth mass extinction in the world.

Daiara: And now these diseases are arriving. And, it's all because of the effect that we have made as human beings in a way of, consuming and exploiting nature and relating to nature. And with the idea that we possess, or we are the masters of nature and mainly in the indigenous traditions, indigenous science, the understanding, the knowledge that we have about the world is that we are not bigger than nature.

Daiara: And nature will always be bigger than us.

Maeve: What can we as listeners and as supporters, what actions can we take to help the indigenous communities in Brazil right now in a time of COVID and to push back against Bolsanaro too?

Daiara: There is a national Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil that is called APIB.

Daiara: And they are on Facebook and Instagram and etc. and they also share in many languages, they have many posts in English as well to explain what is happening right now. As for example, now that we have more than 14,000 infected indigenous peoples, almost 500 people have already passed away with more than 130 nations that are infected. And, we are really now facing a very critical moment and the APIB has launched international campaigns, trying to grab some kind of initial support.

Thimali: And that's APIB spelt APIB and the website is [APIB.info](http://APIB.info) I believe, is that right Daiara?

Daiara: Yeah.

Mary: Thank you so much Daiara. I think it's been really, an honor and a privilege to both talk with you and listen to you and the best of luck in your own incredible work.

Thimali: Yeah. I want to mirror that as well there Mary just by saying thank you Daiara, because this is exactly how I wanted us to open our season three with care for what our future can look like. And I'm super, super grateful that you came to join us.

Daiara: Thank you so much for this opportunity. It's so nice to be with you.

***(MUSIC TRANSITION)***

Thimali: So while I was sick, I looked out the window and saw this mother's meeting of squirrels and pigeons on a patch of grass adjacent to the formerly very busy Edgware Road. I thought about how so many people must be seeing nature in a new way but also wondered about all those folks who were feeling trapped and unable to escape.

Thimali: So while we're at home, it made me wonder what the sounds of lockdown are in places I won't be able to get to for a while. And specifically what nature is sounding like and specifically what nature is sounding like in your neighborhoods as it returns perhaps for the first time in generations. Home is what we're all here trying to protect,



after all. So let's slow everything down, breathe in and escape our walls for a moment.

Thimali: Our inaugural soundscape is from Rebecca in Austin, Texas.

**(SOUNDSCAPE - REBECCA AUSTIN)**

Rebecca: I'm recording from my apartment balcony. I'm looking out on giant three storey tall crepe myrtle trees that are blooming hot pink. And the trees are filled with blue jays and doves. And we're hearing the sounds of the birds, the trees, creaking. It is so hot here in Texas. So while the birds have gotten louder and more clear, we're also just hearing the constant buzz of air conditioners as people are working from home and running their cooling units all day.

So it's a mix of more intense sounds from the natural world but also our built environment.

Maeve: Oh that sounds beautiful, and listeners can still submit their own?

Thimali: Yup. All you have to do is go to [mothersofinvention.online/contribute](https://mothersofinvention.online/contribute). So just let us know why the sounds of lockdown we're hearing is so unusual for your neighborhood.

**(MUSIC TRANSITION)**

Thimali: Mary, Maeve and I are enormous fans of our next guest, Fatima Zahra Ibrahim, who is the co Executive Director of the Green New Deal UK but more recently, the founder of Build Back Better, an initiative that recognizes that we can't go back to how things were before COVID-19 and instead visualizes a new future for the UK as it recovers. So welcome, Fatima!

Mary: Hi Fatima. Great to see you.

Maeve: Welcome Fatima! Hiiii!

Fatima: Thanks for having me.

Thimali: How's your lockdown been?

Fatima: It's been long. And I am still in lockdown. I look out my window and it doesn't seem like everyone still is, but I'm definitely still in lockdown.

Maeve : Have you been tempted to yell out the window at those folks who are buzzing around and not being conscientious?

Fatima: I have been. I have been, I have been just wanting to shout out, "Wear your masks! Stay at home!".

All: *[Laughs].*

Maeve: This is God!

Fatima: That's exactly what I should do. I should hide behind the curtain. They just hear my voice and they think it's just this voice coming from the heavens - then maybe they'll listen.

Maeve: Maybe, but listen, I don't know how you feel about me bringing up your age, but you're 26 years old. We talk to really young people on this podcast all the time. Will you explain how you got such an early start in climate justice and what it means to you?

Fatima: Yeah, I'm 27 years old. Someone probably needs to update the internet, but yes.

Maeve: I'll do that.

Fatima: Yeah please do!

Thimali: Don't update it.

Fatima: Yeah, just 26 forever.

Thimali: Yeah, exactly!

Fatima: It's interesting when people bring up my age and comment on how young I am, because I do feel like - and in speaking to the youth strikers and people who are much newer to the movement - do feel in some ways a veteran because I have been involved in movement for a really long time, actively organizing with huge groups around the world since I was 18, but I have been involved in climate activism before that.

Fatima: So it does to me feel like it's been forever, but this was the reality in which I was born into, we had a climate emergency.

Inequality is rife at so many different levels of our society and making sure that we overcome those challenges just felt like there was no other choice. If I wanted to have a future, I had to be engaged and in that struggle. So yeah, it's hard for me to define like a moment of entry because it's been so a part of my consciousness and psyche for as long as I can remember.

Mary: Fatima, I'm very interested to understand that there's been a recent poll indicating that only 6% of the UK population would like to return to a pre-lockdown economy. So called 'business as usual'. How do you account for that and is the government set to follow through on that trend?

Fatima: This is a really exciting poll. It's a poll that we run with our allies at the New Economy Organizers Network. And it's exciting because of the start of this pandemic, one of the challenges we recognized was convincing people that normal is not what we wanted to go back to. That normal wasn't working.

Fatima: And it makes sense at a time of crisis. That the thing that you long for is to go back to yesterday. The challenge we set off with Green New Deal UK, but also the Build Back Better campaign is to accurately tell the story of what was happening prior to the pandemic and why it wasn't working for most people everywhere.

Fatima: This poll shows we've been successful, that our campaigning, that our alliance building, that our training of communities has been successful because only 6% of people now want to go back to the pre pandemic economy.

Mary: Hopefully you can hold the government to that and move forward with a Green New Deal.

Fatima: Exactly. I mean, that's what we're working towards and I have every hope that's that that is possible. Just looking at what we've been able to accomplish in just a few months.

Mary: Do you think the Boris Johnson led government is going to deliver on that?

Fatima: You know I think the Boris led government is challenging on many fronts because they are in many ways a populist government. So there's benefits to that in that they seem responsive and are working in a nimble way.

Fatima: And investing in many projects that us as progressive and as climate justice activists have been campaigning for for a long time. So there is change happening. The real dilemma here is, is it happening at the scale that is necessary? And the simple answer is no. And that is scary because what they're doing is taking our language - seeming like they are engaging in it but they're not doing it at that scale. And I remember back to last summer, something that Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London said, which is, the 'new climate deniers are the climate delayers'. And that's exactly what we have in this government is that their climate delayers, they're not denying its existence. They're not denying the scale of the crisis, but what they're doing is not meeting it with the scale of ambition that's necessary.

Maeve: That's no accident that they are using your language and, you know, trying to seem like they're on top of things.

Fatima: It is no accident. Um, you know, it was a bit of a bingo because it's almost as if they Google searched, 'What are climate justice activists saying?' And let's make sure we use every word they're saying.

Thimali: Do you think it is because they haven't got a Green New Deal of their own?

Fatima: Yeah. I think what they are realizing is that right now, what is winning in the court of public opinion are people with visions and very clear visions of what the future looks like and what this government hasn't ever been able to do and actually was elected on a platform of just telling us, they needed to come up with a sort of vision to point people towards a future. And what they've done is they've taken that language from us because it is working and it is polling well going into the pandemic, 'New Deal' was the thing that polled actually even better than Build Back Better. So they're seeing the success that we're having and they're just picking and plucking.

Maeve: And so what is the real, um, bones of the build back better campaign? This climate safe future that you imagined for the UK? What is that?

Fatima: So at the heart of what the build back better is, is building an economy that allows us to avoid climate catastrophe, but in doing so meets the immediate needs of people now.

Fatima: So recognizing that there's huge inequality, that's hardwired into this economy. Even in the last four months, the inequality gap has increased. So meeting the immediate needs is really important to us. And we've been working with doctors and nurses and frontline workers, standing with them and showing that they haven't been receiving the support that's needed, and that they've been supporting us despite the many sort of obstacles that face them - demanding that they are paid appropriately, that our public services are invested in, that in recovery, that we center green recovery.

Fatima: Essentially, that's what the role of the government is, what parts of the economy will invest in? Will it further invest in the fossil fuel economy? Will it give bailouts to airlines? Or actually should it be going to doctors and nurses? Should it be going to restoring, you know, green spaces and making sure that we have access, um, and rewilding our, our green spaces, should it be going into our education system?

Fatima: So that's when the build back better, essentially is. It's like how do we have conversations with society of what we value the most? And then how do we make sure we're investing in the things that we collectively value in, in a way that materially makes our lives better, but also, um, repairs our relationship with the natural world and allows us to decarbonize our economy.

Mary: Really. It's wonderful to see you again, Fatima, it's always great to listen to you and you're an exceptional young woman. I'm looking forward to being in your climate justice gang. Thank you for joining us, what are the ways UK citizens can support the Build Back Better campaign?

Fatima: First off, I'm in your climate justice gang, Mary, I think we all are in your gang. Well how people can be involved...

So this is the moment that you should be getting in touch with your local representatives and telling them, 'Hey, I know the government is discussing a recovery plan - because they are - and I want to stake in that our community wants to stake in that' and getting a meeting in the diary. The second thing you need to do is then make sure that you're turning up to that meeting with your community and making sure it's essentially a town hall for your MP, knock on your neighbor's doors, go across street, speak to the person managing the

local shop and say, 'What does the future look like for my/our constituency, what does it look like for our country?'

Fatima: And then the third is, connect with national efforts, get involved with Build Back Better, get involved with Green New Deal UK but also build local campaigns. And you can have fun while you're doing it and also build on those connections with your neighbours that people have been making over the last couple of months.

Maeve: So how can people stay in touch with you? Where can we find you online?

Fatima: Twitter is probably the best place to keep in touch with me. But also my email. My Green New Deal email is, [Fatima@greennewdeal.uk.org](mailto:Fatima@greennewdeal.uk.org). Um, if you forget that you can check on our website and there's lots of lovely faces that you can be in touch with that might live closer to you also and help support the work that you're doing.

Maeve: Amazing. Thank you.

Thimali: You're the best Fatima, bye!

***(MUSIC TRANSITION)***

Mary: Well, I must say that was a really hopeful conversation, I feel rejuvenated, reenergised and ready to get the party really going.

Thimali: Spot on Mary. and what's extra good is that Daiara and Fatima have done a fantastic job helping us frame up what the rest of the season is going to look like. So Mothers in every episode this season are going to help us understand some challenging climate issues while sharing how they get through them but also tell us about their innovative, regenerative solutions for reimagining our future post Covid. We're going to take a look at climate reparations followed by immigration, agriculture, biodiversity, new economics and I have a fun episode at the end of this season that you have to keep listening in for. And of course, don't miss the adventures of Maeve and Thimali, in our occasionally, a bit psychedelic minisodes as we find ways to get involved in collective and individual action for our climate.

Maeve: So, let us know who is in your climate justice gang. And if we need to know about them, should they be on our show? Tag us in your social media posts and send us your mother's suggestions by way of Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. You'll find us @MothersInvent.

Thimali: And lastly, don't forget to pull out your phones and send us your lock down Soundscapes. Why does it sound so different in your neighborhood since everyone's been inside? And how has it been helping you think differently about your environment? So you can jump to [mothersofinvention.online/contribute](https://mothersofinvention.online/contribute) to submit your entries and have a chance to be featured on the show.

### ***(MUSIC TRANSITION)***

Mary: Mothers of Invention is brought to you by Vulcan Productions and Doc Society.

Thimali: Our executive producers are resident clever clogs Jody Allen, Ruth Johnston and the very well-behaved, Matt Milios as well as Jess Search & Beadie Finzi who reign supreme.

Maeve: Our series producer is Thimali Kodikara. Our development producer is Shanida Scotland and our minisodes producer is India Rakusen. Our editor is Sefa Nkyi and our sound designer is Axel Kacoutié.

Mary: Our tough as nails line producer is Rebecca Lucy Mills, our engineer is Lisa Hack and social media strategist is Imriel Morgan for Content Is Queen.

Thimali: Team Vulcan is Andrea Dramer, Susan Grella, Kimberly Nyhous and Alex Pearson with extra props to big impact man, Mr. Ted Richane.

Maeve: In Brasilia, our fixer was Marcelo Marcelo Díaz and our sound recordist was Hudson Vasconcelos.

Thimali: My recording was taped with a little help from my friends at the beautiful Sugarhouse Creamery in Upper Jay, New York. Our theme tune was written by Jamie Perera and we are very proudly distributed by PRX.

*(MUSIC TRANSITION)*

*END OF EPISODE.*