New America
Resilience Audio Interview

ERTHARIN COUSIN

Feeding the hungry.

Editor's Note: *This transcript has been lightly edited for clarity and readability.*

Ertharin: Hi, this is Ertharin.

AMS: Ertharin, it's Anne-Marie.

Ertharin: Hi, my friend. How are you?

AMS: I'm fine. You and I seem to be destined to hear each other only. I was really amused when I realized, wait a minute, that's the same Ertharin that we're interviewing! Because I was not on the, you couldn't see me on the, on the app, so I'm delighted. So I know you have a hard stop at five o'clock and, and there's tons of things to talk about. This really, you know, should just be a relaxed conversation, where I'm going to start by getting you to just introduce yourself to the audience and look at I, we will be reading an intro, but we're not going to do it now. So you will get the full introduction with all your, all the various things you've done. And I know you've seen the questions. I will not stick to them in any formal way, but we will cover that. We'll cover that material. The one thing I would say is it works best if it's sort of short, but not too short. I'm gonna ask you to tell some stories, but I may interrupt you if I think we need to have a little more of me so that it isn't just, it doesn't sound like speeches.
Ertharin: Yep.

AMS: I'm sure you've done many of these, and I'll say, you know, this is a digital magazine on resilience and I'm really am interested and I'll, I'll tee it up and how you think about resilience and how you, I'm going to ask you to connect your personal resilience—you've seen things that many of us just don't have the guts to see, frankly—to how you think about the resilience of communities. And of course, ultimately, resilience in terms of food security.

Ertharin: Sure.

AMS: Okay. Terrific. So let's get going.

Ertharin: Okay

AMS: It's a pleasure. And I do actually hope that we'll be in the same room together soon.

Ertharin: We got to stop meeting this way, as they say. (laughter)

AMS: Ertharin Cousin, welcome to the program.

Ertharin: Anne-Marie Slaughter, thanks so much for having me.

AMS: We do. So let's, can we get going? Yes. Okay. Ready to go I've read about your career in public service and I know that it was really shaped by your family. And you grew up in Chicago, which is a city I love and taught in for a number of years. And you have written that your parents really got you engaged in public service very early on. Talk a little bit about that, about how that happened and how that then led to what has been such a distinguished career in public service.

Ertharin: Well, thank you very much for the question. The family, and my family in particular, if you're lucky enough, shape who you become as an adult, and then shape your passions. My dad, I like to say, was a community organizer before Barack Obama made it popular. And he was one of these people who, if you—well, you need to set the stage. I was born in 1957, both of my parents came up during the migration, my dad from Louisiana, my mom from Georgia, to find the different sets of opportunities than what was available in the south in the 1950s. They met each other, both living with old aunts, and went on to have this family. And my father and mother both believed that we were ripe, as a nation, for change for what was then the Negro. And they were very much, my dad especially, was very much involved in progressive democratic politics. Mayor Daley was in charge in the city and my father was involved in any number of campaigns to try and elect progressive candidates. And we lost a lot of elections, let me tell you. And we were the kids who passed out the literature for those elections. And both my grandmother and my dad owned restaurants and they owned neighborhood joints, where they gave away as much food as they sold, because people knew it was a place that they could go and get a meal if they didn't have enough money. That tells you right away—my dad and my grandmother were terrible business people, but great community people.

AMS: That explains your lifelong career in food. Clearly your family was already providing food security to the people around you.

Ertharin: Very much so. And if it wasn't in the restaurant, it was at our dinner table. There was always Congressman Danny Davis. I grew up with him sitting at my dinner table with my dad, fighting about electing different candidates and making change on the city's west side and particularly in the Lawndalecommunity. But those early conversations that I had the opportunity to witness and the work that they performed really shaped my belief that people could make a difference, regardless of what the systems were that created the challenges that people faced; that working together, people could make a difference.

AMS: That's wonderful. And it was a particularly critical time in our nation's history in terms of having fought World War II on the side of the good and the right as certainly by our own narrative. But a lot of people, and particularly a lot of soldiers of color, came home and said, you know, this doesn't look like what I've been fighting for. And as you said, the 1950s were really, they incubated that—that change in the civil rights movement in the 60s. But what's interesting, as I listened to you describe how you came up and thinking about resilience and the ways we can conceive of resilience, you're describing a very close knit community, lots of tightly woven relationships, and people who knew each other. And did you have a sense of being, I mean you were in Chicago, but in Lawndale, did you have a sense of being part of a smaller community?

Ertharin: Well, you have to remember, this was during a period of time when the racial segregation patterns in Chicago's housing community were such that no matter who you were, doctors, lawyers, the baker, the restaurant owner, the tavern owner, everybody lived in the same neighborhoods. The neighborhoods weren't opened up so that income defined where you lived. Race defined where you lived. And so community was very much about everyone working together to ensure that the communities were stable and safe. Andwe would always laugh because if you did something wrong, the neighbors would discipline you and then tell your parents that they had disciplined you before they even got out of the car. You don't see that kind of solidarity in the community, let alone in parenting, today. But back then, that was how we lived everywhere. The neighbors felt as much responsibility for the children of the community as they did for their own children. And that gave you a sense of wellbeing, that I think many young people miss today with all the violence on our streets, particularly here in Chicago.

AMS: Yeah, and as you say, Chicago of course is still deeply segregated as so many cities are, but it is less segregated by class. In other words, that you do not have the same doctors, lawyers, bankers, all the way up and down the income chain necessarily living in the same places. So it's an interesting and quite wonderful description of people being aware of each other and forging those relationships. Take us, from there. And I love the idea of your father and the restaurateurs in your family giving away food, but take us from there to your belief that people could change; you clearly had a sense of politics. How does that then take you to a career in food security?

Ertharin: Well, let me just add two things that I think are really important and that shaped my beliefs. And that is I was part of the archdiocese busing program as well. And so I was taken out of the inner city Chicago and on a yellow school bus to la Grange Park where I was one of two African Americans then in my eighth grade graduating class. Because there was a belief that at that time, you will remember and recall, that we believed that if we could provide a different set of opportunities for the best and the brightest that we could provide a new set of possibilities for African American children. And so I went. That gave me the ability to know people who weren't part of my community and understand that despite the systematic challenges that we had in Chicago, that there were good people who didn't look like me. And that was really important to shaping my beliefs about how all people working together can make change. And not just people who share your race, your background, or your culture.

AMS: That's very interesting. And also means...Did you then have white friends when you in the school that you were bused to?

Ertharin: I did have white friends in the school that I was bused to. Well, you know, it was me and Russell Morris in my class and so, if I didn't have white friends, I was going to be a very lonely young woman.

AMS: You must have developed the personal resilience though at an early age; that must've been scary.

Ertharin: It was very scary. But you know what? Resilience is all about having the ability to cope with shocks and crisis and differences and continue to move forward. And so again, knowing that I had this community and this family that was supporting my experiences in the suburbs, even though they weren't there, I could always go home if it didn't work out. It gave me the support that I needed, the safety net that was required to take a chance.

AMS: Yeah. That's, I think that's a very, very important piece of, as you say, adapting to change and moving forward. That you know you've got an anchor, a foundation, a place to retreat to that then gives you what it takes to keep putting yourself out there. Because I can only imagine what it felt like to be the first African American students in a white school or in a completely different neighborhood, you know. When you're kids, even when you're an adult, that's scary stuff.

Ertharin: You know, I will tell you a really brief story here, that about a year and a half ago, the Hyatt hotels honored me during Women's History Month. And one of the reasons they chose to honor me was, yes my work with WFP, my work as U.S. ambassador, but also because of my resilience and my continued belief in people. Despite what they'd learned, I wasn't even aware that this was part of their decision making. What happened was the vice president of diversity at Hyatt lead a workshop with his employees and he asked him to tell a story about an event where they were uncomfortable about race, and one of the women stood up and told a story about when she was in seventh grade and she brought home the only African American student in her school for a sleepover. And her father came home and said: “I won't have a n****r sleeping under my roofs.”

AMS: Wow.

Ertharin: And her mother didn't push back. And as she told this story and she named the person, it was me.

AMS: You’re kidding.

Ertharin: Yeah. And so the person who was leading the seminar, a personal friend of mine, and he just couldn't believe that these worlds, his personal world and his work environment were intersecting in this way, a way that gave him the ability to use me as an example of overcoming that kind of challenge to continue to believe in people and move forward. And then he brought us together on the stage with our mothers for this Women's History Month event.

AMS: That is marvelous. But you're underlining a couple of things that I really do think are important, aside from just personal courage and persistence and again, the support of a strong family or a strong community. But you did also then, as you say, encounter difference very early. And understanding that you could navigate difference yourself, but also discovering that—even among what seems different as you say—there are good people in different settings in a way that gave you confidence.

Ertharin: Yes.

AMS: You really have had a career spanning many different organizations, but the overarching theme has been combating hunger, combating what we call food insecurity, because sometimes you have food and sometimes you don't. When I think about what can sap people, and it is if you're hungry and you're irritated and you can't focus and you think about that for children in school. This is one of the most,undamental human needs, right? Right. And so, in the first place, why did you choose hunger? And then we'll talk about the actual work that you've done and the resilience you've seen in others.

Ertharin: Sure. I didn't choose hunger. Hunger chose me. Very, and I don't mean to be too cliche, and I apologize, but I mean that very sincerely. Most of my career, as I'm a lawyer by training, I studied international law with Dean Rusk down at the University of Georgia, and came back and worked in politics and government on issues related to equity and equality and changing regulations to provide for affirmative action opportunity for businesses. All while continuously working to elect candidates that believed in those issues of equity and opportunity. When we finally won a presidential election with the election of Bill Clinton, I went to Washington, first as the deputy chief of staff of the DNC, and then as the White House liaison at the State Department. And while serving as White House liaison at the State Department, I had the opportunity to work on the women's conference in China, with the then first lady Hillary Clinton. And this was before the China as we know it today. And in Huairou, outside of Beijing, the conference was held in a very rural area where you saw the poor and the malnourished in China. And so I was building all of these experiences, both of the challenges of hunger at home and food insecurity at home and then seeing it in China and having the opportunity to travel to South Africa. And so my experience of seeing those without access to food was beginning to shape a desire in me to make a difference in this area. After Clinton’s second election, I took a position with the retail food chain in Chicago, Jewel food stores, as their vice president of government and community affairs, with a goal of working with them to build stores in underserved area, what we call food deserts. How could we serve these communities profitably and equitably to ensure that the populations living in these neighborhoods had access to affordable, nutritious food? And while performing that work, the Clinton administration also then appointed me to the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development. And I must tell you, that was getting a graduate degree in agricultural development. I sat on a panel with some of the leading experts in food security and agricultural development. I listened more than I talked and I learned a lot.

AMS: Isn't it true that often, when we look at problems of food insecurity, one of the problems is that there's the agricultural community, and then there's the nutrition community and of course, there's also the commercial community, but the nutrition folks and the agriculture folks often don't intersect?

Ertharin: Well, they're better at it today than they were back then. The reality of it is, you can follow development activity based upon sources of funding. The nutrition community is funded out of health budgets. The agricultural community is funded out of development or agriculture budgets. And as such, the programs that they would develop, the projects that they would put forward were siloed because they were donor-driven. And it wasn't until the 90s when evidence began to come forth that demonstrated the relationship between food as medicine and that children were not growing to their full potential when they were missing those first thousand days of adequate nutrition, that women were impacted by a lack of access to micronutrients, that you began to see those, those funders then recognizing the value of integrating the programming activities. And when the funding integrates the programming activity, the development actors will then integrate the programming activity.

AMS: Yes, plenty of experience with that in a non-profit organization. So let’s think about the different contexts in which you work. In some cases you have chronic food insecurity, right? That the land really can't support the number of people, and obviously climate change is making that worse. Or just basic poverty often combines with the inability to grow the kind of food that would support you. That's chronic hunger. But then you also have of course, situations like famines and floods, or a terrible heat wave, where suddenly, a community that had been feeding itself can do so no longer. Do you have to think about those completely differently or are there some common themes across them?

Ertharin: Well, there are some common themes, but you do respond differently and the populations that you respond to are quite different. In chronic, severe food insecurity you are often unfortunately dealing with those who are vulnerable people living in vulnerable places. They're the landless. They're those who are subsistence farmers. They're those who, here in the United States, don't have access to enough income to support regular access to affordable, nutritious food. How you address those are directly related to building more resilience in those populations from an agricultural standpoint. And what can I do to increase the productivity to support the partners who will help increase the productivity of the agriculture that is under cultivation that will support the development of markets? Orthat will ensure increased incomes for those households so that they can support food not only during the harvest but during the lean season in urban areas. What can we do to increase access to nutritious food, either by supplementing the incomes of those individuals or working to reduce the costs of the food that they access. And so in those chronic situations, you are working to develop longer term responses to supporting the needs of the population I with a goal of giving people the ability to ultimately feed themselves. In quick onset emergencies, acute situations, you are just trying to get food out to people as fast as possible so that they can stabilize and you can address the challenge that created that quick onset emergency. Right now, that's what's happening in the Bahamas. Lots of people moving very fast to move food to people who have lost everything. And then over time, you will evaluate the different populations, their different needs, and work to address those needs. Not just with your tools,but more aligned with what the population actually needs to recover.

AMS: Hm. Tell us about some of the bright spots of when you were working with the World Food Program. I mean, you've seen many of the toughest food situations in the world in places like Yemen or Syria or Somalia, but there were bright spots, too. So tell us, where there are examples you've seen of building a stronger, more resilient food ecosystems.

Ertharin: Sure, I can. I'm so proud of the teams that I've had the opportunity to work with throughout my career that there are any number of examples of bright spots. Let's start with Guatemala, where I was working with what was the Feed the Future program in the U.S. government when I was serving as ambassador. We were able to not just increase the quantity and quality of yields, but work with smallholder farmers to support the development of export markets for those yields that increased the incomes of the household, giving them the capacity to not only feed their children, but have money for the children to attend school. And as I asked one woman—I will never forget this—I was standing with a woman in her field, in her half- or three-quarter acre plot. And I asked her, “what difference does this work make in your life?” And she said, “that's my husband.” She said he would always need to go to the United States for us to have enough money to eat during the lean season. But because we're able to earn money and save a bit, we can support our family all year long working together and he doesn't need to go to the United States. When we talk about migration and populations moving for opportunity, the people that I met would much rather stay at home if they have the economic opportunity to feed their family and pay their bills from their own labors at home. And that's what we were providing. And it was exciting. We not only fed their families, we kept their family together.

AMS: And you were coming into a community and offering new tools, or supporting people who already knew what to do in the community, but just didn't have the wherewithal?

Ertharin: We were providing new tools and most importantly, we were providing market access to a commercial market. If you work with farmers to increase the quality and quantity of their yields, but you don't provide access to a reliable market that will pay them a fair price for those yields, you won't sustainably change their economic situation or their food security situation.

AMS: Well that's interesting because that also says that just subsistence farming, just growing having enough food to keep your yourself alive, won't do it. It's got to be farming that then generates income. That then allows people to build their personal resilience, to send kids to school, to have enough to weather the small crisis, that the money piece is as important as the actual food piece.

Ertharin: Without a doubt, without a doubt.

AMS: Really, really interesting. Are there places that you could call out for particular resilience in the face of either a famine-like event or a natural disaster where you could actually see that they had built resilience?

Ertharin: I think Ethiopia is a great example of this. This is a country that you will recall during the 1980s led to the Feed the World movement and the songs and you know, “We are the World.” Because when famine hit, they completely relied upon the international community. Without the support of the international community, even more than the hundreds of thousands who starved would have perished. In 2016, when, because of the El Nino, the rains didn't come, the systems that the Ethiopian government had developed and launched in response to the drought supported their ability to provide the assistance that was necessary to their own population. They had worked to create systems for safety nets as well as to create systems that supported farmers' ability to cultivate, because they were able to give many of the farmers more access to drought-tolerant and drought-resistant seeds. And so the level of impact [of the drought] was limited, much more limited compared to what the impact would have been five years, 10 years, 15 years before. Yes, they still needed assistance from the international community, but the largest contributor to the response was the Ethiopian government, not the international community.

AMS: That's interesting. So taking the most from the initial response. And it's a country with a long, proud, strong history as well. I want to talk about food in conflict, because often when we see a famines or chronic food insecurity, it is connected to the places where we have chronic conflict. Again, we're thinking about Yemen orEthiopia before, Somalia, Syria. How do you think about working on food issues in cases of conflict? How do you build the capacity to feed themselves when they're adjacent to the real danger of violence, and fleeing, and the dangers of conflict?

Ertharin: Right. Let me take a step back, and simply say that the response to hunger during conflict is much more akin to a response to a quick onset emergency. These are individuals who are dealing with shocks. And I would argue that they're dealing with shocks that don't end when you are in a situation of a war zone. In Yemen, I slept in a bed and watched the flair, the tail of a missile as it hit the ground. And I couldn't imagine a mother watching that every night and then responding to an expectation that she will go to the fields and work and try and cultivate crops as opposed to protecting her children. The first priority for families in these situations is safety. And that does not leave them with the ability to perform vocational activity, money making activities. There is a desire on the part of many, of some, funders to suggest that we should simultaneously work to build resilience in these populations through support for development activities. The resilience that we can build is much more related to ensuring that we can get access for children to education, so that we have schools in these long, protracted crisis that provide an opportunity for children to continue to grow and develop, despite the situations that they're living under. The reality is that farming, livestock maintenance—the activities of many of the poor in places like South Sudan and Yemen—are not realistic for a conflict-affected population. And so we need to balance between our intellectual desire for resilience building and the reality that people living with the threat of attack are facing on a real time basis.

AMS: That's interesting because we know that human beings are designed to take stress, whether it was being chased by a wild animal or whatever dangers we face, but our cortisol levels go up, our adrenaline levels go up, but then they're supposed to come back down. And if you can do that, you can build the capacity to withstand shocks. But as you point out, in conflict where you're constantly afraid for your security, and that can also be in cities with tremendous gun violence, you never actually have a chance to settle back to normal. So your cortisol levels are always elevated, and it is a long-term trauma. It's interesting to hear you say that effectively you have to treat it like an onset emergency, except yes, children and people where you can possibly give them the ability to have a different future. But that's, that's quite consistent with what I know of just generally dealing with people who are being repeatedly traumatized. I want to move us back to the United States, because I do think often when people hear about hunger or food insecurity, they think about countries around the world. They think about the Middle East. They think about Africa. They might think about Central America. But of course, many, many American families go to bed hungry and many kids come to school hungry. So what is it that allows us, in such a wealthy society in the United States, to have hunger in our midst?

Ertharin: Let me expand it to hunger and malnutrition, because we have a growing challenge of overweight and obesity that are the same families that are food insecure in many communities. And why does that happen? It happens because the safety nets that are in place in our country are inadequate to support the nutritious food needs of an individual or a family for an entire month. And so if you are dependent upon a minimum wage job, or the social benefit system in theUnited States, your ability to meet your household needs and demands and to feed yourself and your children healthy foods are in complete conflict on an everyday basis. You talk to mothers who are making decisions between addressing a medical emergency, taking a child to the doctor in the box at the corner, and paying in cash to see a doctor because the child has congestion in their chest and can't breathe. And then that means they have no money that night to support access to food. So that same child goes to bed hungry. And you talk to mothers who are balancing between paying car fare to get to jobs that pay the minimum wage, and having enough to provide for breakfast, lunch, and dinner for their children. And depending upon the social safety net systems, whether that's food banks, food pantries, or other community aid, to try and make those ends meet on a regular basis. And then the decisions that they make about food, what food to purchase, is the food that fills stomachs. It's the high calorie, it's high salt, it's high sugar. And so we're seeing an explosion of overweight children. I was talking to a pediatrician just last week who was telling me about the increased number of cases of adolescent high blood pressure, teenage high blood pressure, that she's seen because of children being overweight. And we know that we now have more people in the world who are suffering from chronic, non-communicable diseases as a result of being overweight and obese than we have people who are suffering from undernourishment and hunger. And the impact that malnutrition, whether overweight or undernourishment, has on both the individual, the family, the society, and GDP are quite significant. And this is creating health challenges that are having GDP impacts here in the United States, directly related to our healthcare costs. So these are the kinds of issues that we're not talking about right now. We as a society here at home, we are talking about eating better, but what we see is this is those who are eating better are the middle class and the affluent.

AMS: Yeah, it costs a great deal to eat healthy. I’m often noticing when you're in an upscale community, where there's all sorts of very healthy food, you know, the prices are far higher than they are in a typical fast food restaurant, where you've got a dollar menu, where people are watching their dollars. But what I hear also is, again, the length between different systems. Not having enough money then suddenly means even, in very small amounts, you suddenly get a cascade effect, which is the opposite of resilience, right? That if you don't have the extra, whatever it is, 10 or 20 dollars, you don’t provide a good dinner that night, then if your child goes to bed hungry, their immune system is compromised. I mean there's so many intersecting factors where a resilient system would again have layers of contingency.

Ertharin: Exactly. And we too often look to the charity sector community to provide that social safety net that will deliver the resilience or provide the resilience to a community. But in too many places it's unavailable or what is available is inadequate to meet the needs of all of those in need in a particular community.

AMS: I have to throw you a curveball question at this point, or maybe it just a little unusual. You often, when you talk about food insecurity around the world or in the United States, you talk about mothers and mothers trying to feed their children. In your experience, would you say women are more resilient than men?

Ertharin: What a loaded question!

AMS: I'm just struck, you know, with the mothers who walk vast distances. Women who are left home when the men go out.

Ertharin: The women are, even in 2019, the ones who are left at home with the children. The women are the ones who are making the decisions in most households around the world about what the family eats tonight. And the women are often making the sacrifice of not eating to ensure that the husband and the children have access to food. We see it here at home, we see it in communities around the world. What made me hesitate was not the truth of your statement that women are the nurturers, because that is the role that women performed historically and today in cultures both similar and different. But I've also had the opportunity to sit with men who leave their families to find income, to find work, to ensure that the mother has the ability to feed those children, that he can send money back home to support his family. And I am struck by the emotional distress many of these men experience when they leave their families. I think there's a notion in our world that men are less concerned about the food security of their children or the education of their children. And I have found that to be untrue. And that the women embrace the task of nurturing, but the men also embrace the responsibility of providing support where they can. But too often they cannot.

AMS: Yeah. Thank you for that. I quite agree. I think women are often resilient in a different way. They have less opportunity for action. But I completely agree with you about the risks that so many of these men take to be able to feed their family. And of course, not being able to feed your family is one of the very worst things you can imagine as a parent. So let's come back to your personal resilience again; doing this work, it's hard. You've seen situations where there really are bright spots and people learn how to feed themselves and communities become more resilient. But at one point, you described when you were the head of the World Food Program that you were in a refugee camp in Ethiopia and there were women refugees coming across the border from South Sudan, and there was a mother who had walked for a week, with three children, to escape the war and to find food. And when you met her she was outside a medical tent and her youngest child was being seen by the doctors, a child only six months old, and then she went in and the doctors told her that the child had died, and you describe the sound of her cry. The cry of any parent, a mother or father who's suffered one of the worst things any of us can suffer, which is the loss of a child. How do you maintain your resilience in the face of that? I think many of us who want to do this kind of work are perhaps afraid we can't withstand that kind of suffering and being face to face with some of the worst things that human experience has to offer.

Ertharin: Yes. The situation you described is one that will stay in my memory for the balance of my days. It was not a cry, it was a wail. It was just a wail of pain. And at that moment, my team looked to me for leadership, and if I could not stand with that mother and with my team, then how could I expect them to remain in this refugee camp after I drove away and continued to serve with the strength that's required to serve a population suffering through crisis? And so, I am a crier. I—my family will tell you—I cry during Christmas commercials, but I'm also disciplined and I know when tears are appropriate and when they're not. And when I must, I find inside of myself the strength that is necessary to lead. And that means keeping my emotions in check until it's appropriate. But that also means in order to stay mentally healthy, that I do find those appropriate opportunities to let go, to release. It's always been important to me to have a group of close friends who love me for me and not for my title and who I can cry and laugh with and drink a beer with and then fight another day.

AMS: Again, the personal resilience, like community resilience, what I think of is a web of relationships that supports us; family, friends, constructed family. So we have time for one last question and I wanted to end actually by asking you about relationships with your team. When you started at the World Food Program, you told your staff never to take a picture of you holding a baby with flies in their eyes or with an emaciated belly. And you said, “the world has seen enough of those babies to know that we can fail. I want the world to know we can succeed.” So talk about the value of optimism, of images, of hope, and of resilience and how that has informed your work.

Ertharin: When you're working with 14,000 people to feed 80 million people a year, the ability to get up every morning and do it again when there's not enough money, there's not enough people, there are not enough resources, requires that you continue to build a narrative of hope. A narrative of hope that supports the donors, the desire to continue to provide the financial support that is necessary because they believe you will get it done. The hope of a team that is sleeping on the floor in places where they are meeting the needs of those who are only overcoming hunger because of their work, and the hope of those that we serve, that they can depend upon us. If there was nothing else that is required of a leader in those situations, it was the capacity to deliver that level of hope to all of those different stakeholders in order to keep performing the work that was necessary, to ensure that we provide the assistance as required, to continue to attempt to work so that no child goes hungry.

AMS: Well, Ertharin Cousin, I think it must be apparent to anyone listening to this what a fine leader you are, and we are lucky that you've held the roles that you've held in really some of the greatest crises, during the toughest problems that we’ve faced. So I thank you.

Ertharin: Thank you. Appreciate you much.

AMS: So that was great. I'm going to just ask one more thing, which is I didn't, let me just say, let me introduce you and just say Ertharin Cousin, welcome. And then you can say glad to be here because I just plunged into the question.

Ertharin: Sure.

AMS: We're going to read the thing later, so let me just do that. And I am pronouncing your name correctly.

Ertharin: Yes, yes.

AMS: Good. All right. So I'll just do that and you can say whatever you want to say. Ertharin Cousin, welcome to the program.

Ertharin: Anne-Marie Slaughter, thanks so much for having me.

AMS: Great. We're good. Terrific. And it's five o'clock. I guess they said you had a hard stop.

Ertharin: Yeah. I'm going to give a speech about poly lateralism.

AMS: Oh my goodness.

Ertharin: All right. Take care. Bye. Bye.