

POD OF JAKE
#141 – MIKE SOLANA
AI-GENERATED TRANSCRIPT



Jake 00:16

Thank you, Mike for coming on and join me on the podcast today. It's great to have you and be able to speak with you You are the are a vice president at Founders Fund as well as an entrepreneur in residence over there. You're also the founder and CEO of pirate wires, a interesting media company that sort of operates at the intersection of tech and politics and culture. And you know, it started with firewire substack. But now you've got a few different sort of brands or verticals under there. There's the white pill, which I think launched a couple months ago, industry or the industry shortly after that, and pirate large podcast as well. So you're doing a bunch of stuff. And it's all great content. I've enjoyed it a lot over the years, starting with power wires and your Twitter. So it's great to be able to speak with you I think the best place for you know, for those who aren't as familiar to get started would be to tell your story from as early as you're going to start to where you are today and talk about some of the decisions you made along the way.

Mike Solana 01:11

Well, great, thanks for having me. My story. So I guess the version that the sort of founders one story for me begins in New York City. I actually just wrote a little bit about this. For firewalls that has interviewed Peter. We just published that today, Friday. I used to be an editor at Penguin Books, and I was in the habit back then I've just kind of reaching out to writers who I liked. Peter wrote an essay for Cato magazine, hit him up and he responded through that we became sort of acquainted with get coffee, through specifically something called the Seasteading Institute is where we first met, I was throwing meetup groups for them. It was a nonprofit of his and, and eventually, he brought me on to Founders Fund to work on his class at Stanford called CS 183, which became his book zero to one. So I was sort of like me and a colleague of mine, Scott Nolan built out that class, it was sort of like, kind of like a teaching job. But it was really like an editorial job just kind of distilling all Peters thinking into into chapters essentially. And in separately, doing sort of networking events and things like that for Founders Fund that evolved into a brand role. And pretty quickly, I took over the brand, sort of no one was that sort of on brand back then. So I just did it myself, and became Yep, just like the day I'm the CMO of Founders Fund. And maybe a few years ago started pirate wires, which is where I write raised a little bit of money for that and have a team there. That's my media company. And I guess that's kind of who I am.

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Jake 02:53

Awesome. Well, I appreciate you sharing that. And it's definitely an interesting story. Everyone at Founders Fund seems to have a very interesting story that's far from direct in terms of like, you know, it's not filled with a bunch of partners who graduated college and went into banking or consulting and then did and ended up in venture it's everyone's got a very sort of unique story. I want to go back just briefly, because you mentioned it to your time volunteering at the Seasteading Institute. This is like one of the things that sort of got me interested actually, in sort of this cutting edge frontier Tech, I think you call it sort of like sci fi stuff that can actually maybe happen in real life. The seasteading concept has always been really interesting to me, and then sort of bridged me and to, you know, okay, maybe we don't have to build cities on the ocean, like that might be sort of harder than necessary version. But, you know, can we do like charter cities? Or are there other ways to sort of experiment with, you know, these cities being able to govern in new and innovative ways and start very small and potentially scale or at least have their lessons that are learned from them and successes applied to, you know, larger cities and larger countries? Have you sort of have your thoughts on that space? Space, like developed it all over time, or, you know, as your interest in that space maintained? I'm curious to hear sort of the evolution of that particular interest on like the city building realm.

Mike Solana 04:19

Well, I got into seasteading a long time ago, so that was 15 years ago, I was 23. I was at my most libertarian, probably, that maybe not my most libertarian, certainly my most anarcho capitalist that I ever was, I really was taken in by the idea of two things, one of just building politically autonomous cities and then to meeting lots of other anarchists and that's just like very the stage of my life that I was in I would say, I was reading all the writers I was super plugged into the scene. And the idea of building a country from nothing was just exciting and I there are parallels at that point that I was interested in. So building a city from scratch was really exciting to me. Specifically in this sounds kind of silly, but Walt Disney World was a huge influence on me. Just the fact that it existed was exciting. I grew up going there as a kid. And I saw that they had, you know, their own public transportation and their own garbage facilities. And they grew some of their own food and their own power stations and things like this. And so well, Ron. I, I've always been interested in like, if you could start over what would that look like? And so that was what got me into the idea of seasteading. I think it was just a

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super ideological, optimistic space full of ideological optimistic people. And I would say that, over the years, the way my thinking is transformed or changed is just a little bit less ideological and a little bit more pragmatic. So nothing really came with the Seasteading Institute, and not much yet has come from I would say the the philosophical progeny of seasteading would be something called the charter cities movement. And that seems a little more grounded in reality, also very hard and haven't seen much by way of, you know, great success in America just yet. Um, I I've sort of grown. And I'm reluctant. I don't know that this is the right solution. I don't know that I'm in the right place. I don't know that I'm focusing on the right thing. But where I am right now is I'm interested in local politics, which is incredibly unsexy and really difficult and full of people who have really perverse incentives. But I don't see another way to fix any of the problems in the country. I think you'd like have to just get involved in this really shitty situation to change things. The charter cities movement, and seasteading especially was this was like, Well, fuck this, we'll just start the whole thing completely over. And I don't know, I look around, it's been 15 years, there's no progress. So I think it's sort of like the best time to get involved in local politics in a place like San Francisco, for me would have been 15 years ago, when I was excited about seasteading. And the second best time would be today, though. I'm in Miami. So I think this is a problem across the whole country. Everybody needs to be more engaged locally. And again, yeah, it's not exciting. But it's not nearly as exciting to see stunning, but I think it's, it's what we have, and it's where we have to focus.

Jake 07:28

Yeah, I think sort of the multi pronged approach makes some sense. You've got these projects like prospera, or even cul de sac and Arizona praxis. There's a few sort of companies or projects that are working in and around this, can we build a city from scratch space? And then, you know, there's also sort of less sexy, maybe not VC backed, just like charter city projects that are going on around the world. But then also you come at it from the other angle, like that's sort of the ideologues side, and then you come out from like, okay, maybe, you know, if we can't get these fresh starts, if it's not as easy as it sort of seems in the dreams. Let's go and try to reform some local government issues that we're having, obviously highlighted in San Francisco, but lots of cities in the country. I'll sort of I should mention, actually, during COVID, when, you know, cruises were basically going out of business. They obviously they've recovered since but I was sort of hoping that some rich tech person

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would like snap up a cruise ship during that time, and like, you know, see what they can make of a seasteading thing, even if it's not, like, fully permanent, at least, you know, do something.

Mike Solana 08:37

During the I think back during COVID, I tweeted about cruise ships, I think it was it was like, because that was why you have 7000 homeless people on the street. Why can't we just buy a few cruise ships and take care of this problem tomorrow? Just dock them at the airport in San Francisco and Statham and we're good to go. Homelessness, salt.

Jake 09:01

Yeah, it's funny, it makes sense. I hesitate to bring this up, but I feel like I have to because, you know, you've got like Heredia Khan, and you're all about, you know, saying these things that are sort of supposed to be on set. But my thing with homelessness for a long time has been, regardless of whether it's a cruise ship or whatever it is, like these people in San Francisco, you walk around and like these people are having, it's just terrible. Like it's not good. It's it's not a it's no way for a human to live. And so my sort of maybe overly controversial thing would be, you know, it should be basically illegal to be homeless. And if you are in a homeless situation, obviously a lot of these people are, you know, crazy and, you know, medicated and whatever, but then some are just kind of down on their luck, regardless of who you are. You should be sort of like brought to someplace that gives you you know, ample food and shelter and a place to sleep and like a reasonable human life for a relatively minimal cost. That's probably a lot less than paying for all They're, you know, clean needles or whatever the whatever else it is. And like, that's just I guess controversial, a little bit on like freedoms, but we've got tons of stuff that's illegal. And the homelessness problem obviously hasn't been solved. And it's only gotten worse. So

Mike Solana 10:14

what's the infringement on freedom here?

Jake 10:17

That you just like are not allowed to be homeless? Yeah, like, it's public territory, like you can't be on it. You have to have like your own private land or something.

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Mike Solana 10:27

I think that you look around, and you see what happens when you allow it. And it provided that you have an alternative that is safe and clean.

Jake 10:38

I mean, we're not we're not talking about jail here, or like anything, it's like a reasonable place to live,

Mike Solana 10:45

comfortable. Your option is the free bed that we are giving you or you move along those.

Jake 10:51

Yeah. So anyway, we won't get too deep into that. I know, I'm sort of preaching to the choir on some controversial ideas. And you guys, I think it's actually really history. I'd love to hear about sort of erratic con and how that came about. Maybe we can just tangent into that real quick. I think you guys held the first one this past year,

Mike Solana 11:09

was 2022. i So redcon was an idea that I had back in 20. It was I think, 2018 or early, early, early 2019. And it was set to take place, March of 2020. Back then, it's hard to really talk about how radical without bringing us back to sort of the headspace we were all in, in the late 20 teens. And at that time. This was just, it was sort of like wokeness was pervasive. This cultural authoritarianism, the sort of culture of I would say intolerance, when it comes to different ways of thinking or different ideas. Anything that was that was deemed not completely standard, I would say, pretty far left, politically, was relentlessly attacked, called anything from you know, it's like always racist, sexist, they would find racism everywhere. It was just like, it was a culture of silence, I would say it was a culture in which more than half of the country couldn't speak. And it wasn't just political, right. So like, things were dragged into the political but it was actually like, you would see this in the sciences, you would see this when it came to strange questions of psychology or parasitology. Like the the really weird stuff, like you couldn't even talk about. You couldn't even talk about like, like UFOs. It was it was like a weird, it was a weird time to be interested in ideas in, in America. In the sciences,

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what I saw was, you'd have like physicists, for example, who had a controversial opinion on one was dark matter, he didn't believe that it existed. He was completely banned from the world of physics, he wasn't invited to conferences, his all of his colleagues called him, you know, insane, or whatever it maybe he was, but like, why not be able to talk about that and biology. You saw that in the practice of biology, which is maybe biohacking, where people who are who believe in something like radical self determination, they have a right to their own body are completely marginalized from the community. And then eventually, came COVID. But that was a little bit that was a little bit later, it interrupted the conference, the point of the conference was, you know, at the height of you can't talk about anything. What if we talked about everything? What if we had a conference for people banned from other conferences was kind of how I built it. And it was just going to be a party, which also at the time seemed super, super, super not allowed the idea of having fun. There were always these crazy articles going after the tech Bros for these wild parties they were having, which is like, not even accurate. There were no parties. It was like nerds, right? Like, it wasn't happening. But I was like, maybe it should happen. Maybe we should, maybe we should be a little bit of the villain that they say we are. And, and we did that we just had a celebration of wrong think I would say like all of the things that you're not supposed to say out loud. And we did it in the context of a party in Miami. It was fun. It was exciting. But it didn't happen for a few years. Because obviously COVID happened, everything was canceled, punted it until 2022, when all was finally said and done. It was January. So it was like really the end of 2021. We were gearing up towards it, to do it. And at that point, culture was already shifting pretty fast. To the point where, you know, I released the idea in 2019. I was called a Nazi for things like, I mean, like really, basically, it was crazy to be called out specifically a white supremacist. And I think I build the conferences we were talking about, like, I built some of the topics it was like, it was like UFOs it was like sex work. It was we had I think there was at that point, the biohacking stuff was in there. It was like very vanilla and what feels to me today. Very good. nella, and it was dragged immediately into the political and framed this way. But by 2022, it was like, people were saying, I mean, same exact billing, very similar topics. And they were like, this isn't heretical enough, like culture was already changing. I think we got it sort of just at the right point, too early 2022. And at this point, now, the trick is like, I mean, how do you how do you do something like that? I think I think the culture has shifted significantly. I think the Overton Window is very broad, or not very broad, but it's broad enough, where where people feel basically comfortable sharing their ideas, again, to a certain extent, and I think that's a healthy change. I don't know what

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the future of something like retcon isn't in a in a culture like that, like, you know, just the culture still need her at a con? I think, yes, but probably not quite, in probably not quite the same. Manifestation, I think it'll look a little bit different when we bring it back.

Jake 15:59

Yeah, it definitely feels like you know, two or three years ago, somewhere around that time, maybe four years ago, like that whole, the whole phenomenon that you were describing sort of peaked, fortunately, and now, I don't think it's like, you're totally in the clear to say whatever you want, like, I was hesitant to even talk about the homeless solution earlier, there's also you know, I guess leveraged media, where you're saying it, you don't necessarily know who's listening is always a little bit of a different beast. But that was actually, you know, part of when I started doing what I'm doing with, you know, the podcasts and blog and whatnot, and late 2019, that's, like, at or around that peak time that you're talking about. And part of the reason why I did things, pseudo anonymously was like, I don't even consider myself a very controversial person, I don't really have like, very, that many really super controversial concepts that aren't at least, like, reasonably supported in some way. And yet, I was still sort of like, well, I don't really want to like my old colleagues, like seeing these blog posts, like I want to be able to write about whatever I want to write about and not worry about it. And at that time, it was just absolutely insane. The types of things that were considered controversial that were just like, not only not controversial, but like, correct.

Mike Solana 17:10

Things like due process, that was like the idea that due process would be considered controversial, free speech would be considered controversial.

Jake 17:20

Yeah, just a crazy time. So outside of heretical and you've also, you know, you mentioned you've sort of run the media efforts for Founders Fund for years now, you've been there for I think you mentioned like, 12 years or so. So it's a long time, I actually didn't realize until sort of doing deeper diligence here that in the last week or so how long you've been there and, you know, contributing, going back all the way to you mentioned, like, TELUS class at Stanford. Were you actually a part of like, the year when, you know, Blake masters was there and did the notes that became zero to one,

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Mike Solana 17:52

like, was not at MIT? Was he? Uh, I think he maybe he was an intern? I'm not actually sure he worked at seal capital.

Jake 17:59

No, but for the for the startup class. I mean, yeah,

Mike Solana 18:02

he wasn't. He wasn't a part of the class at all. He was. He was in the class. He had been taking notes. But that wasn't a part of that wasn't a part of like, building it. That was all me all me and Scott Nolan. With Peter, obviously. We were the ones who I mean, we built we distilled the thinking we collected the thoughts into chapters we built I mean, every chart you see in that book came from us, all the titles are ours. The thinking obviously is Peters, but that was us for and that was the first thing I was brought on for is really an editorial job for what became his book zero to one and zero to one is just basically verbatim as class. So yeah, it was not just a part of that. I would say it was a central part of that. And then Blake after those notes, he ended up working at teal capital and working on I think it was the book for a while with this guy, Jimmy calculator and then other stuff there that I'm not entirely sure if till capital is a slightly separate entity, it is a total this entity from Founders Fund. We're friendly with those guys, but like, I don't have, I don't know the structure as well.

Jake 19:08

Yeah, well, I appreciate your contributions to the book that is, you know, very fortunate for me.

Mike Solana 19:15

In it, it was one of the most important experiences of my life Peter is great. It gave me an amazing opportunity. And it really like changed everything for me.

Jake 19:23

Yeah, I think it changed a lot for a lot of people obviously being a part of it. It's a different story, but phenomenal book and just very principle that I enjoyed it a lot and I've read it a couple times actually

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over the last several years but um another thing you know, outside of that those sort of like the earliest days of your work there and then we're talking about credit card something newer, but you've always sort of been poking around with like different things you're doing on the media side there was like anatomy of next which was a podcast as well as like articles and things for I was listening to the podcast I don't know quite as much about the articles but there's like 50 episodes, I think ending a few years ago, and now pirate wire seems to be like, it's more of your personal thing than it is, I guess attached to Founders Fund. But can you talk through a little bit about how like, the evolution of this brand or your own independent from Founders Fund media brand have sort of come about and you know, where you're at with with pirate wires, sort of as of now?

Mike Solana 20:24

Yeah, so founders was a co founder in pirate wires, and also an investor. So they're closely linked, and I still work, I have a full time job at both places. And they're like, undeniably sort of interwoven and connected, I can't really separate the two and that's just how I've always done my work. My work is I put everything I have into everything that I do. Because if I don't, it's super selfish. I just, I can't, I can't focus if I can't be myself wherever I am. And and so I find ways to kind of weave it all together my cultural interests, my interest in science and technology, my interest in media, politics, philosophy, like that's an everything that I do. Anatomy of next was a pure, like, it was more science, technology, positive optimism, you know, I started that show. God, I think it was like six years ago, when, when that first came out, and it's funny to see like, you have these like, sort of techno optimistic people on Twitter now, and I've gotten in trouble from some of them who say that I'm not like, optimistic enough. And it's, um, like, I, that's what I did. Like, I long before these people were around, I was doing this in a vacuum of that. And I felt like, really proud of the quality of that show anatomy of next. And also like, it never quite, it was hard to know who is listening, right? It wasn't the same as writing or something on Twitter, where you get a feedback immediately. But I loved it, it was a labor of love, I would say to a certain extent, and I got a bunch of listeners and show I did you know, for Founders Fund, as the culture became more intolerant of every kind of, I would say dissent that existed, like a lot of what I was doing an anatomy of next I was, I was reporting on things that were fascinating to me, and exciting to me, but also, were increasingly controversial. Among throughout the media, and we kind of entered as America this, I would say, in the late 20 teens, we entered this, like, cultural wartime moment where nothing was safe. And, and I certainly felt like my

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friends, the people who were working on things, either building companies or working on exciting new technologies, or science and working in the field of science, are one of the fields within the field of science. I felt like they weren't really safe, you know, everybody was under attack. And, and that was coming from the media. And, and the media itself was becoming a more chaotic environment. Because of the maturation of social media with so many more people online, it just became harder to understand what was going on, it was just like a nasty, loud place where the good stuff couldn't really grow. And inside of that, like, while, like maybe at its worst is when the pandemic started. And, and that's when everything kind of went just to shit, right. And I was kind of at the most depressed I ever was, I wrapped up the third season of Anatomy of next. Then it was the summer of 2020, that sort of miserable summer. And I just started writing longer form for something called pirate wires, which became like, to a certain extent, I say, like creatively, like anatomy of Nexus peacetime and pirate wires is wartime. It was me sort of fighting for space for people who I cared about is how I think about it. And it's urgent at its original point. And today, it's like, it's that plus just clearing up the clutter. And I would say translating the chaos into signal and like finding just what is the message like what do people have to know about what's going on today to be in technology or science or just you know, in the world? And that's how it Yeah, I guess that's how I that's how I have felt creatively and how I evolved my work creatively. At this point, it's like I think we achieved a lot of what I wanted to back when I started pirate wires I think that that doesn't the sort of war between media and tech fields. Not nearly as bad as it once was. I think the culture war is super played out. I don't want to be talking about it or the more not in the in the sort of nasty weather. Some of the stuff is just too fun. Like, I'm following the Snow White controversy and it just like, it's like catnip for me. I mean, like, I need to know, like, every detail. But in general, it's like we got to get back to the stuff that was exciting. You know, before all this sort of went went to shit I want to be reading more about. I don't know, the stuff that inspires me and less about the stuff that makes me feel threatened.

Jake 25:10

Yeah, I mean, I think it's evident that you're starting to sort of shift in that direction or transition in that direction, I was reading some of the pieces on the new publication, the white pill earlier, you know, under the pirate wires, brand. And I think for anyone who's questioning you on Twitter or whatever about like, not being positive enough, just link them to that, because like, it's all extremely

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positive, you've got like pirate wires, obviously covers a wide variety of topics. And the the industry is more sort of, like, just news and like, just sort of facts and things like this. But the white pill is just like pure techno optimistic inspiration sort of stuff.

Mike Solana 25:51

Yeah, that comes from my Managing Editor runs that Brandon. And he early on was just like, the stuff that people love about your right, he went right to the links. He was like, the stuff that people love, and want, maybe even need are the moments that you talk about these crazy science, ambitious science projects, or engineering projects, like the big sort of geoenvironment stuff, and just cool, optimistic. And I thought, wow, like he wanted to do he wants to do a newsletter just on that stuff. And I thought, actually, yes, like, let's just, let's get back, let's remember who we are. Let's remember what it was that we were fighting for in the first place. And it's been really exciting to watch that flourish. And there is an appetite for it, people want it people are they people want to believe in something better. And, and they want permission, I think to just be positive and happy and like progressive in the way that is like, we are progressing as a people towards something better, I think they want to kind of slip back into that in. And so that's where we are kind of hitting it from every angle.

Jake 26:59

Yeah, I forget who was saying it the other day, but someone was saying like the term progressive got like sort of hijacked. And like we kind of want it back for like the actual good version. It's not something that we associate most people like sort of associate possibly not sort of like the far left or whatnot. But

Mike Solana 27:15

I consider myself a progressive, like, I just I am it's like, there's no other word for it. If you want the rest of society, like what are you left with, you have to be you, because there are people who just fundamentally don't believe that, that there's progress at all, I don't think that's the left, like, I think the left does believe in progress, they just have progress for the far left, let's say is communism, and that's not progress to me. But that's how they see it, they see it as progressing towards that ultimate communist ideal. There are plenty of people who don't really want things to change at all. And they

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want to you know, use maybe they want to go backwards a little bit, use a little less energy, you know, live off the land. There's a right wing version of this and a left wing version of this right now. And I'm certainly not that I am progressive, technologically progressive I am I think politically progressive i, i culturally progressive, I believe in a better world that we should be working towards.

Jake 28:06

Yeah, and I want to go back actually, and talk about so I guess, to try to separate this a little bit. And maybe you'll disagree with this. But we sort of talked about like sort of the freedom of speech versus not being able to say anything, that's like sort of one axis. And then like on another sort of separate spectrum, there's just sort of like the raw positivity and negativity and like, Well, I think we've come past the peak of, you know, being able to people can sort of speak more freely now. I think the prevailing narrative, especially around tech remains extremely pessimistic and negative. And we still have like a ton of work to do there. And obviously, you know, the white pills, helping a lot, you know, your tweets are helping a lot of what you're doing with tire wires is helping, but I found like this old article that you actually wrote, in going back again, like, nine or 10 years and wired, and the title was like, stop writing dystopian sci fi. It's making us all fear technology. Yeah, this was

Mike Solana 29:02

like my first entrance into I was nervous for all for the earliest years founders been I was I didn't want to be taking. I didn't want to be public speaking or writing I, I want it to be supporting a supportive role of people who I really admired on the team. And I wanted to kind of help them tell their story. And then over the years, I gradually got more into just leaning into my natural interest, which is, you know, writing speaking, tweeting, like this kind of stuff. That was the first piece of mine, that that was like my kind of coming out party, I would say it was that piece. And then that was like my first beat as as a writer was like, it was science fiction.

Jake 29:45

Well, so what was crazy about it, or one part of it at least, was that I don't know the last time you went back and read it. But you start in the intro. You're talking about how, you know there's a couple of Ebola cases in the US so there's a threat of an outbreak. And there's rumors of possibility of Russia invading Ukraine and AI fears are getting out of control. And it's like, wow, like, here we are. We had

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a pandemic, Russia has invaded Ukraine and AI is way better and fears are accordingly much higher than they were back then. So is pression, I think in more ways than one. But on this, you know, we've talked about like the news cycles and things like this, but and you know, the white pill talking about some of these big developments in space and energy and whatnot. But let's talk a little bit about like the fiction, like, I don't know, if you have any interest in producing fiction through or under pirate wires itself, or more generally, but why has fiction gone in such a negative direction when it comes to technology? And can you think of any, you know, approach to fix

Mike Solana 30:45

fiction has always been pretty negative, especially when it comes to science and in technology. I mean, there are all these outliers. And especially years ago, Peter always wants to talk about the Jetsons and things like this. And that's true. Like that was, you know, there was this vision of the future that existed that really permeated our culture in like the 50s. And the 40s. More one other 40s really was the 50s. That's like, when you that was the height of it, that you saw this. But the first science fiction novel, I mean, was that not Frankenstein? Like, I think that from the earliest days, it was that there was it was a fear sells. And so I'm reluctant to really diagnose society with some kind of sickness based on the fiction that we're consuming. I think that what happens actually is dystopian science fiction is much easier to write because there's so much tension in the story. And it's hard to imagine a world in which science and technology have solved so many of your problems. But actually, there's still tension. It's like a tricky puzzle for a writer just who wants to tell a good story that's gripping and fun, and, and whatever. So that that I think is like ground floor where the problem begins. But then when you're telling these stories, like regardless of why you did it, just because it's easy, and you're lazy. The effect is, yeah, it does tend to terrify people, like you tend to, you tend to be telling stories about the future that are only negative, and, you know, the culture just absorbs that internalizes that. And so today, it's like, we talked about artificial intelligence, there are really, there are no stories that I can think of one story that has been told, that you can point to and say, oh, there's this positive version of this thing that we're building. Every version of artificial intelligence is negative in film in television, other than I think, the movie her, and, and that movie was not even, like, produced by a science fiction director. That was I think, was that Spike Jones? It's, you're told, if you read up on it, it's like, there are all these different versions of what that movie was about. And the big one, it's like, it's like healing from divorce and loss of love and things like this. It's the themes

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are not science fiction, the themes are not are not, you know, politics, philosophy of the future and things like this. It's like, he, it's a metaphor for something else. But I think it's a beautiful movie. And I think the importance of it is, like, almost incalculable because when you're building this stuff, everyone who is building this stuff, like no, there are no bigger fans of science fiction than the people who work in the technology industry, everybody refers back to some book that was meaningful to them. And, and more often, they're not what they're referring back to are like, basically dystopian things, because that's all that there is. It's like this, this desert of anything else. And that stuff gets baked into what we build, even if inadvertently. And I think it's important to show people some kind of better future that they can work towards, and get your attention still. So you put that feature at risk. Like you create something that's beautiful and exciting. Star Trek did this really well, there was an entire future that was just like, really exciting in terms of technology and our interactions with it. But then it was like, you know, the Borg show up and you have to do something. And I think that's how you keep it exciting is you threaten the very best that we can produce by something external. And then we come together and we solve it to be solved that problem as a people.

Jake 34:19

Yeah, I would love if some of this stuff. Obviously, you've got sort of background, long background in media and even before Founders Fund working in books and things like this and thinking about narratives I would love if some sort of fiction type of Yeah, so it comes out of pirate.

Mike Solana 34:34

I wrote a book called Citizen sim. It's not, it's not in print anymore, so you can't get it. Um, I've wrote the sequel. I never published that. This was years ago. I did it for a new media company. Like, like me, I was 26 I think it was like, you know? No, it was 28 I think was like 889 years ago. Nobody knew who I was back then. I had no audience online. I had nobody who I could sell that book directly to In, that's how publishing works. Like if you don't have an audience that you can sell yours that you can sell your book to, or you're not, you know, ghost writing a biography for someone famous that the publishing company is going to throw all of their money into promoting, or whatever, your book is going to be published to die. And now, you know, the world's changed for me, I have an audience that does care about my writing. And I know that I can sell a science fiction book directly to them. It's a better time to publish it, and I've been sitting on it, it's maybe time to kind of revisit it. I was

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just telling my colleague at Founders Fund Trey Stevens about this, because he's thinking over some ideas to himself in terms of science fiction, on pirate wires, the future of pirate wires as a media company, there will absolutely be room for fiction. Right now. It's like we're building the first sort of core product. And that's going to be it's, it's a news. It's a news product. So it'll be a minute before we get there.

Jake 35:55

Yeah, I think I'd love to read the book, I did stumble upon it, and diligence and was sort of wondering what that was all about. And the sequel sounds great, too. So maybe, you know, even though it's out of print, or whatever, either you could get it going again, or maybe the easiest one would just be to get it up on Kindle, and see how receptive your audiences to it. I'm sure, you know, a ton of people would go after it, I would certainly do it. So that's, that's interesting. But, um, one sort of interesting question that I think also comes into play. When you're talking about, obviously, you know, the dystopian stuff can be a little bit easier than some of the positive visions for the future. The tech industry, obviously, and you know, venture capitalists, and all the way down, would love to have these more positive views of the future. And so there's a question that sort of arises like, Well, how do you actually make that happen? Like, outside of going and doing it yourself? Like, what does the funding of something like that look like? Whether it's like a media company, or a movie or like a YouTube, you know, channel or whatever it might be? And I'm sort of curious, your thoughts on this, obviously, Pirate wires, it sounds like was partially, you know, Founders Fund invested in pirate wires. And I'm not sure what the exact like funding dynamic was there. But I'm curious if you have thoughts on sort of like the best way to fund media companies, if it's sort of worth going and trying to start some, like, you know, the next Mr. Beast, discover the next Joe Rogan, whatever it is not. I mean, he was pretty discovered when he started the podcast, but even still, like, you know, these things go on. And there is like a power law dynamic similar to venture in terms of these, like, you know, media creators who blow up, is there a room for like innovation in the way that these things are funded, where maybe some more traditionally, tech oriented VCs could go and start funding some of these, you know, media companies, or movie makers, YouTube? People, whatever it might be.

Mike Solana 37:47

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I'm sure there's something that I haven't thought of. And eventually, someone will think of something interesting, but it won't be me. I don't. I don't see it. I think that it's never been easier in the history of the world to get online and say something. And if it connects, and you have an audience, you have an audience, and that's how they're built now. And if you don't, and you don't, then you don't. And like I don't know, there's, I don't know that there's a way for someone who's not the creative person to figure that out. Before it's happening. You see little little inklings of it. On Twitter, you'll see people sort of start to pop off on YouTube and whatnot, people who join the show or whatever. But in general, we're in this open world now, where you have the tools, it doesn't cost anything. I'm nothing stopping you. That's why I never really care about these conversations about like, you know, the system is keeping this or that kind of person out of media. It's like, nothing's keeping anybody out of media. No one No one No one, like gave me a platform. I wrote for years and years and years and years and years and years and, and built a platform. And it wasn't even really until recently that that it took off, right? Like people will say, Oh, well, Founders Fund, it's like the brand. It's like, I didn't have a platform for most of my time at Founders Fund. When I had the platform was it was for most of my life. I was nervous. To be honest about my opinions online. Because I was writing fiction, not nonfiction. And I didn't want my fiction. My ambition. My dream was to be a professional fiction writer, I wanted to write science fiction. I wanted to write you know, adult fiction, adventures action. I wanted to do movies and television and and I wanted to be seen as a creative person, not as a political person. And I was really worried that if if people kind of knew how I thought about politics and whatnot, I'd be outcast. And and then I worked at founders wanted, I didn't want my opinions to impact my colleagues negatively. It was really important to me to be uplifting my team and not exposing them more than they already were. It wasn't until I decided that what we really needed was someone to sort of fight back that I started offering my opinions, I started being more honest. And, and at that point like, it really was almost an overnight shift. It was like I changed my profile pic. It was no longer me it was Ulysses S. Grant, I started speaking a little more honestly. And the moment I started speaking a little more honestly, I started gaining more followers, I started getting more attention, I started gaining more readers, not just grew and grew and grew until, until until COVID, when I started writing long form. And that's when it really went like just, you know, it's a spiked, upward rocketed upward from that point. And that came from me just using the tools at my disposal, using the tools at my disposal to speak. And so what is the future of like funding those things? I don't know. I don't know that. First of all, they even need funding, which is one of the big problems like

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the average person doesn't, I took funding, because I want to do something a little more ambitious than just me with a mic. I want to build a team, I want to I want to really cover the news. That's a little bit beyond just like sort of me out there being an influencer. But I don't know, like, I just I don't know that you need. I don't know that you need the money. I know that people want to spend the money. I know that people want to invest the money, and you're gonna see people try and find the next Mr. Beast and things like that and do it. I just don't know that the next Mr. Beast needs it necessarily.

Jake 41:33

Yeah, I guess the reason I think of it is more so like you mentioned, you know, you're writing for years and years and years before anything clicks, and getting, even if it's just a one man show, to begin with for a long time. I wonder if raising some capital to give you some runway to just sort of produce and produce and produce and produce and see if you sort of are able to hit the band and the cop and the hockey stick. could sort of like to your point, there's no, there's nothing preventing people from creating content and things like this. But how many people might be willing to sort of go more full time on doing what they're doing? Maybe currently as like a side project or whatever, and just spend time on it for years and see sort of give it a real go. Of course, you could do it without the money. But I just wonder if that would sort of move the needle on some people who sort of otherwise might not have the, you know, courage or whatever you might call it to sort of take the leap. But coming back to, you know, your big break, you talk a couple times about like, you know, fighting for space, it's a very interesting sort of story that you mentioned with Bing, I it certainly resonates with me on like, when I whenever I'm, you know, employed, I sort of am concerned about being like, just very out there online, because it's like, well, I don't want to reflect. It's not even like, I don't want to reflect poorly. I just don't want to like I feel like if I'm working for someone, I sort of represent them and that brand and my colleagues and I'm hesitant to be who I otherwise am, you know, like when I'm not employed and can just be myself, it's there's like a little bit of a, just a tiny bit of friction there. That's sort of the difference between posting and not posting or writing and not writing or whatever it is. And the thing that it sounds like was able to take you over the hump on that was this sort of urge to, to go and like fight for for space for the people that you believed were sort of like doing good things and being treated unfairly? Are there specific examples or any particular instance you remember from from that?

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Mike Solana 43:38

Yes, but there's nothing that I can say that won't implicate someone else and make them seem like they needed someone to defend them or whatever. And I don't want to Sure, I don't want to do that. But

Jake 43:52

that's fine. We can get

Mike Solana 43:54

from a place of like, no one is defending this person who's being unjustly persecuted for something they didn't even do. Meanwhile, their net impact on the world is overwhelmingly positive more than 99.9% of the people on the planet. And I'm not going to just sit by and and watch them be attacked anymore. I'm going to jump in and say something about it.

Jake 44:22

Yep. So let's talk about something that's actually positive. I saw you tweeted the other day 40,000 Americans, while this part is not positive 40,000 Americans killed by human drivers. But the positive piece of that is that of course San Francisco has approved legislation so way Moe and Cruz can do their full self driving.

Mike Solana 44:43

Well, California, California, California did the rule was the decision was taken out of the hands of San Francisco or was never placed in the hands of San Francisco. It was it was it was run by the state started program started five years ago. And now they've approved it the city is important because the city is He's resisting it and every step of the way, and now they're trying to reverse the decision.

Jake 45:05

Yeah, I think this is like one of the most underrated things like I've been talking about it for a long time about, like, even during COVID, like, at its peak, if you sort of compared it, I don't know, the numbers like fresh in my mind. But the number of just, you know, forget America worldwide, the

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number of like road traffic accidents that are, you know, fatal is like, so ridiculous. And we just accept it, as you know, this, it sort of happened, like, gradually over time as cars became a thing. And so like, when something's gradual, instead of overnight, like the pandemic, we tend to not sort of just like quiet, it's like, you know, boiling the frog or whatever you just like, sort of get used to it slowly over time, and then you never react. But I can't believe like, to me, the government should be not only not blocking this stuff, but like, giving as much possible support in terms of regulation, and also like assistance with funding or whatever, that should be like a national priority to get all of our roads to be fully self driving like autonomous vehicles, because you can basically, I mean, I think even with the technology that's around today, I don't know exactly what the numbers are again, but it's like, you could get like 90%, less car traffic deaths, just implementing the technology that like, for example, Wei, Mo Cruz and Tesla have today. And obviously, these things are continuing to improve. So just crazy to me, and it's good that obviously, things are taking at least a step in the right direction. But maybe in closing, I know, we've only got a few minutes left. But um, you talked to the top of the episode, when we were talking about the city building and stuff like this, that actually, your opinion has shifted a bit to where like, local politics is actually like sort of the most important area to get involved. And obviously, you know, people are hyper focused on this in San Francisco, which, you know, you wrote about sort of the tech people leaving and had a great article on that. And now, you know, people are saying, well, SF is back, it's the place to be whatever. But there's still these issues with local politics. Obviously, you've moved yourself it sounds like but do you have thoughts on sort of the current state of San Francisco and you know, how you think about

Mike Solana 47:09

I mean, SF for work, like once a month, and I'm going to, I love San Francisco, people often mistake me as like an anti San Francisco person I love it's the only city in America that I love New York, but it's different. It's like New York's my home city. It's, it feels my mom's from New York, it's like, it's, it's like my family rather than like my chosen love San Francisco is the place that I just really want what's best for it. And what motivates me on the local political discussion, there is just like, there are people who are destroying it. And it seems like they're doing it on purpose. And and the only way to stop that is to get involved. And so when you see people excited about San Francisco, and they're like, you know, return and all of this, again, if this like, it's this techno optimist group of people, they just have no sense of history whatsoever. And they have no sense of engagement, they tend to not be

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involved at all. And that's not even a criticism of them. It's like, that's what we all were 10 years ago, 12 years ago, no one was paying attention and like, What results is this? The difference is that 1012 years ago, everybody was excited about what tech was doing, not just within tech, but in the country people. Uber was like magic. When that became an Lyft, Uber, Airbnb, people were still extremely excited about social media. 12 years ago, people wanted to work at Facebook, that was that was still considered cool like I that is, we were in a different time, we are now entering a uniquely negative anti tech sort of cultural moment. And then San Francisco, the purported capital, it is the cat. I mean, let's just be honest, it is the capital of the tech industry. That is like one of the most negative on tech that exists in the country, it's going to be very hard. We can talk about awesome self driving cars are until we're blue in the face, it is going to become a labor issue. It's already a labor issue and say in San Fran, that's the real reason people were opposing it. It's the unions are mad about it, they just see it as a job killer. And so they don't care how safe it is. They don't care how many lives are protected. They see this as like you're getting rid of jobs, trucking jobs, driving jobs. It's like those Uber jobs that they ridiculed for the last 10 years. It's not good enough. There now like Don't you dare take those rubber jobs away. That's the fight. It's going to be a political fight. It's going to be a local political fight. And so like you can talk about tech optimism until you're blue in the face if you're not actually involved, at this level, at the unsexy level, when it's like we have to stop this piece of legislation and that requires talking about something that's really not popular online, which is like voting for stuff. Then I don't want to hear it from you anymore because I care about actually improving fittings and that's it's like the there's a positive story that you tell is a part of that. But you have to be willing to get in the mud and fight for it as well.

Jake 50:10

Definitely, yeah. It's gonna be interesting to see how things play out out there. It seems like it's been a volatile few years, but people are starting to maybe pay attention to some more the right things and get involved. So anyway, I know we're up on time. So I want to thank you for taking the time and coming on. It's been awesome talking with you. And I want to give you the last word, you know if there's anything else that comes to mind that that you didn't get a chance to share that you'd like to but also just sort of pointing people to you know, where they can go and continue to follow along and I know I for one, and we're going to continue to enjoy pirate wires and the white pill and

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everything going on there, including pirate wires podcasts that you mentioned, people should go listen to that as well. Sure,

Mike Solana 50:50

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