

3 Takeaways Podcast Transcript

Lynn Thoman

(<https://www.3takeaways.com/>)

Ep. 181: Top Takeaways of 2023

This transcript was auto-generated. Please forgive any errors.

INTRO male voice: Welcome to the 3 Takeaways podcast, which features short, memorable conversations with the world's best thinkers, business leaders, writers, politicians, scientists, and other newsmakers. Each episode ends with the three key takeaways that person has learned over their lives and their careers. And now your host and board member of schools at Harvard, Princeton and Columbia, Lynn Thoman.

[music]

Lynn Thoman: Hi everyone, it's Lynn Thoman. Welcome to our 2023 highlights episode. After each takeaway, I'll tell you who the 3 Takeaways guest is. I bet you can't guess who the guest is before I tell you. In each case, listen for the three beeps followed by a guest voice. Then I'll introduce the guest and you will hear a longer segment of what they had to say.

Here we go, enjoy the show.

Beep beep beep

Alex Azar: To be honest, if we just rely on the pharma timelines, we're not going to get there.

LT: That's Alex Azar, former Secretary of Health and Human Services, who shares previously unknown reasons for the stunning success of Operation Warp Speed, including how his selection of people was influenced by the Manhattan Project.

Alex Azar: If we do it the old way, we're just not going to get there. And I said to them in this meeting, we are the most powerful nation in the history of the earth with more resources than any nation in the history of the earth. We are the country that developed an atomic bomb in three years. We are the country that put a man on the moon and returned him safely to earth in eight years. We should be able to do things differently.

AA: And I said, so here's the thing, Congress has just spent \$2 trillion of COVID relief money. So literally any amount of money we could conceivably spend on clinical trials or manufacturing of vaccines therapeutics and diagnostics would have an infinite return on investment. If we could pull that forward by any, any period of time.

[Former Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar on Previously Unknown Reasons For The Stunning Success of Operation Warp Speed \(#174\)](#)

Beep beep beep

Shlomo Ben-Ami: Hamas doesn't see itself as part of a political solution.

LT: That's former Israeli Foreign Minister, Shlomo Ben-Ami.

Shlomo Ben-Ami: They say this very clearly then in their covenant, it says that the objective is to obliterate the state of Israel. It's not one of having a political deal with Israel.

SB: It is different in its magnitude. It's different in its barbarism. Nothing before like this was experienced in the Israeli-Arab conflict. It is more similar than what you saw in America with 9-11, only that here proportionally this was even bigger. So, in that sense, the shock was tremendous and the shock should explain in a way the reaction of the Israelis, of the Israeli government.

[Former Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben Ami on the Hamas Israel War \(#171\)](#)

Beep beep beep

Zoe Chance: First of all, the magic question is helpful and powerful because it's respectful.

LT: That's Yale professor, Zoe Chance, who teaches the wildly popular course, Mastering Influence and Persuasion.

Zoe Chance: If I'm asking you, what would it take? We're shifting the dynamic from me pressuring you to a collaborative problem-solving conversation that's easier and more comfortable to have. And I'm also respecting that you're the expert on your obstacles and your situation and your interests. And you know all kinds of things that I just don't know.

[Yale Professor Zoe Chance Reveals Smart, Simple Ways To Influence People To Get What You Want \(#156\)](#)

Beep beep beep

Mike Wirth: A responsible energy transition and an orderly energy transition is going to require three things, solutions, scale, and speed.

LT: That's Mike Worth, the CEO of Chevron on the race to meet the world's energy needs with lower carbon solutions.

Mike Wirth: First of all, there is no one solution. Electric vehicles are great, but they're not the only answer here. So, we're going to need everything.

MW: We're going to need every solution. Demand continues to grow. We're going to need more forms of energy. So we shouldn't be ruling things out right now. We should try to be ruling solutions in and proving

solutions that could work for the future. The second thing is that the scale of the energy system is just enormous.

MW: And this last year has shown how much modern life depends on it. If you look at the risks in Europe and the concerns related to the war, the prospect of insecure energy supplies is of great concern to economies around the world. So, we need solutions that can scale, not just things that can work, but can scale.

[Chevron CEO Mike Wirth On The Race To Meet The World's Energy Needs With Lower Carbon Solutions \(#170\)](#)

Beep beep beep

Christina Swarns: False confessions happen more often than people realize.

LT: That's Christina Swarns. Christina is a nationally recognized criminal legal reform expert and attorney who defends people condemned to death. Christina is one of the few people and even fewer Black women to have argued before the US Supreme Court and won.

Christina Swarns: As I sit here talking to you, right, Lynn, I would say to you, I would never confess to a crime I didn't commit, right? That's what all of us say, because we're confident that how is it even possible that those words can come out of your mouth? The reality is innocent people can and do confess to crimes they didn't commit. There are categories of folks that are more vulnerable.

CS: Children, we tell our kids, you go to a police station, right, you've got to kind of supposed to do what the police tell you to do. Like there's some baseline of expectation that kids should do what a police officer says. And so they do.

CS: People who have intellectual disabilities fall in the same space, right? So the elements of that system are these.

[Innocence Project Head Christina Swarns on The Horrors Of Our Criminal Justice System And How To Improve It \(#176\)](#)

Beep beep beep

Alan Mulally: One is people first, love them up. These are talented people.

LT: That's former Ford and Boeing CEO Alan Mulally on love by design, the secret behind two remarkable turnarounds.

AM: You want to create a culture of people working together that has talented people, that it's a safe environment where they can share what the real situation is. And they're highly motivated by a compelling vision of what they're doing.

AM: You want to make it fun because you're creating something out of nothing that is powerful, that's going to serve the world. You're going to do it in a very creative way where you are counting on working

together because you need everybody to do it. And so there's not a day that I go by, Lynn, where I don't say, thank you, thank you, thank you.

[Former Ford and Boeing CEO Alan Mulally On Love By Design, The Secret Behind Two Remarkable Turnarounds \(#152\)](#)

Beep beep beep

Paul Scharre: In this competition, DARPA, the Defense Department's Department of Mad Scientists, they created an AI system, an AI algorithm to go head-to-head against a human in a simulator in dogfighting.

LT: That's former Pentagon defense expert, Paul Scharre, on war in the age of artificial intelligence. And as you said, AI totally crushed the person.

Paul Scharre: But what was wild was that it actually used different tactics than how people fight. And one of the things that it did was it would make these split-second head-to-head gunshots. So the aircraft are racing at each other, they're doing hundreds of miles an hour, and there's a brief second, like a split second, where you could get a shot off and take out the other aircraft. This is basically impossible for humans to do this. But the AI could do this because machines can operate at superhuman levels of precision and speed and accuracy.

[A Chilling, Mind-Blowing Talk about War In The Age of AI With Pentagon Defense Expert Paul Scharre \(#151\)](#)

Beep beep beep

Adam Alter: Jobs and a lot of other tech titans were very, very careful even 15, 20 years ago, about exposing their kids to the same technologies that the rest of us were being encouraged to use.

LT: That's NYU professor Adam Alter on the rise of addictive technology and the business of keeping us hooked.

Adam Alter: So Jobs had been on stage at his final Apple event where he was discussing the iPad. And he basically said, you know, we should all have an iPad. It's great for our kids. It's great for education. It's going to democratize education. It's a device that allows you to do all sorts of incredible things. And as you would expect, he said everyone else should have an iPad.

AA: But then he was asked by journalists later on, so your kids must love the iPad. Now the obvious answer to that is yes, they think it's great. But he was honest and he said, no, we don't allow them to use the iPad. This pattern comes up over and over again that people who themselves work in the tech industry are the most cautious people when it comes to giving those same devices to their kids.

[Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked With NYU's Adam Alter \(#150\)](#)

Beep beep beep

Karl Rove: I want people to be able to participate in the American economy and not become monks when they go into government. So they should be able to invest.

LT: That's the one and only Karl Rove.

Karl Rove: When I went into the government, I was told you have to sell all your individual stocks and you only can invest in broadly based mutual funds. And so this idea of members of Congress trading stocks and making investments or their, at minimum members of Congress should be able to do that in my opinion, and they again ought to be bound by the same rules that they apply to members of the executive branch that you can only invest in broadly based mutual funds.

KR: But I worry less about that than I worry about the president because the president is the example that's set for the rest of the country. If you have shenanigans going on inside the White House and inside the president's official and personal family, then you're likely to have shenanigans going on elsewhere in the government.

[Karl Rove Takes A Riveting No-Holds Barred Look At The Frightening State Of American Politics \(#168\)](#)

Beep beep beep

Bill Owens: There is one issue between the United States and China, that is Taiwan. So it's good that we understand the other side of the story.

LT: That's former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Bill Owens, on the other side of the story.

Bill Owens: The other side of the story is that the Chinese were our friends in World War II. The Chinese, in my view, may have been the reason we won the war in World War II in the Pacific. The Chinese lost 20 million people killed in World War II, holding down 800,000 Japanese soldiers for seven years. And if they hadn't done that, we would have been fighting those Japanese soldiers in many other countries and the islands and parts of the Pacific.

BO: In World War II, we lost 440,000. The Russians lost 20 million, and the Germans lost a very high number, but not as much as the Chinese or the Russians. So we have to remember that there was another side of that story.

BO: At the end of the war, we had some sympathy for General Chiang Kai-shek, and we wanted to find a soft landing for him. And so we gave him Taiwan. And at the time, there was a lot of discussion about whether that was the right thing to do or not.

BO: Now, Mao was in charge of China. None of us liked Mr. Mao, but he was the other leader. And he was there fighting the war with us in World War II.

BO: So now we wind up with Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT party in Taiwan. And the policy of the United States at the time was one China, two systems peacefully. That's the way we talked about it. We

signed a lot of documents about it. And we agreed with the Chinese that that was our policy, and the Chinese understood. And I believe it should still be our policy. It is if you get very formal, but it's not when you go to Fox News or CNN or any politician who will tend to say the Taiwanese need to be independent.

[Former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Bill Owens on Our Critical Need To See “The Other Side of The Story” episode \(#157\)](#)

Beep beep beep

David Petraeus: I don't think he will use nuclear weapons, although clearly the possibility is greater than it otherwise would have been.

LT: That's General David Petraeus on Vladimir Putin and the Russia-Ukraine war.

David Petraeus: He certainly has not hesitated to rattle the nuclear saber from time to time, as has his minister, and some others. That said, I think it's almost a sign of desperation that they are doing so. They're just trying to grasp at any straw that could intimidate Ukraine and scare the West from continuing to do what Ukraine and the West have been doing.

DP: It would not change this strategic reality that I described earlier, which is very dire for Putin, and that is that Ukraine has mobilized its country vastly better than has Russia, and it continues to out-generate Russia when it comes to recruiting, training, equipping, and organizing additional forces and capabilities supported massively by the US and our allies and other Western partners. So the use of tactical nuclear weapons has a tactical effect. It doesn't change the war.

DP: It could kill or destroy a lot of people and a lot of infrastructure, but that doesn't change this dynamic. If anything, it probably inflames the Ukrainians further and the US and West, and it makes Russia even more of a pariah than it already is without really achieving anything that would be truly noteworthy. So I think he will shrink from doing that.

DP: I guess there's some scenarios where Russian survival might be at stake, however he defines that, and that's an open question, but I think, again, right now that it is unlikely. By the way, depending on how he uses or would use nuclear weapons, his own forces could be in jeopardy. You know, they don't have protective equipment. They aren't trained on this. They're very poorly trained on just basic skills as soldiers, as infantrymen, much less on acting on a nuclear battlefield. And depending on which way the wind blows, it could actually, again, do more damage to Russia than it could to Ukraine, at least outside of the immediate area of the explosion and the effects of that explosion.

[Former CIA Director David Petraeus on The Russia Ukraine war \(#128\)](#)

Beep beep beep

David Bernstein: These classifications that we've all have accustomed ourselves to, that we just sort of think as natural, Hispanic, Black, White, that I well should emphasize that the White classifications itself, including everyone from Iceland to Turkey, is itself entirely arbitrary from any kind of anthropological

point of view. So I think we should be aware that these classifications are not immutable, that they're not natural. They're not based on science, which means they're not based on anything else.

LT: That's law professor David Bernstein on the complex and bizarre world of government-imposed racial classifications.

David Bernstein: But it's also important because these classifications have shaped how Americans see themselves and each other. If you go back 50 years, you wouldn't have really found anyone who thought of themselves as being Hispanic or being Asian-American.

DB: Those classifications didn't really exist in people's minds. People were Mexican-American or Chinese-American or just American. But once the government invented these classifications, they started to affect both people's self-perception and how people perceived others.

DB: They're not objective. They came about in the 1970s. The government thought it was needed to regularize and standardize the classifications that were being used to collect data.

DB: And they came up with these classifications in a fairly haphazard way. There were historical rationales in the sense that people had understood certain groups to certain contours and that played a role. Political lobbying played a role. Just sort of happenstance played a role. For example, Hispanic category, they just actually asked for three volunteers from the government, one Cuban-American, one Mexican-American, and one Puerto Rican-American representing the three largest groups of people of Sebastian origin. They sort of sat them in a room for a few weeks and said, come up with a classification and how it's defined.

DB: And it wasn't like they consulted with anthropologists or sociologists or ethnic studies specialists or geneticists or anybody else. It was literally just a bunch of bureaucrats sitting in different conference rooms coming up with these classifications based on whatever criteria they happened to come up with. So the groups are inconsistent in the sense that the definitions vary.

DB: So the Black/African-American category is the only really specifically racial category. You have to be descended from one of the Black racial groups of Africa.

DB: The Hispanic category is cultural and linguistic. Technically, anyone who has a Spanish-speaking ancestor is eligible.

DB: The White and Asian categories are based on geography. Just for example, Asian-American. Now, Pakistanis, Filipinos, Chinese-Americans really have nothing in common in terms of origins except they're all from the continent of Asia, but they don't look alike. They don't have the same religion, the same culture, the same food, the same anything, really.

DB: But if you go back in American history, we used to have laws that restricted Asian immigration and restricted Asians from becoming citizens, which required the courts to determine who was Asian. And the courts said, okay, people from the Middle East, even though that's Asia, they're White, but people from

Pakistan and India, even though they're Caucasian, are not considered to be White. So we wound up recreating that exact racist classification that was used to keep out people of Asian descent.

DB: When the government came up with these classifications in the 70s, they very specifically said, these are for record-keeping consistency purposes only. They're not meant to be sociological or anthropological. They're not meant to dictate eligibility for government programs. They were never meant to be used for the purposes we're using them for.

[The Complex and Bizarre World of Government-Imposed Racial Classification With Law Professor David Bernstein \(#130\)](#)

Beep beep beep

Dan Weiss: The advent of really dazzling technologies has not supplanted or in any way replaced the on-site experience, but actually it has complemented it.

LT: That's Dan Weiss, the former president and CEO of New York's Metropolitan Museum.

Dan Weiss: One of the questions we face as a society at large is what kind of lives do we want to lead and how much social interaction versus virtual engagement constitutes a healthy, happy human experience? And it's no different in an art museum than it is in our own lives.

DW: We can spend all of our time at home on our computer, but it's different than sitting in a room together with people and engaging with them in ways that one can't do virtually.

[President and CEO of The Metropolitan Museum Dan Weiss On Its Critical Role In Modern Life \(#148\)](#)

Beep beep beep

Robert Waldinger: Essentially, we are given messages all day long about what is supposed to be a good life. Think about all the visual images we see in the media and all the Instagram feeds we look at and then Facebook photos and all the things that we put out there for each other that make us think that we're supposed to be rich and famous and be on beautiful beaches all the time. And of course, then you get the sense, well, that's not my life.

LT: That's Bob Waldinger, the head of Harvard's 80-year study on the good life unpacked, discovering what makes us thrive.

Robert Waldinger: When does the good life start? It starts now. It starts with making small choices, small choices to connect with people you want to be more connected to, small choices to pay attention to what's really here right now, as opposed to the stories we've been telling ourselves about where the good life is supposed to be. The danger is if we listen to those stories in our heads, we can end up missing life as it's unfolding right here and now.

[The Good Life Unpacked: Discovering What Makes Us Thrive with the Head of Harvard's 80-Year Study Robert Waldinger \(#127\)](#)

[music]

OUTRO male voice: If you enjoyed today's episode and would like to receive the show notes or get new fresh weekly episodes, be sure to sign up for our newsletter at <https://www.3takeaways.com/> or follow us on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#). Note that 3Takeaways.com is with the number 3, 3 is not spelled out. See you soon at 3Takeaways.com (<https://www.3takeaways.com/>)

This transcript was auto-generated. Please forgive any errors.