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# What Marc Andreessen Couldn't Say

*A Roar From 300 Million Frontlines Reactive essay. Foundation series. May 23, 2026. Source: Marc Andreessen Sputters Incomprehensibly at Question About How AI Will Actually Benefit Humankind, Joe Wi*

Marc Andreessen went on Joe Rogan's podcast recently and was asked one question.

Sell it.

He sputtered. He invoked Newton. He invoked alchemy. He invoked his eleven-year-old. He produced the phrase

thought at scale, for everybody, in perpetuity

— three lies in one sentence. Not free. Not for everybody. Not thought. Then he stopped.

That's the argument. The richest evangelist of the most-capitalized technology in human history, handed an open microphone on the largest podcast in the world, cannot name one human being his capital was built to serve.

He talked about Newton.

I am writing this from a car. I am driving through Detroit.

Hundreds of city blocks. Boarded homes. Streets where the curb is still cut for the driveway that used to be there. Schools with the windows out. A church with the cross still on the roof and the doors chained. Block after block. Mile after mile. The grid of a city that once built the engine of the American century, and the houses where the people who built it raised their children, and the silence where their grandchildren should be.

This is not new. I have seen this before.

Buick City opened in Flint, Michigan in 1985. It was built on the site of the original Buick Motor Company plant, which had been there since 1904. By the late 1980s it employed more than 28,000 people. It built the Buick LeSabre and the Buick Park Avenue. It won J.D. Power awards. It was, at the time, one of the most productive auto assembly complexes in North America.

It closed in 1999. The buildings were demolished between 2002 and 2013. The site is a flat field now. The workforce was not relocated. The city was not relocated. The houses where the workers lived are the houses I am looking at versions of, forty miles south, today, through this windshield.

I worked for General Motors from 1989 to 2004. I was there for the closing. I drove through Flint then. I am driving through Detroit now. The streets look the same. The decision that produced the streets was the same.

The decision was this:

the people who live here are not in the room when we decide their lives

That is the entire decision. Everything that followed — the lead in the water, the schools collapsing, the third generation that has never seen a shift change, the boarded blocks I am passing right now — followed from that one decision. It was not an accident. It was not the market. It was a decision made by people, in rooms, who had concluded that the formation of the people in Flint did not count on the balance sheet that mattered.

Capital walked. Formation stayed. Formation cannot walk. It is in bodies, in neighborhoods, in the way a man teaches his son to hold a wrench. You cannot relocate it. You can only abandon it.

They abandoned it.

Forty miles south of Flint is Lansing. Same company. Same era. Same workforce stock. Same union. Same state.

Lansing Grand River opened in 2001. I helped launch it. We won the J.D. Power Gold Award. We ran a Walden Pond immersion for the launch team — we lived inside the work, named what we saw, wrote it down. Lansing Delta Township came next. Both plants are still running. Both cities are still standing.

The difference was not skill. The workers in Flint were the same workers as the workers in Lansing. Some of them were literally the same workers — the ones who could move. The difference was whether the capital decided to stay in the room with the people.

Lansing got the room. Flint did not.

Detroit, outside this windshield, did not.

This is the part most people do not understand, because most people did not stand in Flint in 1999 and watch the gates close on men who had given the company their hands.

Deindustrialization is a word. It is also a smell. It is the silence where a shift change used to be. It is the specific human face of a team leader who taught you everything and then had nowhere to go. It is a wife who packed lunches for thirty years for a job that no longer exists. It is a son who grew up in a house his father bought on a wage that is now extinct, and who will not buy a house, because the wage is gone, and the formation that produced the wage is gone, and the room where the decision was made never had his father's name in it.

Multiply that by a city. That is Flint.

Multiply that by ten cities. That is the Midwest I have driven through for thirty years.

Now multiply that by every sector — manufacturing, construction, hospitality, healthcare, retail — and compress the timeline from thirty years to ten. That is what Marc Andreessen is selling.

He cannot say so on a podcast. So he sputters.

The mechanism is not extrapolation. The mechanism is identical.

Flint is what happens when one company makes the decision

the people who live here are not in the room

in one city over thirty years. AI under the Andreessen worldview is what happens when the same decision is made by the entire capital allocation machinery, across every sector, against three hundred million people, in ten years.

The compression is the only difference. The worldview is the same. The permission structure is the same. The LPs get paid either way is the same.

Andreessen wrote the worldview down in 2023 and called it the

Techno-Optimist's Manifesto

. Read it. Intelligence is supreme. Markets are sufficient. Deceleration is murder. The only real politics is Up Wing versus Down Wing — optimist versus pessimist about technology. Inside that frame, the question

what happens to the paint inspector when the paint inspector is automated

is not opposed. It is

unintelligible

. There is no slot in the ontology for her.

That is why he sputtered. The worldview cannot produce a human-scale account of itself, because it was never built to. A person who has stood on a floor and watched a team leader run a shift can answer Rogan’s question in one sentence. A person whose entire epistemic life has been spent in the cap table cannot.

The sputter is the worldview made audible.

Three hundred million frontlines work in the five sectors I have studied. Three hundred million. Every one of them has a name. Every one of them has a formation, or had one stolen from them. Every one of them lives in a house on a street in a city that the capital has the option to walk away from.

Debra Fogle inspects paint in Alabama. Wally Vinton built wiring harnesses at LGR. Ramon Hernandez ran the best team I ever saw. Dennis Boutwell was my first supervisor in 1989, and he is now a director of manufacturing excellence. Four frontlines. Four floors. Four formations. In Andreessen’s ontology, none of them exist. Multiply by three hundred million and you have the magnitude.

The blocks outside this windshield are the magnitude.

There is a word for what these people are. I have started using it because the language we have does not fit the work they do. They are the frontlines. Plural form, used as singular:

a frontlines, the frontlines

. The grammar is borrowed from words like

a means, a species, a Marines

— words where the dignity of the noun is constituted by membership in a tradition rather than by the adjective in front of it.

The word fits because capital needs the frontlines to work and disappears them when they come out into the light. The shift ends, the gates close, the city is asked to vanish back into the dark so the balance sheet does not have to look at it. Flint is what that looks like. Detroit

out this windshield is what that looks like. The vampire grammar is not a metaphor. It is the operating logic of the machine.

Andreessen's sputter is the sound of a man who cannot say the word, because saying it would require admitting the room exists.

I am stopped at a light. I can smell weed through the window. A few frontlines are lurking outside a liquor store. Another rushes past them into the pawn store next door, because he has something left to sell.

One block. One light. The whole architecture in one frame. The liquor store that anesthetizes. The pawn store that extracts the last asset. Both placed within walking distance because the system has studied the walk. It knows how far a frontlines without a car will go on a Saturday morning.

The men outside the liquor store have already sold what they had. The man going into the pawn store is still selling. Tomorrow they switch positions. The block does not change.

The light is going to change in a moment. I have to keep driving.

The pawn store is the last stop of liquidating formation. The wrench keeps its market value. The man loses his standing. Capital extracts the storable half and leaves the unstorable half — the formation — to dissolve in the body that carried it. The pawn store is not destruction. It is unbundling. It pretends the wrench was the asset and pays the man for the pretense.

AI under Andreessen's worldview is the same mechanism at industrial scale. The training run does not destroy the paint inspector's eye. It extracts the pattern her eye learned across twenty years and bonds it to silicon. The pattern keeps its market value. The woman loses her standing. The next plant gets the inspection without the inspector. The woman gets a severance and walks home.

The pawn store is one wrench. The training run is three hundred million.

Same mechanism. Same unbundling. Different scale. Identical grammar.

This is what the sputter could not say. Because if Andreessen said it, the deal would not close.

I will answer Rogan's question for him, since he could not.

## AI is good

## if and only if

it stays in the room with the people. AI sitting next to Debra on the paint line, catching what her eyes cannot, is good. AI replacing Debra is Flint. AI sitting next to an oncology fellow reading every paper published this week is good. AI replacing the oncology fellow is Flint. AI sitting next to the apprentice answering the question she is too embarrassed to ask her foreman is good. AI replacing the apprentice and the foreman is Flint.

This is not the union leader's argument. The union leader says:

protect the worker from capital, slow the technology, tax the gains.

That argument is defensive. It accepts Andreessen's machine and asks for restraint. Restraint has been asked for, for forty years, and Flint is the answer. Detroit out this windshield is the answer. The blocks are the answer.

I am not asking for restraint. I am proposing a different machine.

Capital is the lever. That part Andreessen is right about. The question is what the lever is bonded to. Bonded to extraction, the lever produces Flint. Bonded to formation, the lever produces a Meister. Same lever. Different bond.

The machine I am proposing has parts. A Capability Account that follows the frontlines across employers, accredited by an independent body, half-life depreciation if it is not maintained, employer deposits at years one, three, and five. A Capability Capital Institute that holds the accreditation and the standards. A Zunft — the German word for guild, and the German word is correct because the Germans built this and it works — that organizes the bench and the formation. A Bloom System that names the four formations, the six elements, the five gardeners. Five sectors. Three hundred million people. Twenty-five thousand hours per Meister. A book per year for five years documenting how it is done.

This is not theory. The Germans built the operating system in the nineteenth century and are still running it. Honda built a version of it in the twentieth century and is still running it. I have stood inside both and watched them work. The third path is not the absence of capital. The third path is

## capital bonded to formation, by design, by structure, by ledger

Andreessen has a machine. I am building a different machine. The difference between the two machines is whether the people on the floor are in the room when the capital is allocated, or whether they are the externality the capital walks away from.

Flint is what the first machine produces.

The second machine has not been allowed to run yet. That is what is at stake.

The case for AI is not thought at scale. The case for AI is formation augmented by intelligence, capital that stays in the room. Anything else is the same decision GM made in Flint in 1999, made again, faster, against more people, by people who have never driven through what they built.

I have driven through what they built. I am driving through it right now.

In which worldview, with such economic progress, is this asymmetry, this abject indifference, acceptable?

In one worldview only. The worldview where the people who live here are not in the room when we decide their lives.

That worldview produced Flint. That worldview produced these blocks. That worldview produced the sputter. And that worldview is what Marc Andreessen, who has never stood on a floor and never lived in a city the capital walked away from, is asking the next $1.5 billion fund to finance against three hundred million more frontlines.

He could not answer Rogan because there is no answer. There was never meant to be one.

That’s the argument.

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Built to Extract and

## Already Paid For

, come from Capability Capital Press, January 2027.

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Written with AI assistance. The argument, the judgments, and the floor testimony are the author’s own.

Published 2026-06-04 · thelonggameforall.substack.com · Capability Capital Institute