Merion West Interviews Shiva Ayyadurai

STAFF

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Shiva Ayyadurai has decided to challenge Elizabeth Warren for her Senate seat. makes his case in this Merion West interview.

On July 20th, Shiva Ayyadurai joined Merion West's Erich Prince for an interview to discuss his decision to challenge Elizabeth Warren in the 2018 Massachusetts race as a Republican. Born in India, Dr. Ayyadurai came to the United States in childhood. He is perhaps most famous for his claim, which became a source of controversy, that, at age fourteen, he invented email. In addition to his work in the computer field, Dr. Ayyadurai holds a PhD in biological engineering from MIT and is active in the healthcare industry. In this interview, he discusses his upbringing in Ind his work in computer programming, the dearth of politicians with a background in science, and why he believes he is the best choice for Massachusetts voters.

Erich Prince: Dr. Ayyadurai, thank you for joining us at Merion West this afternoon. Can you start by telling us about your journey? How did you go from being born in India to an accomplished 14-year-old computer programmer to deciding in 2017 to enter politics?

Shiva Ayyadurai: I've had no choice but to be a political person since I was a five year old kid. And that's where my journey starts in India. India has, as some people may know, a deplorable caste system. My family was considered a lower caste, or "untouchables." In the caste system you success was not based on what you did, but it was based on where you were born. It was frankly probably one in ten trillion that my parents even made it to America because they came from thi lower caste background.

I grew up in India, Bombay, but I also grew up in a small village in deep south India, where my grandparents were poor farmers who worked 16 hour days. My grandmother, on the weekends, h learned traditional systems of Indian medicine and as an offering she was a village healer. People would line up at her doorstep, she'd observe their faces, figure out what was going on in their bodies using an ancient system of diagnosis, and help them in a personalized way using different herbs and different medicines.

So I was born in this very interesting environment where I saw this woman with no degree being empirically able to heal people, but I was also born into this environment where I saw this caste system. As a five year old kid, I remember distinctly going into a friend's home, and I was asked t

That's when I asked my mom, and she said, "We're Shudras," which is almost like the n-word in India. So that was my upbringing, and I wanted to understand why this system of injustice existed and how this woman with no degree was healing people, especially when I saw doctors w couldn't do that. So that was my formative period.

I came to the United States as a seven-year-old kid. I remember landing in Kennedy Airport with shorts on in the middle of winter. We went to Patterson, New Jersey, and an amazing American family took us to the Salvation Army, which is where we got all our clothes. That was really comi to America for me.

My journey otherwise was just like any other American kid. I went through the public school systems. My parents didn't really believe in private schools; they thought it was, in some ways, elitist, but they believed in the public school system.

This was the mid-70s before all the nonsense took place in this country. Nonsense meaning the entitlement stuff that occurred.

Erich: And it was shortly, thereafter, you became interested in computers?

Shiva: Yes, I was accepted to a 40 student special program to study computer science by a visionary professor at New York University when I was 14. It was an intensive program where yo learned seven programming languages and digital circuitry. My dear mom would drop me off at Newark-Penn Station at five or six in the morning, and I would take the train.

I didn't get paid. I got free food in the cafeteria. The third year I got paid a buck 25 an hour. But challenge I was given was to digitalize the interoffice mail system.

In this organization, they had three different offices; each office had a secretary and on the secretary's desk was a physical desktop where she had an inbox, outbox. There were also folders. There was a typewriter, an address book, paper clips, and she would write this thing called a memo. The memo had "To, "From," and if she needed to copy people, she literally used carbon paper. It was literally a carbon copy. That memo was put in an envelope and sent around. So if you were going to hire someone, it was a collaborative effort. You'd write a resume, a cover letter, carbon copy ten people, forward it to them, and that's how collaboration took place. I was asked to convert that entire system to the electronic version.

Now you have to understand that even then there were simple methods of sending little short text messages, going all the way back to the telegraph, between electronic devices, but that's not what we're talking about here. This was converting that entire system to the electronic version, and making sure it was easy to use, because remember secretaries were typists. The thought of them moving to the computer was inconceivable, so it had to be easy to use. I wrote 50,000 lines of code, worked until two in the morning most days, and I called this system "email," a term never used before in the English language. It had every feature we see today, and I went off to MIT.

32 years later my mom was dying of pulmonary fibrosis, and she presented me with a beautiful suitcase, which contained all of the artifacts associated with me invented email, three months before she died. *Time* magazine wrote a beautiful article called: "The Man Who Invented Email" in 2011. Smithsonian wanted my materials, and it went into the Smithsonian February 2016, literally a month after my mom passed away. Then you would have expected this amazing celebratory story of the American dream. Instead, the mainstream media and the mainstream academics who thought they owned the history of everything were alarmed to find almost like a new skull had been found in Africa that reset the narrative of the origin of humanity. They were upset because the invention of email goes against their story that all great inventions must come out of the military industrial academic complex. Big corporations, big industry, and the military.

great innovation doesn't come out of MIT and other great institutions, but a 14 year old kid in Newark did invent email. That's the American story.

Erich: Moving on now to the political side of things, a majority of Indian Americans vote for the Democratic Party. Pew says 65 percent of Indian-Americans "were Democrats or leaned toward the Democrats." According to *The Wall Street Journal*, approximately 60% of Indian-Americans have reported viewing the Republican Party less than favorably. As someone, who may have been exposed to a lot of support for the Democratic Party in your early life, how did you decide to become a Republican?

Shiva: It's a great question. To give you an idea, there's obviously a big difference between someone who comes from a Boston-Brahmin, New England family and someone who comes from Mississippi, who's an oil worker. It's a massive difference. Now India's diversity is magnified by a factor of 100. So when I came here, when my family came here, most of the Indians coming here were upper caste, so they would always ask my last name because they were trying to figure out who we were. When I came to MIT, I remember joining the Indian club, and they were frankly very discriminatory. Because India itself has a caste system.

We were considered the lower caste. They were alarmed: "How did this kid get into MIT?" Elites always support policies that make them seem as though they are for the poor guy—a sort of "plantation" attitude. When you look at it, though, it's a very elitist attitude. That was what the Indian American community, by and large, still is like in America. Now the second wave of Indians that came are more open.

When I came to MIT, most of my friends were poor whites, poor blacks, and poor Hispanics. This was in the early 80's when MIT was still bringing in people from the inner cities. Frankly, I couldn't identify with any of the other Indians on campus. The big turning point for me occurred probably in the 1984 election when Walter Mondale was running against President Reagan. There was this guy named Jesse Jackson who created a kind of movement called the Rainbow Coalition. He was trying to bring everyone in, an anti-establishment movement. I said: "Wow this is pretty cool." I liked some of his rhetoric, but the day Jesse Jackson on the floor of the Democratic convention gave all of his votes to Walter Mondale, vilifying Reagan, that's when I realized this whole thing is a racket.

What I have witnessed in studying the arc of political history is this: There appears to be three dynamics: 1) the establishment, and then 2) there are the change agents, the people on the street wanting a better day for themselves and their families. Then there's a third, not-so obvious establishment like Jesse Jackson. This wing basically exists in the left-wing of the Democratic Party. They exist to funnel the passion for change from the change agents, drive it back into the establishment. This also occurs in the GOP. Bernie Sanders did the same thing. Elizabeth Warren, Barack Obama, "Hope," "Change," "Revolution." It's just talk. They're basically establishment politicians. I learned this at a young age.

We started a newspaper at MIT, a radical newspaper, and we said to hell with the establishment Democrats and the establishment Republicans. We would eviscerate politics on campus; we would expose hypocrisy. MIT, for example, claimed: "We love the dark-skinned people. We want to help everyone in the world." Yet the university was investing money in South Africa, apartheid South Africa. **There's a picture of me burning the South African flag**; you can find it if you go to Shiva for Senate. We made sure more poor women, more poor blacks, more poor whites got admitted to MIT. I organized union workers at MIT. When I got my PhD, I was the only student who pulled out a huge banner saying U.S. Out of Iraq, because I thought it was ridiculous that we were fighting a ridiculous war and sending poor soldiers to fight there. And that's who I've always been.

use his position on national television to expose a collusion of the mainstream media and the establishment, I thought it was phenomenal. Most people would not do that and he was risking himself by doing that. I said: "You know what, I like this guy." And, for the first time in my life, I voted. Then I heard him speak at the inauguration, and I decided to become a Republican; and I decided I was going to run against Elizabeth Warren.

Erich: I know you've spoken critically about establishment politicians, but is there a current Senator you could see yourself in the mold of? I'm thinking of Senators who have backgrounds in science. Obviously, the late John Glenn was one such Senator.

Shiva: Bill Frist, transplant surgeon, great guy. Rand Paul, a doctor, great guy. It's typically these non-lawyer lobbyists, who have actually had to work for a living. Politicians are really about being fake. What do they do? Did any of them create a job? Most of them didn't. Have they ever paid payroll? No. Have they ever had to invent things? No. Have they ever had to hire people or organize a company? No. These guys have no skills. What they have is every word run through their consultants. It's theater art for them, and they're bad actors. That's what we have. They actually offer no value. Everything they do is fake.

Checking off that you were Native American, taking advantage of someone else's seat. Saying that you fight big banks, passing Dodd-Frank which destroyed so many community banks, saying you support the young people to get a good education, meanwhile you're getting paid $350,000. Big universities have no competition; we've destroyed local community colleges. They should be allowed to give four year degrees. We've eviscerated community colleges with big universities. You go down the list: Obamacare has nothing to do with healthcare. I'm talking to you as someone who is a medical researcher and running a biotech company now. It's really about health insurance. Romneycare, the establishment RINOs, and the Democrats created the whole insurance industry. Nothing to do with health.

Erich: Affirmative action is an issue often in the news, and many Asian-Americans are objecting to some of these policies. As someone who is both an Asian-American and someone who has spent considerable time in academia, what would be your stance in the Senate on any affirmative action legislation?

Shiva: You've got to look at all of this, and I don't take a Left or Right view on this. You have to look at affirmative action for what it is. The reality was that a certain strata of people helped build this country were given a disadvantage, and I'm talking about African Americans. Obviously that unfairness led to what is known as the Civil Rights movement. Outcomes included things like affirmative action. Everyday people were out there protesting, and they wanted significant change.

But by the time the politicians got a hold of it, they gave band-aid solutions. Yes, affirmative action was a gain from people shedding their blood and fighting on the streets, but what resulted was not the liberation of large numbers of minorities. It created a pencil thin strata of minority bourgeoisie, and that bourgeoisie frankly became Uncle Toms. They didn't advance the cause of African Americans; they started their own strata, they became politicians, they started NGOs, and they really wanted to keep their own people on the plantations. From Al Sharpton to Jesse Jackson, they're Uncle Toms. The reason I can speak so clearly about this is the same thing occurs in India.

There are a lot of people in India who go and say they want to help the poor castes. Around election time they used to give bags of rice, and now they give laptops, basically to get their votes. But they don't actually want to adopt policies that would liberate those people. It's very much like when the British came to India. The Indians who they appointed were actually more brutal slavemasters than the British themselves.

In many ways what you have is that kind of basically oppression. That's why people were so hopeful for Obama, but what really happened was more segregation, more separation between

Americans have not done well. So my point on affirmative action is that it was a bone that they threw to quell the mass protests that were taking places. The right solution now, however, is to enable people to unleash their own creativity and their own innovation.

Erich: Lastly, Massachusetts is a historically Democratic state. I'm thinking of the 1972 presidential election where the only state carried by liberal Democrat George McGovern was Massachusetts. Why should these historically left-leaning voters give a Republican candidate like yourself a chance in 2018?

Shiva: I'm running as a Lincoln Republican because I feel that I can really expand the discussion and actually solve problems. That's what we need to do. The Western part of the state, people there care about health; they're farmers, rural people, and I'll be the only Senator to go head-to-head with Monsanto. I've published research on it. I've exposed them to show that genetically engineered food has no safety standards. Number one: Elizabeth Warren voted for the Monsanto Protection Act. The middle part of the state consists of everyday working people, who do not have the skills, and I am all about education. We need to unleash Vo-Tech education. Real education, real food, and finally we need real health. The Eastern part of the state is where the highest concentration of medical schools and health centers are. **But it's all based on knives and drugs medicine and crisis management. We need to move that to preventative medicine. We need to unleash the number of doctors. There should be no need for someone to go four years and then another four years.** You should be able to go right from high school to get an M.D. degree.

Erich: As is the case in many parts of Europe.

Shiva: Right. But what we've done is created corporatization of medicine, based on what to do after you get sick. I know a lot about medicine. I have a PhD in biological engineering from MIT. My whole life has been based on understanding health. **What better person to represent Massachusetts than someone who knows information technology, someone who knows biotech, someone who knows how to create jobs.** A Senator is someone who is supposed to be a representative. I am de facto the best representative. I am not a lobbyist or a career politician. **We need term limits. I'm not looking to do this as a job. One or two terms maximum and then get back to the farm.** That's it.

Erich: Dr. Ayyadurai, thank you for joining us. All the best to you.

Shiva: Thank you.

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