

Voiceover: [00:04](#) Welcome to The Bill Walton Show, featuring conversations with leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, and thinkers. Fresh perspectives on money, culture, politics and human flourishing. Interesting people, interesting things.

Bill Walton: [00:24](#) Hello, and welcome to The Bill Walton Show. What do China and Google have in common? Both present grave threats to the world's democracies, free speech, and even human autonomy. These are big claims, but I believe that after you've taken in this show you will agree.

With me, to understand more about both Google and China, Dr. Robert Epstein and Reggie Littlejohn. Dr. Robert Epstein is senior research psychologist at the American Institute for Behavioral Research Technology, and the former editor and chief of Psychology Today Magazine. A PhD from Harvard, he has published 15 books and has devoted the past six and a half years to researching tech giant bias, especially with Google, which dominates the search engine market. He is currently working on a book called How Google and Facebook Ate Your Brain, and How You Can Get a New One.

Reggie Littlejohn is the founder and president of Women's Rights Without Frontiers, a graduate of Yale Law School and an experienced litigation attorney. She is an acclaimed international expert on China's one child policy and its human rights abuses. Her organization has been called the leading voice in the battle to expose and oppose forced abortion and the sex-selective abortion of females in China.

Robert, Reggie, welcome, Dr. Epstein.

Robert Epstein: [01:57](#) Thank you.

Bill Walton: [01:58](#) Epstein.

Reggie L.: [01:58](#) It's great to be here.

Bill Walton: [02:00](#) What sparked your interest in Google?

Robert Epstein: [02:04](#) Early 2012, actually it was New Year's Day, 2012, I received about 10 emails from Google saying my website had been hacked. And I thought, this is odd, why am I getting notification from Google? Why aren't I getting notification from a Google agency or some nonprofit organization? Why is Google telling me? Who made Google the sheriff? That was one thing that crossed my mind.

Then I also tried to figure out some technical issues, because I've been a techie since I was a teenager and one thing that bugged me was that Google was not just blocking access to my website through their search engine, which I understand, I get that, but somehow they were blocking access through other people's browsers, like Safari, which is Apple's browser, and Firefox, which is a browser created by a nonprofit organization. And I thought, how can they do that? That doesn't make any sense. I don't get it.

So I started to just look at them more critically, not just as a fun toy for finding information, but what kind of company is this? That's what I started to ask. I've seen reports in the news, by the way, saying that I have a grudge against Google because they notified me... And that's absolutely absurd. I simply started to look at them with my scientific eyes, I've been a research for almost 40 years. And then later that year, I started to notice a new literature, a new research literature on the power that search results have to drive sales. That's what I found.

And the results were so fascinating to me that if you can push your website a little higher in Google search results, you can make a fortune. And I asked the simple question, I wondered whether just those high ranking items in Google search could be used to shift people's opinions and maybe even their votes. And I started doing what I do, I set up experiments to study the issue and answer that question and it opened up Pandora's box, to say the least. I've since then been immersed in scientific research, showing me unfortunately that the search engine is the most powerful mind control machine ever invented.

Bill Walton: [04:43](#)

That's quite a statement. We're also here talking about China and the Google-China connection I think will become obvious to everyone once we've gotten into this a bit but just to kick off the China piece of this, Reggie, what is it that you think makes China an important topic when it comes to Dr. Epstein's issue?

Reggie L.: [05:08](#)

Well, first thing I want to say is this is part of the brilliance of Dr. Epstein, where he sees this research that says oh, if a company gets higher in search engine you can get more sales, and then he thinks, wow, could that be used to manipulate votes? How many people would have made that connection and just opened this huge Pandora's box? So I'm just very grateful for your mind and that it has not been eaten but Google and Facebook.

But I think that there's a very important connection between Dr. Epstein's work, or maybe I can call you Robert since we're friends.

Robert Epstein: [05:47](#)

Please do, absolutely.

Reggie L.: [05:50](#)

Okay. And China, because what he's talking about is how these search engines or other electronic means can really interfere with our electoral process and even our human autonomy, and so much is going on in China using electronics and artificial intelligence to limit people's autonomy. And they don't even have elections over there, they're a one party totalitarian system, but they have a mind control machine that is unmatched by any other country in the world.

Bill Walton: [06:21](#)

So in China it's overt and United States or at least in Google's platform, which is worldwide, it's covert. And what's the SEME system? What's search engine manipulation effect? That's one of the things you mentioned, there's 10-12 different ways they can manipulate how you think and react to things. What is that?

Robert Epstein: [06:45](#)

Well, the search engine manipulation effect, SEME, that was my first discovery. This was early 2013, I ran an experiment, a controlled, randomized experiment, to see whether I could shift people's opinions and voting preferences using search results that are biased, that favor one candidate or another. So in the basic experiment, there are three groups, people are randomly assigned to one of the three groups, and one group they see search results that favor one candidate, and the other group, the search results favor the opposite candidate, the opposing candidate, and the third group is a control group where their search results are all mixed up.

So in this type of experiment we're using real search results, real webpages, people are using a search engine that we control, it's called Kadoodle, works exactly like Google does. And we... Or, I speculated, that through this random assignment, that I could probably get people's opinions about a candidate to shift by two or three percent. That was my thinking at the time.

So the way this works is, in the beginning we start always with undecided voters, and in the beginning we're giving them brief information about each of the two candidates. So these are real candidates from a real election. We used participants from the United States and the election we chose to use deliberately was an election from Australia, just to make sure that our

participants were definitely undecided because they knew nothing about these candidates.

So we give them a little information about each candidate and then we ask them a bunch of questions like who do you like? And who do you trust? And who would you vote for if you had to vote for one or the other right now? And in the beginning, as you can imagine, there's a 50/50 split to all of these kinds of questions because these are undecided voters.

Bill Walton: [09:06](#) This is name recognition or I like this name or not that name but know nothing else.

Robert Epstein: [09:10](#) Exactly. So you end up splitting down the middle. Then we let them do the search. So we let them use our search engine, again they're using real search results, real webpages, they can move around on the search engine just like you move around on Google, and we let them search for up to 15 minutes. The only difference between these three groups is the order of the search results. That's it. That's the only difference.

And after that time period has passed, we ask them all those questions again to see whether there's any shift in their thinking, shift in their voting preferences. Again, I was predicting a two or three percent shift, not much but in a close election, in a very, very close election, if you can shift two to three percent of your undecided voters just with some biased search results, that could flip an election if it's very close. But the shift we got in that first experiment was 48%.

Bill Walton: [10:11](#) Wow.

Robert Epstein: [10:13](#) So I did not believe that, we repeated it with another group, I got a shift of 63%. Then we did it again, another huge shift. But as we were moving forward, we also noticed that people couldn't see that there was bias in the search results. So we not only had a very powerful way to manipulate people's thinking and voting preferences, but we could do it in a way that they couldn't even see.

This led to a big national study in the US, more than 2000 people from all 50 states. Same kind of procedure. Now we had so many people in the study though, that we could look at demographic differences, we found in fact some demographic groups are extremely susceptible to this kind of manipulation. For the record, the group we found that is more susceptible

than any other is a group called moderate republicans, believe it or not. We got an 80% shift with moderate republicans. I know.

Then another really, almost terrifying finding, which is the very, very small number of people who do recognize the bias, in the search results, they shift even farther in the direction of the bias. So in other words, merely being able to recognize bias in search results doesn't protect you from it, not at all.

So this is SEME, search engine manipulation effect is what we called it. I published a big article about that in the proceedings at the National Academy of Sciences in 2015. Published a replication of this effect in 2017. It's also been reflected by a group at one of the Max Planck institutes in Germany. This is real. This is an enormously powerful and almost completely invisible way to shift thinking about anything, it turns out, not just candidates.

Bill Walton: [12:16](#) You're watching The Bill Walton Show, I'm here with Dr. Robert Epstein and Reggie Littlejohn, and we're talking about China and Google and search engine results and manipulating voters. Reggie, what are your thoughts about what you just heard? I'm a little alarmed.

Reggie L.: [12:32](#) Well, I think it's very interesting that people, when they discover the bias or they think that there's a bias, that they go with the bias. And this is something that I think is perhaps having to do with people trusting search engines, okay, and like Google for example. Google presents itself as being very trustworthy. 99% of the time you do a Google search-

Bill Walton: [12:58](#) Do no evil.

Reggie L.: [12:59](#) Do no evil, okay, that's right. And people believed that Google will do no evil, and 99% of the time you do a search, you search for the Capital of California you get Sacramento. You can rely on it. So that if they see if Google is shifting towards this that they're going to go with the shift. This is a way that a company can build credibility and then without people knowing it, people will rely on the search results and then shift their votes.

Bill Walton: [13:25](#) So let me just be sure I understand. There are different effects you talk about. There's the list effect, there's the auto fill-in, there's the box that pops up with Google, and we know now are the paid ads that show up in the search so you tend to ignore that. This was just the list effect that you worked on? There was

no auto fill-in, there was no other attempt to manipulate perceptions?

Robert Epstein: [13:49](#)

In the first couple of years I was focusing exclusively on the search results, so in other words on this very powerful list effect, that's right. 2016 made another discover, and that was about auto complete, or those search suggestions you get when you start to type a search term. Two major findings there, in a series of experiments, were number one, it appears that Google is manipulating from the very first character they type into the search box. That was one conclusion that I drew from the experiments.

But the second one is even wilder, which is, we showed in experiments that we could turn a 50/50 split among undecided voters into a 90/10 split just by manipulating those suggestions that Google is flashing at you as you start to type a search term. So, search suggestions alone are extremely powerful in shifting opinions and they work together, of course, with the search results. They're generated when you've finally got your search term in there.

Reggie L.: [15:01](#)

Right, so what we're talking about here is like for example, let's say you put the name of a candidate. If Google likes that candidate they can say, "Mr. Jones, Nobel Peace Prize nomination" as a suggested thing that you want to do. Or if they don't like the candidate they can put in something like, "Mr. Jones sex abuse scandal" right? So you put in the name Mr. Jones and depending on whether Google backs that candidate or not, they can put in autosuggestions about what would be the next thing you would click on. Is that what you're saying?

Robert Epstein: [15:34](#)

Basically, it turns out that the key to understanding how this works is negative search terms, that is the key here. Back in 2016, before the election, a small news service made a video, which they posted on YouTube, which by the way is part of Google, and by the way that video was later taken down by YouTube. But anyway, they posted a video on YouTube claiming that if you type names of candidates, like Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton and others, into Bing and Yahoo you get all kinds of search suggestions, positive and negative.

You type "Hilary Clinton is" on Bing and Yahoo, you get "Hilary Clinton is the devil", "Hilary Clinton is sick", "Hilary Clinton is..." you know, you name it. Most of them are very, very negative. And that's actually what people were searching for back then. But if you typed "Hilary Clinton is" on Google, you got "Hilary

Clinton is awesome", "Hillary Clinton is winning" and that's it. That's all they showed you.

For other candidates they would show you positives and negatives. For Hillary Clinton they would just show you positives. And it turns out now we know from the research we've done, those negatives, that's the key to manipulating people using search suggestions because negatives are like a cockroach in a salad. All the attention is drawn to the cockroach.

This is a phenomenon in the social sciences known as negativity bias. It's been very well studied for a long time. So if Google allows a negative into the list, that negative search suggestion will draw 10-15 times as many clicks. So one of the simplest ways that you can support a candidate is suppress negative search suggestions for your candidate. And allow them to appear with other candidates, that will drive a tremendous amount of traffic to websites which show negative things about those candidates.

- Bill Walton: [17:45](#) So this is the phenomena that if I give you nine compliments and then I say, "But there's this one thing," you forget the nine compliments, it's only the negative that sticks in your mind.
- Robert Epstein: [17:55](#) Absolutely, that's negativity bias.
- Bill Walton: [17:57](#) Now, who is Google? I mean we're going to get further into what they're doing but Google has, what, 80,000 employees now? 100,000? Is there a monolithic culture that set out to do this, or how do the individuals within Google interact to determine how these algorithms get manipulated or set? Is this something that somebody's setting out consciously to do or is it just their bias, their way of thinking about how the search results ought to be?
- Robert Epstein: [18:28](#) Well, Google is a very secretive company, it's only in the last year or two that there have been significant leaks and that a couple of whistleblowers have come forward. So, we're finding out just recently, we're finally finding out a little bit about that internal culture. We're also finding out that there are some small groups within Google that have actually protested some of Google's policies, in particular-
- Bill Walton: [18:55](#) Mostly ex-Google employees now?

Robert Epstein: [18:57](#) No, no, no, there's actually thousands of people within Google who have formed groups and have protested to the leadership there about what they're doing. In particular, they've protested Google's plan to go back into China and help China control its population.

Reggie L.: [19:15](#) I wanted to mention that.

Bill Walton: [19:17](#) They left China in 2010 and got great kudos because they're not going to be working with the Chinese government.

Reggie L.: [19:22](#) Right, do no evil, they wanted to... Right, exactly.

Bill Walton: [19:25](#) But then they've come back... They went back into China with something called Dragonfly?

Reggie L.: [19:29](#) Dragonfly. So what this is, is this is a search engine that is in collaboration with the Chinese Communist Party, which is a brutal totalitarian regime that hunts down dissidents and others that they don't like. What it does is it can be used to censor searches that Chinese citizens run but it can also be used to just completely eliminate the ability to get on certain websites and learn the truth. So it's part of the Great Firewall of China. I mean, would you agree to that characterization?

Robert Epstein: [20:02](#) I would, and by the way for the record, since this keeps coming up, I should point out that their motto, don't be evil, was officially dropped in 2015.

Reggie L.: [20:12](#) I mean, why would a company do that? Do they want to do evil? That's crazy.

Robert Epstein: [20:19](#) I'm just telling you for a fact, it was dropped. People still think it's their motto, in fact it is not.

Reggie L.: [20:25](#) Do only a little bit of evil, maybe that's their new motto.

Robert Epstein: [20:28](#) No, I think it's don't do evil unless it makes you money.

Bill Walton: [20:31](#) But we talked about the covert-

Reggie L.: [20:33](#) Don't do evil... Okay, go ahead.

Bill Walton: [20:36](#) Okay, we're going to have a theological debate about evil.

Reggie L.: [20:40](#) Right.

Bill Walton: [20:40](#) What is evil? They never really defined it to begin with, except that the new logo is don't be evil except when it's profitable. But Dragonfly was... And I'm confused about whether they've dropped it or not or whether it's still going on, but it was to censor information at the behest of the Chinese government. And it was going to do things like your issue, prevent citizens from learning about human rights abuses.

Reggie L.: [21:08](#) Right, exactly.

Bill Walton: [21:09](#) And another show we've done on the environment recently, it was going to prevent Chinese from learning how bad their air is, and therefore what's wrong? There's nothing on the internet that says the air is anything other than what it should be.

Robert Epstein: [21:24](#) Well, first of all, China has its own search engine, I should point out. It's called Baidu. It's not very good, but there are a couple of things that I want to point out here I think that are very relevant to some things that Reggie just said. In our experiments on search suggestions, we also found out what the optimal number of suggestions is if you want to manipulate people.

It turns out the optimal number of suggestions that you want to flash at people is four. Okay, so just hold that thought in mind for a second here. When Google first invented auto complete, they had 10, they showed 10 items. And Bing and Yahoo to this day show 8 or 10 items, they show you long lists. Google's list got shorter and shorter, and from roughly 2010 until roughly 2017, when I went public with my studies on search suggestions, Google was showing four. Four search suggestions, which is optimal for manipulative purposes.

Baidu, China's search engine, to this day still shows, I believe, four, maybe five. But they're showing you that small list, which is optimal for manipulation. So Baidu is a manipulation machine, it's just not very good, and so China always wanted Google's technology for search because it's much better technology.

So, Google was in China and people think they left China in 2010, as you just mentioned, because they couldn't put up with the censorship. I don't believe that's true. The fact of the matter is, in 2009, the Chinese government hacked Google, hacked them to the core. It's one of the most dramatic cases of hacking ever, was when China hacked Google.

As I see things, that is why Google pulled out of China. But then they've been planning in the last couple of years to go back in, that was a project internally, in the company, that was known as the Dragonfly project. Some of their employees objected, and that gave them pause. Then word got out and some members of Congress objected. All I can say at this point is officially Google is saying, "Well, we're not going to go ahead with that." But no one really knows for sure.

- Reggie L.: [23:55](#) Because they're so secretive.
- Bill Walton: [23:56](#) And that's one of the things that has put Google in turmoil in the last two, three, four years, is that there a lot fewer people inside Google that trust top management. This was, I think, handled, this Dragonfly was handled only by like a couple hundred people inside the company and nobody else was giving any clue as to what was going on?
- Robert Epstein: [24:20](#) But lets not pretend that Google is in turmoil because they're not. They're an extremely homogenous company, about 96, 97 percent of their donations in 2018 went to democrats. They're very secretive, very tightly run, and as I say very homogenous. There have been here and there, there have been some protests lately, this is new, and a couple of whistleblowers have indeed come forward. One who was fired, another who quit. And some documents have leaked, and a couple of amazing videos have leaked. But generally speaking, for a company that size, they're extremely homogenous and highly secretive.
- Bill Walton: [25:10](#) But aren't there some rumors that Google's been infiltrated by Chinese agents?
- Robert Epstein: [25:15](#) There are rumors to that effect. No one knows for sure.
- Reggie L.: [25:20](#) I want to ask-
- Bill Walton: [25:22](#) I just want to interrupt you for one second. You're watching The Bill Walton Show, I'm here with Dr. Robert Epstein and Reggie Littlejohn, and we're talking about manipulating search results in China and Google's project in China called Dragonfly. Reggie?
- Reggie L.: [25:38](#) Right. So I wanted to ask Robert a question, following up on what you've just said, because I think this is important. Okay, you talked about leaked videos. I watched one of those leaked videos that you sent me. I would like you to describe, if you could, the utopian vision of Google that comes through in these videos, and what the driving force is behind what they're doing,

not only in the United States, not only with US elections, but worldwide?

Bill Walton: [26:03](#) Well, I think you're talking about the video called the Selfish Ledger?

Robert Epstein: [26:08](#) Yes, this extraordinary. An eight minute video made by one of their advanced divisions called the Selfish Ledger leaked about a year and a half ago. You can access it online now, there are places you can find it, and I have a transcript of it that I made, which I'd also recommend that people look at if you're interested in this issue. But this is one of the creepiest videos you'll ever see because this explains... Now, remember, these are Google employees explaining this to other people at Google. This explains that we have the power to re-engineer humanity. And the phrase, "Using company values" is actually in this film. In fact, they do have that power, and what this video shows is they actually discuss using this power.

I'm so glad you asked that question, Reggie, because so many people these days, they're kind of after Google because Google seems to suppress conservative content in the United States. We can talk about that issue, but let me tell you there are much bigger issues here than whether or not they suppress conservative content in the United States. Google is impacting the beliefs, attitudes, purchases, votes of 2.5 billion people around the world. They're impacting people I almost every country in the world at the moment, except China, and that could change any day, and North Korea because no one has internet in North Korea.

Bill Walton: [27:50](#) Well, yeah. I've got the transcript and it's incredible. They said they think of us as not a being, necessarily, but a ledger of encoded DNA or whatever, and that as we go through life, and this is based on some work done in the 19th century. As we go through life, we're coded and we change. And there are theories that if they keep programming us, we're going to change and we're going to reflect their values. And they call, they say, "What if the ledger could be given a volitional purpose?"

Reggie L.: [28:27](#) That is so creepy. But this is in fact what is happening in China now.

Bill Walton: [28:32](#) Yes.

Reggie L.: [28:32](#) You talk about reconstructing-

Bill Walton: [28:34](#) And by the way there's a great documentary called The Creepy Line.

Reggie L.: [28:36](#) Right, everybody has to watch The Creepy Line.

Bill Walton: [28:39](#) Which Robert is featured in.

Reggie L.: [28:41](#) Absolutely.

Bill Walton: [28:41](#) And I highly recommend that. Continue, creepy.

Reggie L.: [28:46](#) Well, just, China is doing exactly what Google has said that they want to do, which is to re-engineer people along the lines of the values of the company. And that's what the Chinese government is doing right now with its social credit system. So, the social credit system in China is... talk about creepy, okay. We are all familiar with having a financial credit score, and China, what they've implemented is a social credit score. And it is affected by everything, like if you have a parking ticket, if you jaywalk. Let's just talk about jaywalking.

This is rolling out all over China, it hasn't completely rolled out yet, but they have all of these surveillance cameras all over the place, and the difference between current Chinese surveillance cameras and former surveillance cameras is that like, if you walk into a grocery store, you see a surveillance camera, you figure, okay, no one's watching this or maybe they are running some kind of a video of this that will be gone in a few days because all they're looking for is the ability to catch somebody in a crime.

Well, that's to the way it is in China. In China they have facial recognition, and their surveillance cameras feed into this facial recognition, so that they are keeping... and it's a permanent record, so they're keeping track of everything, everywhere you go, everything you buy, everything you do, and they are assigning you a credit score about whether you are trustworthy or not.

And by the way, one of the ways that you can earn points or not earn points is by if you engage in an app called Xi Jinping Thought. This is actually some companies require this. So what people will do is you have to get on Xi Jinping Thought, you have to spend a certain amount of time every day and at the end of it you can't just let it go because you have to answer a multiple choice questionnaire to make sure you got the point. And then your social credit will rise if you do that and it will fall, you will get penalized if it doesn't do that.

So what difference does it make what somebody's social credit score is? People who have a high score, who are considered trustworthy are able to buy plane tickets, train tickets, get visas to foreign countries, they can get mortgages, they can escape detention. But if you have a low credit score then what that does is you can lose your job, you can not be able to travel, your kids will not get into the school that you want them to go to. It affects every aspect of life. And what Xi Jinping said is that he wants the trustworthy to be able to go anywhere they want under heaven and the untrustworthy will not be able to take a single step.

So that's what they have in place in China. Oh, and by the way, another thing that they do is they track your searches online and that has to do with your social credit score as well.

Bill Walton: [31:47](#)

Well, apparently there are 500,000 internet police in Beijing alone, and so the aspects of their control, they're monitoring what you're doing online, they have cameras that are aiming for 100% coverage of the country, which is 1.4 billion people. They have complete coverage in Beijing with cameras, and they also monitor all your buying habits.

For example, I read that if you buy diapers for babies, that supposed to be a good person taking care of a baby, but if you're online gaming for five hours that's supposed to be a negative thing. So there's this ledger. But then a lot of Chinese like that ledger, and that to me is the really creepy part of it and they get competitive.

Reggie L.: [32:32](#)

Okay, so this is the thing, Bill. You can't really take the statistics of the Chinese, or-

Bill Walton: [32:38](#)

In other words, the Chinese Communist Party is doing the polling?

Reggie L.: [32:42](#)

Okay. If the Chinese Communist Party is doing the polling, for sure they're not going to get a straight answer. But even if the Chinese Communist Party is not doing a polling, the polling, I think that people would be very reluctant to say that they disagree with it, because they don't know whether they're being tracked or not because so much of the tracking is invisible. So why would they go out of their way to say, "I disagree with this," when it could come back with repercussions against them in their family.

- Bill Walton: [33:08](#) That's true, the poll is circular, the poll results feed back into your credit score. So if you say you like it, you get a boost in your credit score.
- Reggie L.: [33:15](#) That's right. You may or may not, I don't know whether the polling was independent, but they're not going to know whether it was independent either and they don't know whether to trust somebody who says they're independent because trust is very difficult in China because they're always being tracked and they're always being exposed, so they don't know really who to trust, a lot of people.
- Bill Walton: [33:36](#) Well, the reason why I wanted to link China and Google, is just it's the overt/covert thing, and you look at coming back to the creepy... not the creep, the Selfish Ledger. They talk about streams of information are brought together, the effect is multiplied, new patterns of behavior become apparent and new predictions about behavior become possible.
- Robert Epstein: [33:57](#) Yes. They call it behavioral sequencing, which is very interesting. You know my doctorate, a long time ago, was under a very famous Harvard professor named B. F. Skinner. And Skinner is known as one of the founders of behavioral psychology, and he believed in what he called benign control. In other words, he believed that we're always controlled anyway, so let's improve the methods of control, so that we can avoid using aversive methods, unpleasant methods, and we can just use pleasant methods, reinforcers he called them, positive reinforcers.
- We can basically get people to do good things but without having to penalize or punish them, and get people to do good things in ways that maybe they're not even aware of. He saw that as a kind of positive move for humankind, but I guarantee you, I knew him extremely well, that he would be appalled by what's happening in China. I guarantee you he would be terrified by the phenomena that I've discovered in online influence, these new methods of influence online. He never envisioned manipulation on this scale, affecting everyone in the world, in ways that are in fact often aversive, certainly in China.
- Then in the United States, with companies like Google, we're talking about control that's complete invisible to people, and it's not control that's in the hands of some responsible agencies and very diverse groups of people who are discussing what's best for everybody. It's in the control... we're talking about control by mainly one, and to a lesser extent a couple of other private companies. That I guarantee you Skinner would have

objected to strongly because these companies are not accountable to the American public or any other public.

So whether this is a... it's a government that's making this happen in China, for example, or it's a couple of private companies making it happen, it's terrifying, to me. It's terrifying to me. And the more I've learned about it, by the way, over the years, the more concerned I've become.

- Bill Walton: [36:31](#) So has anybody from Google showed up on your doorstep to say, "Why are you being so tough on us?"
- Robert Epstein: [36:38](#) Yes.
- Reggie L.: [36:39](#) Really?
- Robert Epstein: [36:40](#) Yes. Well, Google sent a private detective to my house, it got my wife quite upset.
- Bill Walton: [36:51](#) Because what you're doing's extremely courageous. I mean I think about Reggie and some of the work she's doing in China but she's not in China physically. I mean this is the thing, we're all, even the show, is going to go on Facebook, or not Facebook, but YouTube, and so there's this whole...
- Robert Epstein: [37:08](#) All I can say is if you irritate Google, there are consequences.
- Reggie L.: [37:18](#) So I'm thinking about myself. This is the first time I've ever done anything that'd be irritating towards Google, so I wonder if they're going to shut my website down or something. I don't know. I guess I'll let you know.
- Robert Epstein: [37:31](#) I'm telling you for sure, there have been consequences for me and obviously I like it when people say, as you've said, a couple of times now, "Oh, you're courageous, that's great." But in my family, people say something very different. They say that what I'm doing is irresponsible, reckless, is foolish. And I hear this over and over again, I don't hear it just occasionally.
- And I had an attorney general of one of our states come up to me after I gave a talk and he said to me, with a straight face, he said, "I think you're going to die in an accident some time in the next few months." And he was not smiling. He said, "You know, accidents happen all the time." And then he walked away.
- Reggie L.: [38:30](#) You know, I just have to say, this reminds me a lot of what dissidents in China have to go through, because in China, if

somebody takes a stand against the Chinese Communist Party and exposes their corruption, which is what you're doing with Google, they're being extremely courageous, they're going to be persecuted. But China will persecute the rest of their family, and some, like [Chen Wen-chen 00:38:51] has this great family that supports him, and they were willing to be tortured, literally tortured, and they said it's worth it because of exposing the corruption of the Chinese government and the violence and the one child policy.

But a lot of other dissidents, they do not have families that are supportive and they're like, "Why are you doing this to our family. Our family's worked very hard, we're just trying to go with the flow and because you're doing this we're all getting persecuted," and they turn against this person and this person ends up being very alone, doing the right thing without any support from their family and being also persecuted by the government. So, again, what you're doing is very brave.

Robert Epstein: [39:28](#)

Well, I mean, I can't honestly tell you that what I'm... that I'm entirely comfortable with what I'm doing. I can't honestly say that because, for example, just a couple months ago I testified before Congress about some of my research findings, and I also proposed a way that Congress could quickly and permanently end Google's worldwide monopoly on search, which means they would no longer be the threat that they are to humankind, and I published an article about this in Bloomberg Business Week, and I talked about it in my congressional testimony.

Bill Walton: [40:15](#)

And the way to do that is to, as you pointed out, to make its index public?

Robert Epstein: [40:21](#)

Its index is the database that it uses to generate search results. The way to end their monopoly on search, because you can't break up the search engine, that's out of the question because then it won't work very well. So you can't break it up. But what you can do is make the index, the database they use to generate search results, you can make that public through what's called an API, that's what programmers call it, and there's precedent for this in Google's own business practices, because they actually allow a couple of companies access to their index. Where do you think Siri, which is Apple's personal assistant, where do you think Siri gets answers from? It's from Google's database, they all come from Google.

So there's precedent for this in Google's business practices, but if they opened it up to everyone, then within a year or two you'd have thousands of search platforms using new business

models and all kinds of new kinds of formats and I mean, it'd be creativity galore in the area of search, and Google's users would shrink and shrink and shrink and shrink.

But the point is yes. So I gave this testimony, a few weeks later Donald Trump tweeted about my testimony. Now, he didn't get things quite right, which is kind of par for the course.

Bill Walton: [41:53](#)

And to be clear, you did not vote for Donald Trump.

Robert Epstein: [41:55](#)

I am not a Trump supporter, I'm not a conservative, by no means, in fact I'm a long time supporter of the Clintons, I have a signed letter from Bill Clinton up on my wall. The point is, Hillary Clinton replied to Trump's tweet by saying that my work had been debunked. Which is completely false, and was based on, and I quote, "Was based on 21 undecided voters." Now, my research involves tens of thousands of participants in dozens of experiments involving five national elections in four countries, et cetera, et cetera. It meets the highest possible standards of scientific integrity.

And because Hillary Clinton did that, basically gave that message to her 25 million Twitter followers, mainstream news sources picked up on that, amplified it, and the next thing I know my reputation is destroyed. This has literally just happened to me. Now, where did she get that information from? She got it from Google. Google was Hillary Clinton's biggest supporter, financial supporter in 2016. Hilary Clinton's chief technology officer, Stephanie Hannon, came to her straight from Google, she was a Google executive.

Eric Schmidt, who was the head of Google, offered in writing to run Hillary Clinton's tech campaign. I mean, she is very, very closely tied to Google. So what I'm saying is if you irritate the Google machine, however you do it, there are consequences. I'm paying a huge price for doing the work I do. And sometimes, to be honest with you, sometimes it's hard to get out of bed in the morning.

Reggie L.: [43:54](#)

No, I can understand that.

Bill Walton: [43:56](#)

Well, hopefully shows like this and you've been on a lot of other shows in the last month or two, I think there's going to be a bandwagon effect, I would hope, as people learn about this because we did a lot of research before you came on. I read nothing on the internet that has anything critical of what your search is. It's nothing but crickets, silent, there's nothing. So

Google didn't give Hillary or anything, they just gave her a sound bite because they hadn't done any actual research on their own. They know what you're saying is true.

Robert Epstein: [44:29](#)

Well, my point is that I do get pushback from many sources, and I have a very good friend who's based in Washington, I know he would want to remain anonymous at this moment so I'm not going to mention his name. But he was one of the first people out there to recognize what a threat Google posed. He's paid an enormous price for having gone public in the way that he's done and written to things he's written. It's hard to take on any big entity, government or corporate, but Google is... they're ruthless, they are extremely ruthless. As they say, it's hard to do the work I do.

The other thing is why aren't there hundreds of people doing the work that I do, which is not just the research but I've also set up monitoring projects to see what Google's actually showing people, we can talk about that at some point.

Bill Walton: [45:36](#)

I do want to talk about that, yes.

Robert Epstein: [45:38](#)

But why aren't there hundreds of researchers doing this around the world? I mean, that article I published on SEME in 2015 has been accessed or downloaded from the website of the National Academy of Sciences more than 200,000 times. Now, that's extremely, extremely unusual for a scientific paper, and early last year, which was the last time the Academy ran this kind of rating system, but they rated my article on search engine manipulation effect to be in the top 1% of all scientific papers in all disciplines.

So there's no question, from a scientific perspective, that what I'm doing is not only legitimate but is important, but why aren't universities around the world doing this research?

Unfortunately, the answer is so disturbing. If you get an email, for example from a professor at UCLA, which I get from time to time, or a professor at Columbia University, which I get from time to time, or a number of other... I just got one yesterday from a professor at San Diego State University. Guess what? If you know how to open up an email and look at it carefully to see where it's routed, where it's moving through, these universities use Google services. All of their emails are shared with Google.

Reggie L.: [47:14](#)

Well, isn't that also true of parts of the US government? I mean I thought that Google was... that they were contracting the-

Bill Walton: [47:22](#) Well, the federal government runs on Google Docs. It's got Google Cloud, Google tools, the whole federal government is based on Google, or Google based on that.

Reggie L.: [47:32](#) That's what I'm saying. So are all our federal documents safe?

Bill Walton: [47:34](#) Real quick, you're watching The Bill Walton Show, we're here with a very brave man, Dr. Robert Epstein, who has done a tremendous amount of work on how Google really operates, and how the threats it presents to our privacy and to our way of life, and with Reggie Littejohn, who's also doing similar work in China. Just to put a point on who does suffer, Jordan Peterson, the public intellectual that has spoken out on different topics, and had some gender identity objections, and Google shut down his Gmail account, his YouTube account, took off 250 videos that he'd posted, he had 15 million views and 450,000 subscribers. Cut off access to his email and his calendar data. Now, I guess he got it restored, I don't know if there was a happy ending to that story or was he...

Robert Epstein: [48:30](#) There was but in most cases there is not. Google does this to individuals and to companies every single day. I published an article, an investigative piece for US News and World Report in 2016 called The New Censorship, in which I talked at length about nine of Google's blacklists. And if you get on a Google blacklist, it is virtually impossible to get off of such a list, and they don't even have a customer service department, so there's no one you can discuss it with.

Bill Walton: [49:04](#) Say that again, there's no customer service department, there's no 800 number you call Google and say, "I've got to register a complaint."

Robert Epstein: [49:11](#) That is correct. So here's one of the richest and most successful companies in history, that has no customer service department. But they do have a lot of internal blacklists, and as I say I wrote about this in great detail back in 2016. It was only just a couple of months ago that some documents leaked from Google showing actual internal blacklists from the company. So I had to wait that many years for what I said about the company to be confirmed. But we're talking about a very secretive, potentially very dangerous organization.

Bill Walton: [49:55](#) But you do have a solution, and the solution is similar to what we did in 1956 with the AT&T decree, which is where... What did AT&T do at the time? They gave up certain technologies that everybody could use and it caused a technology explosion? Telecommunications explosion?

Reggie L.: [50:16](#) Right, I mean I think that they had to let other people use their phone infrastructure, the cable lines and all of that.

Robert Epstein: [50:24](#) That was actual their patents. All of their patents were shared with everyone, that was under the 1956 consent created by the Department of Justice. Yes, so there's precedent for doing the kind of thing I've suggested we do with Google, which is making their index, their basic database public, because that's exactly the kind of thing that was done with AT&T back in 1956. It led to tremendous amount of innovation in telecommunications and if we make Google's index public so that thousands of competing search platforms would be formed very, very rapidly, there would be tremendous innovation occurring in that space of online search. Right now there's no innovation, nothing, because 92% of search in the world is conducted by one company, which hasn't changed what they do in almost 20 years because they have no reason to.

Bill Walton: [51:29](#) Well, I dug up your article on the blacklist, we have an auto complete blacklist, we have a Maps blacklist, we have a Google account blacklist, we have the new Google News blacklist, the Google AdWords blacklist, I mean. This goes on and on.

Robert Epstein: [51:46](#) Yes, and I've actually gotten to know one of the whistleblowers, one who smuggled out a lot of documents recently, his name is Zachary Vorhies. He says there are actually dozens and dozens of blacklists. I happened to identify nine of them before I even had any confirming evidence that there were any blacklists, but I knew as a programmer that these blacklists must exist.

Zach not only has confirmed that, he's actually shown us now two of the blacklists. Meanwhile, when I testified before Congress, before I testified Google had a very high ranking representative there testifying and he was grilled by senators there on the Senate Judiciary Committee. And he was asked, under oath, "Do you have blacklists? Does Google have blacklists?" And he said, under oath, "No, we have no blacklists." It's insane. This is a company that denies, denies, denies. Even when people are coming forward and saying, "Wait a minute, that's not true, that is not true."

Bill Walton: [52:59](#) Dr. Robert Epstein, Reggie Littlejohn, I'm afraid this block of time has run out. I'd like to continue with the second segment, because we're going to shut this one down for a moment and then come back, because we've barely scratched the surface of what we need to talk about Google and China and what the Chinese are doing all over the world, because this is not just an American problem but it's a worldwide problem. Great

conversation, eye-opening. Thanks for doing this, I'm looking forward to having you back in our next segment.

So, to be continued, and thank you for taking time to watch or listen to The Bill Walton Show. Please join me for our upcoming show with our guest Reggie Littlejohn and Dr. Robert Epstein, and we'll be talking with you soon after the next break.

Voiceover: [53:51](#)

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