**3/11/24; Charlamagne tha God on Biden v. Trump**

**[HALF SECOND OF SILENCE]**

**[BILLBOARD]**

NOEL KING (HOST): An influential poll from the New York Times/Siena poll last month showed that 23 percent of registered Black voters polled said if the election was today, they’d vote for Donald Trump.

NOEL: This is big deal - Black voters historically vote Democrat, overwhelmingly.

SCORING IN <JMP\_JMP\_0136\_01801\_Big\_and\_Bad\_\_b\_\_APM>

NOEL: On Sunday, I sat down at SXSW with Charlamange Tha God. He commands one of the largest young Black audiences in the country, as co-host of The Breakfast Club. He has become known for his blunt and provocative interviews of politicians and his critiques of Joe Biden and the Democrats

*<CLIP> Charlemagne Tha God: I’m the type of person I feel like as a black person, I don't see how we're beholden to either one of these parties. I don't understand these black conservative crazies, and I don't understand these black liberal crazies either. I think as a black person, you shouldn't be beholden to any political party in this country,*

*because we haven't really seen, I mean, Democrats have done more, but we haven't really seen anybody systemically help us get out of this situation that we're in, because I think that's something that people never truly address.*

NOEL: Coming up on Today, Explained.

**[THEME]**

BRAKKTON BOOKER (CORRESPONDENT, POLITICO): I am Brakkton Booker. I am a correspondent at Politico, and also the author of “The ReCast” which focuses on race and policy in politics. My focus is mainly on voters of color, in particular black voters. They seem to be, on some level up for grabs this election cycle. And you know, that has different meanings depending on who you're talking to Black voters are obviously the the backbone of the Democratic Party. But there are polls that show that there may be some slippage among Democrats as far as black voters are concerned.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KttH5spKRn0)*> “CBS Mornings, What Black voters in South Carolina are saying about President Biden”*

*Reporter: A recent CBS news poll shows 77% of Black voters would back the president in a potential general election rematch with former President Trump. Down 10 points from 2020.*

*Pastor Curtis Johnson: I am concerned that so many in our community are feeling that some of the issues that are more relevant to us are not being addressed.*

NOEL: You use the words up for grabs and we think about an election. You know, we assume every block of voters is up for grabs. And yet baked into what you're saying is, is ~~the kind of~~ the idea that black voters don't have to be competed for because they will vote Democrat. Where does this idea come from? What's it grounded in?

BRAKKTON: Well, it stems from the fact that black voters have been so loyal, really, since, you know, the 1960s and the civil rights movement that black voters have voted overwhelmingly Democrat, no matter who is on the ballot on the on the Republican side of the ledger. But what you're seeing now, kind of in the modern era of politics, is while that still is largely true, we're seeing that Trump has actually made some inroads with black communities.

NOEL: Hmm

BRAKKTON: And polling coming in to to 2024. Is showing that Black voters are saying, at least to pollsters, that some 20 to 23% are open to voting for Trump. And look,it could be the difference in swinging the election, for Donald Trump, if folks don't show up and vote for, a Biden-Harris ticket. And it's still unknown how much like an RFK, candidacy or a Cornel West or Jill Stein is going to be this year. But the fact that voters have options and we're seeing protest votes kind of emerge among the Democratic faithful…

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZnZCZnMe-I)*> CBS Mornings, some Democrats cast protest votes*

*REPORTER: it's a win for President Biden in Michigan's Democratic primary but the results signal discontent among Democrats over the president's foreign policy the ballot option uncommitted earned more than 100,000 votes.*

BRAKKTON: It's really unclear about where these shifts are going to be and how impactful they're going to be on 2024.

NOEL: Now, you were recently at Mar-A-Lago for Politico. What do you hear Donald Trump trying to do to appeal to black voters?

BRAKKTON: Look, he has said some things in recent weeks that has given some people…

NOEL: Heartburn. <laughs>

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWSaEV059ks)*> MSNBC, Fox host says Black people will back Trump because ‘they love sneakers’*

*Trump Rep on Fox: >> EVEN THE SNEAKER THING. I WAS ON SOCIAL MEDIA LAST NIGHT. VERY INTERESTING. AS YOU SEE BLACK SUPPORT ERODING FOR JOE BIDEN, THIS IS CONNECTING WITH BLACK AMERICA. BECAUSE THEY LOVE SNEAKERS. THEY’RE INTO SNEAKERS. THIS IS A BIG DEAL.CERTAINLY IN THE INNER CITY.*

*<CLIP>Associated Press, Trump unveils $399 branded shoes*

*TRUMP: We’re gonna remember Sneaker Con! You know that.*

BRAKKTON: <chuckle> But the fact that he is trying to ingratiate himself with with black voters saying like, look at all this, the criminal justice system, look at the legal system they're coming after me just like they do for you guys. Look, I don't know if that that message hits home, but maybe maybe for some, it actually does. I was part of a a polling group of of Black men, and some people said that, yeah, I think these cases that are against Trump, they're politically motivated~~.~~So there is some empathy that that is going on among black men in particular. I don't think it's widespread, but look, like I said before, like you just need small percentages to change their mind or feel like their lives were better under Trump than they are under Biden. But the Biden Harris has a message to sell. They will talk to you ad nauseum and give you laundry lists

*<CLIP> Quentin Fulks interview w/ TEx*

*FULKS: the president promised to help black families, he’s done that by one, by just overall lowering costs. He promised to invest in Black small business owners and entrepreneurs, and the rate of Black business ownership has almost doubled. Promised to invest in Black communities overall, Black childhood poverty has been cut in half. He increased Pell grants, 60% percent of Black students can now afford colleges. Those grants going to them. Invested in HBCUs. I mean, the list goes on and on.*

BRAKKTON: The problem is, I think they are having trouble connecting that to like how that is improving, certainly all Americans lives, certainly Black Americans lives. So if they're focusing too much on the past and not enough on the future, then folks are going to be like, hey, you know, I remember what my pocketbook felt like when Donald Trump was in office. Donald Trump was a much better salesman about policies, whether or not he deserved credit or not.

<[CLIP](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKF7vgeqhqQ)> CBS News, Trump At criminal justice forum

TRUMP: and we rallied activists and faith leaders and law enforcement and law makers alike we worked across party lines very strongly after all of the work and effort we passed the bill and I proudly signed it into law the most significant criminal justice reform in many generations

<[CLIP](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUT3cxGIhMs)> CNBC Television, President Donald Trump announces stimulus for business, help for families

TRUMP: to ensure that working Americans impacted by the virus can stay home without fear of financial hardship I will soon be taking emergency action which is unprecedented to provide financial relief

BRAKKTON: But look on the other side, I think Democrats have a much bigger, and broader, set of accomplishments that they can sell. Obviously, they're going to point to the vice president being the first black woman, first Asian woman, first woman to have that post.

*<CLIP> Quentin Fulks interview w/ TEx*

*FULKS: he's diversified what, you know, the government of America looks like he appointed Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first black woman on the Supreme Court. And he's put more black women on the federal courts than any other administration*

BRAKKTON: And, and I think that folks are going to say, look, our job is not complete.

*<CLIP> Quentin Fulks interview w/ TEx*

*FULKS: we have to continue the work that we've been doing and we have to finish the job. I think that if we allow Donald Trump back into office, he is going to roll back the progress.*

BRAKKTON: So they're both trying to sell this message that, look, there's a lot of unfinished business on both of our ends. They Trump supporters say like our our administration got cut short.   
  
<[CLIP](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nO5B5Ci98o)> Forbes Breaking News, 'I Make You This Promise' If I Win In 2024  
TRUMP: we will route the fake news media we will evict Joe Biden from the White House and we will finish the job that we so brilliantly started it was doing so beautifully

BRAKKTON: And you're hearing sort of the same messages from the Biden camp as well.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/5DLrIlUMXc4)*> @JoeBiden, finish the job*

*BIDEN: we made a lot of progress, because of all of you! But there’s more to do! So let’s finish the job!*

NOEL: People have been looking at these polls and asking if we’re at a point in history where the Democrats can no longer COUNT on the Black vote. If that’s the case it would be a very big deal which is why - I think - people were asking the question but nobody really wanted to answer it. Let me ask you if you’re comfortable answering .

BRAKKTON: So you’re gonna put that question on me. Now, is that what you're doing?

NOEL: I sure am, Brakkton Booker.   
  
BRAKKTON: Okay wow… <trails off>

NOEL: POLITICO's Brakkton Booker. <exhales>

BRAKKTON: You know, somebody for a long time, and you look at you, look at you. You just put me on the spot here.

SCORING IN <Subtle-Edged Sword (koto, lofi hip hop, shaker, thin synth, headnod)-01>

BRAKKTON: Look, I don't think there is a major realignment where Democrats have to worry that large numbers of black voters are going to abandon this party. But I also think there are lessons learned from 2020. There are a lot of pronouncements made by companies, made by politicians, made by business leaders about how much things were going to change after George Floyd.

NOEL: hmm

BRAKKTON: And I think that, you know, if folks are keeping receipts, they're like, man…

NOEL: mmhmm

BRAKKTON: I don't know if I got all that return on all that investment y'all said you were going to make. And so I think people are just being a little more cautious and a little more, judicious about where they are going to put their, alliances. Right? Like folks know that their vote counts. Folks know that Biden absolutely needs them to show up. And so because they know that and because the polling is showing that he is he is down and also losing support among his strongest base folks are like, well, what is my vote get me? What are you going to promise me? What are you going to deliver for me, for my community? And I don't know if all those answers have been provided sufficiently for a lot of voters.

SCORING BUMP

NOEL: Coming up: My talk with the man asking those questions very loudly – Charlamagne Tha God.

**[BREAK]**

**[BUMPER]**

NOEL: At SXSW in Austin yesterday, I sat down with Charlamangne Tha God, host of The Breakfast Club. It has millions of listeners / it’s a morning hip-hop show / but Charlamagne has ALSO become known for these probing, direct, disarming interviews with elected officials and candidates that have vaulted him into a position typically reserved for a few top journalists. Last year he interviewed Nikki Haley while fill-in hosting The Daily Show. He’s got a very big reach now.

*<CLIP> Charlamagne tha God @ SXSW*

*CTG: I'm a very curious person, like, my mother was an English teacher, in South Carolina. And she always told me when I was young to read things that don't pertain to me. And so being as she told me that I would read everything from the source magazine, Excel magazine to mad Judy Blume books. And so it's the same thing when I'm sitting around, you know, watching any of these elected officials. I'm just always wondering, like, why aren't they asking the most obvious question? That's how I always used to feel when I see people interviewing different celebrities, like, why aren’t they asking that question? So it's the same thing with politics.*

NOEL:The Democrats recognize his influence and they’ve been frustrated by his critiques of President Biden. He says Biden has no, QUOTE, “main character energy” and he questions Biden whether he can WIN in 2024. When we invited Charlamange / he asked to bring along his close friend Angela Rye who hosts the Native Land Pod.

*<CLIP>Angela Rye @ SXSW 2024*

*ANGELA: I was born to an activist and an educator, and I was always taught that I had an opinion. And whatever I wanted to do in this life, I could. I think I've tried my best to make my parents proud. And the culture proud. The culture to me are black folks.*

NOEL: After working on Capitol Hill, the Homeland Security Committee, The Congressional Black Caucus, Maxine Waters’ office, Angela became a TV commentator

*<CLIP>Angela Rye @ SXSW 2024*

*ANGELA: I still don't really know how that happened or why I never was it a goal of mine. And, ended up adopting this lovely individual as a brother.*

NOEL: Now like the Democratic establishment, Angala also has some critiques of her friend Charlemagne and how hard he’s gone on the Democrats, which you’re gonna hear. But I started by asking Charlamagne about one of his most viral moments:

NOEL: It's 2020. Charlamagne tha God is interviewing candidate Joe Biden, and you're trying to get a couple more minutes with him. You're telling him, hang on, hang on. Like, don't, don't end the interview yet, which is something every interviewer does…

ANGELA RYE (PODCAST HOST, POLITICAL COMENTATOR): Yes.

NOEL:The candidate tells you, you know, you've got two minutes left and you say, no, give me ten. And at this point, Candidate Biden makes this statement. If you don't know whether you're for me or for Trump, you ain't Black. I am very curious what went through your head…

ANGELA: <LAUGHS>

NOEL: as an interviewer when candidate, then candidate Biden said that?

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD (AUTHOR, HOST, THE BREAKFAST CLUB): Exactly what I said to him in that moment, like, you know, it's not about Trump, it's about me wanting to, you know, make sure that the Democratic Party is going to show up and do things for our people. I didn't even disagree with his statement because I think what he I hate trying to say what white people are trying to say, <audience laughs> what he was trying to say was like, if you if you're black and you vote for Donald Trump, you're voting against your interests.

NOEL: So this is before Biden is elected. In that moment, did you believe that to be true?

CHARLAMAGNE: What? That if you vote for Trump, you would be voting against your interests?

NOEL: Yeah

CHARLAMAGNE: Yeah. I believe that to be true now.

NOEL: You believe that to be true now?

CHARLAMAGNE: Absolutely.

NOEL: Okay. Sometimes people aren't sure. I mean, this is the thing people will say. Charlamagne is critical of President Biden. That means he is directing his audience toward Donald Trump.

ANGELA: That’s so–

CHARLAMAGNE: Yeah, I think yeah, I think we really insult black people, especially. We insult our own intelligence when we make those kind of statements, when we say things like, you can't be critical of whoever the elected official is and still know what's in our best interest to do when we get into the the voting booth come November.

NOEL: All right, so we have all been watching the polling last couple months, and one thing that we've all seen is that President Biden does appear to be losing some segment of black voters. What do you think is happening here with President Biden and his support in the black community? Has he done something wrong? Has he failed to do enough right?

CHARLAMAGNE: This is always when I hear this, people say this nowadays, I'm like, why are they just focusing on the black voters when–

NOEL CROSSTALK: because for a longtime it was a gimme!

CHARLAMAGNE CROSSTALK: you see him going lower and lower with everybody

NOEL: That’s why, that’s why, for a long time it was a gimme–.

CHARLAMAGNE: I think that's overstated. I don't see 23% of black people voting for Donald Trump. I could be wrong, but I don't. I think it might go up, but I don't see 23%.

ANGELA: But I think that it is one of those things where we are not we end up talking about this and then black voters are to blame in November if that's what ends up happening. So I don't think that that's fair. Again, we've carried this country long enough. Right. But I would say that it's not about what Joe Biden himself has done or not done for black people. I think this is about an institution, an establishment that has regularly failed, folks who look like me, folks who feel voiceless and unseen.   
NOEL: You get questions about this because– <APPLAUSE> Well said. You get questions about this. I think in part, again, as a radio person myself, because you take calls on your show, which means you have this intimate connection with people, that–

CHARLAMAGNE: It's the best.

NOEL: It's so cool. But, but it means that people sort of ask you to be a representative of the people that you're hearing from who call in, and I'm asking you now to do the same thing. I want to know what you are hearing from people that is undeniable this year about this election?  
CHARLAMAGNE: The biggest thing is, you know, my guy Tim Ryan, he talks about the exhausted, exhausted majority. And he says he feels like, you know, most people in this country, they're not leaning to the left and not lean into the right. They're just tired. So I think it's up to, you know, both candidates right now, but especially, you know, Democrats. How are you going to energize those people who don't want to get up off the couch in November? So that's the biggest thing I'm hearing from people. They're just tired. Like they just fed up with the political process all across the board.

NOEL: What do you think Biden has gotten done? What do you hear Biden has gotten done?

CHARLAMAGNE: Just student loan forgiveness is a big one. You know, I mean, honestly, that's the biggest thing I've heard people from our community talking about, because people like to see tangible things. They like to see things that absolutely they can touch and they can feel like, you know, when people wonder why folks keep bringing up these stimulus checks, it's because it's something that they could actually touch and they could feel and they could see. And I think it's the same thing with, the student loan debt forgiveness. But outside of that, I, I personally haven't heard much.

NOEL: When you say tangible things, I hear the economy. I hear –

CHARLAMAGNE: That's it! That’s literally all it's ever about. Like you could, when, when they asked people, well, what do black people want? We want the same thing everybody else wants in this country: upward mobility, money. People like cash. Cash rules everything around me. That's been the the,

ANGELA: CREAM, get the money

CHARLAMAGNE: That's right. It's been like that since the beginning of time.

ANGELA: This is where we disagree too, though.

CHARLAMAGNE: But it's, it’s true–

ANGELA CROSSTALK: I’m not saying– Not that. I’m saying–

CHARLAMAGNE: There's nothing we can talk about on this stage that money doesn't revolve around.

ANGELA: It's not just money that we need. We need safety. We need,we need the same folks who are there to protect and serve other communities, to protect and serve us, not shoot to kill. I want a Department of Justice that serves us. I want some folks that are really aggressive on voting rights cases. Like this is a big deal that he's not he's not going to be able to get to the finish line in November if they don't really start taking these voting rights issues really seriously.

CHARLAMAGNE: The voter suppression is going to be so real come November. And Democrats only defense against voter suppression historically has been we've got to have the largest voter turnout in the history of America this election. I don't know if you get that in 2024. So if you don't get a large voter turnout, how are you going to stop, the voter suppression?

NOEL: Truthfully, I think one of the criticisms is even saying something like that could lead to people sitting home and staying on the couch. You're not advocating anyone to sit home and stay on the couch. Angela is nodding her head. So I didn't make this up.

ANGELA: I tell him this…

NOEL: You have so much influence. You say it. And there's like a genuine fear that that might make it real.

CHARLAMAGNE: I disagree, I think that–.

ANGELA: What are you basing your disagreement on?

CHARLAMAGNE: Because I think that if these elected officials were doing what they were supposed to be doing for the people, it wouldn't matter. You know what somebody like me says if, if, if literally me just having these conversations because only the only question I've ever asked, you know, that is considered critical is are they still a winnable ticket come November? I think that's a very valid question to ask. If we have a threat to democracy on the other side…

ANGELA: Yea.

CHARLAMAGNE: like what's wrong with asking that question? Are they still a winnable ticket? When you look at the polls, when you look at the approval rating, what's wrong with asking that question? When David Axelrod said, there's just nobody said anything. When, what's the name of the guy who wrote the article for The New York Times?

NOEL: Ezra Klein

CHARLAMAGNE: Ezra Klein. When Ezra Klein, writes an article like that, nobody said anything. But when the black guy from the hip hop station in a hoodie says something, then everybody has a problem with it. Any power that I have is derived from the people. Like, I'm literally only asking the questions that I hear. You know, everyday working class people ask of me when they call into the radio station in the morning, or when I'm walking the streets in New York or when I'm home in South Carolina. These are the things that I'm hearing people say. I'll give you an example. I remember back in January, and I was, having a conversation with Fox News, and the guy said to me, hey, do you think the border is going to be an issue come November? And I said, hell yeah. And the reason I said, hell yeah, because the first for the first time, I'm having people that I talk to on a regular basis come to me and they're having these conversations. You know, you have people in Chicago, you have people in New York complaining about the resources that they feel the migrants were getting, that, you know, people in the community that have been there forever aren't receiving. And you literally had MSNBC run a headline that say, Charlamagne the God is pushing MAGA messaging. Now, two months later, that's all everybody's talking about is the border. So literally, my answer came from talking to people regular, everyday people. Like not listening to no politics. You know what, what a what a what a campaign strategist said this came from the people. So how is it MAGA messaging if it's coming from the people?

NOEL: If people think Donald Trump is stronger on the border, if people remember getting stimulus checks for Donald Trump.

CHARLAMAGNE: Yeah.

NOEL: If people think Donald Trump and the Republicans take crime more seriously than Democrats, that 23%, that doesn't seem unrealistic to me. <CROSSTALK: some of the things your saying–>

CHARLAMAGNE: We got to stop saying that in regards to black voters, though. Like when you look at Joe Biden's approval ratings, he's getting his ass kicked everywhere. It's not just…

NOEL: That’s fair.

CHARLAMAGNE: black people. So I think that, you know, in order to really get that campaign on, on, on, on the right track, they got to start looking at the totality of what's happening with that campaign and how different groups of people feel about him.

NOEL: In 2020, you endorsed Joe Biden.This year you have not made an endorsement. You hear how Angela speaks? You hear what? Your friend, you're very well informed. Friend says is at stake. Are you going to endorse anyone this year?

CHARLAMAGNE: No. I'm endorsing our democracy, though. I think that you should go out there and, you know, you should vote to keep this democracy, democracy alive. So, you know, this is clear as day. All you gotta do is, you know, and we're not even talking hyperbole…

ANGELA: No

CHARLAMAGNE: when we have these conversations. We got it. We got a you got some pretty good examples, you know, of what he's capable of. I don't, you know, I don't know, January 6th, 2021 was a pretty, you know, pretty cut and dry situation. Like, you know, that was that was an attempted coup of this country. And then, you know, you also have a, a man who doesn't believe in the Constitution. Like, you know, when you say you you should suspend, you know, the Constitution, to overthrow the results of an election. You know, you have his lawyer saying, well, he didn't, you know, sign up to say he was gonna support the Constitution. That kind of tells you what we're going in this country.

SCORING IN <JMP\_JMP\_0005\_01101\_Got\_Sleaze\_Geez\_\_a\_\_APM copy>

NOEL: Alright Charlamagn tha God, Angela Rye thank you guys so much. Guys lets give them a big hand! <applause> thank you for coming out today.

CHARLAMAGNE: Thank you! Thank you for having us!

ANGELA: Thank you, Noel.

CHARLAMAGNE: Thank you Noel

NOEL: That was Charlamagne tha God live onstage with Angela Rye at SXSW last night. You also heard Quentin Fulks of The Biden Administration listing some of Biden’s accomplishments in the first half of the show. Thanks to the team: Hady Mawajdeh, Miranda Kennedy, Laura Bullard, Patrick Boyd and Rob Byers. I’m Noel King. It’s Today, Explained.

**[10 SECONDS OF SILENCE]**