Bret Weinstein's DarkHorse Podcast - Black Intellectual Roun...

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**SPEAKERS**

Coleman Hughes, Thomas Chatterton Williams, John Wood Jr., John McWhorter, Kmele Foster, Glenn Loury, Bret, Chloe Valdary

**Bret** 00:06

Hey folks, welcome to the Dark Horse podcast. We have for you today a roundtable of some remarkable public intellectuals, many of whom you will know some of them may be new to you. We have Glenn Lowry who is the Martin P. Stoltz professor of economics at Brown University and the host of the Glenn show on blogging heads TV. We have john wood Jr, who is the National Ambassador of braver angels and a quitter, contributor at Colette magazine. We have Coleman Hughes, who is a fellow at the Manhattan Institute, and a contributing editor at City journal. We have Chloe Valerie, who is the founder of theory of enchantment. Thomas Chatterton Williams, who is contributing writer at the New York Times Magazine and a columnist at Harper's. And we have Camille Foster, who is a partner at free think and an unindicted co conspirators, co conspirator at the fifth column podcast, and john McWhorter, who is professor of linguistics at Columbia University. Thank you all for joining me, we have quite a situation on our hands here in the US and in the West more generally. And to be honest, I'm not exactly sure how to start this conversation. For one thing, the conversation is obviously in large measure about race, but I don't even feel comfortable asserting what anyone else's race is, and I'm not even sure I know what mine is supposed to be. So forgive me for having invited you here on the basis of having some African ancestry. I believe that that fact is, is sufficient to set the conversation in motion. And at some level, that makes me the token white in this conversation. So I guess, is that is that some kind of progress?

**Chloe Valdary** 01:55

Maybe you also have African ancestry,

**Bret** 01:59

all of us have entirely African ancestry. That Thank you, Chloe, I probably should have said recent African ancestry. And I guess I should ask recent African ancestry. Is it fair to say that, you know, I'm an evolutionary biologist, so recent, to me means something like the last 1000 years? Is it fair to assume that each of you traces your ancestry to Africa and the last 1000 years? On? Both? Yeah. Okay. Fair enough. All right. Now, I should also probably warn you upfront that my sense is that we are involved in a renewed racial conflict in the US, and that it is very badly cast. And that, in fact, it is a distraction from a much deeper issue, which has to do with long standing and extensive political corruption, which has frozen citizens out of the well being that is produced by their labor in our markets, and that we are in effect being misled into fighting each other when there is a much more obvious enemy. So in light of that, I will at some point during this conversation, want to talk to you about what solution might lead us out of this catastrophe. But before I get to a discussion of unity, 2020, and what it might have to do with our situation, I'm very interested to have a different conversation with you all. In essence, I invited you because I know you all to be incredibly courageous, and to be very deep thinkers on many issues, including race. My hope is that one thing will strike people who see this podcast, which is that we have assembled here on our screen, an incredible group of courageous public intellectuals, who are also African American, in part or in whole however it is that you define yourselves. And that the fact that the African American community or is it fair for me to say, black? Is that acceptable term?

**John McWhorter** 04:16

prefer? Yeah,

**Bret** 04:18

I do, too. It's the one I grew up with. And it feels it feels right to me as well. That what I know from my own life, and from interacting with many of you is that for some reason, and I confess, it's a reason I do not know, the black community has produced more top flight, public intellectuals than any other population I know of. I don't know the cause. But the fact that that is the case is striking. And I hope people will notice and start thinking about what may be going on. One hypothesis is that it has something to do with adversity. I'd be interested to hear what you all think. But before we get there, what I'd like is each of you to give a sense of where You think we might be given the George Floyd? protests, the Black Lives Matter movement and the national conversation? I just want to have an idea of where you think we might be headed as a nation. So you're all in different orientations on each other's screens? Why don't we go with the orientation on my screen? Glenn, are you willing to start?

**Glenn Loury** 05:22

Here? I'll start, I don't want to stand in the way of the brilliant observations, I'm sure we'll follow. We're in deep doo doo man. I mean, we're, we're, we're in the grips of something, I think. I'm not sure I can give all the parameters. And I don't want to take too long. But that I think, is a very serious problem for the country. I think we're out of touch with reality. I think demagoguery is afoot. I think there's a lot of sophomore reflections about social problem, an organization that has just consumed all the air in the room, and we're boxing shadows and whatnot, then I'll just get one illustration of this, and I'll stop. There's supposed to be an epidemic of racist police killings of black people. I don't think that's true. I think that's literally false. I don't think these events that we're observing are even properly classified as racial events. I think the unreflective imputation of racial animus to people who happen to be in one group or another who find themselves in conflict is a deep problem for our society. I think we're losing our way. But like I say, I'm just the first of many people who will make much more important observation. So I'll just

**Bret** 06:38

explain jonghwan.

**John Wood Jr.** 06:43

My feeling is that this is let me go ahead and say something optimistic to try and counterbalance. I think some of the justifiable pessimism that people may be feeling this moment. I think that this is a moment of extraordinary opportunity and extraordinary danger. And I think that we can focus on the opportunity in a way that calls forth some things that need to happen right now. I think there is this zealous pursuit of an ideological victory in favor of a certain version of social of social justice, which is calling for the sort of vast condemnation of the white supremacist state, it gives the impression that America is irredeemable, because its whiteness is something that imbues it with a certain guilt that can only be removed through a sort of mass atonement and capitulation to a series of demands. My feeling is that the is that America is not a fundamentally racist nation, but that black America faces problems that are complex and systemic. Both of these things can be true at the same time. And I think that a moment like this is a moment in which the nation is paying greater attention to the plight of black America. And if that happens in a way to where those energies can be diverted towards sensitive listening, and an appreciation of the nuances that govern our reality, then we can make the space for genuine progress to occur. But we have to move past the demagoguery of the demonization that is characterized the conversation so far, that is so heavily invested in the in this sort of tribal, vilify of certain groups. If we get if we can get past that, then we can use the attention of the moment to actually break through to something better.

**Bret** 08:37

Great. Coleman Europe.

**Coleman Hughes** 08:41

Yes. So I think we face many serious problems as a country, foremost at this moment is the fact that policing is difficult job. And we have, you know, the the way the police are structured, often doesn't provide incentives for police to be at their best. We face tricky problems, we face problems that are much harder than I think would be suggested. If you listen to the dominant rhetoric coming out of the left wing activist movement right now. We live in a country with more guns than people were when police pull someone over, they have to some extent rational fear that the person might have a pistol hidden in the glove compartment. And certain police officers deal with that, as well as it could possibly be dealt with and other police officers are horrible at their jobs. But that's a unique, uniquely American situation. Because of how much of a gun country we are. It's a situation that there is no path or easy solution to and I think I'm more optimistic about the prospect of never seeing a George Floyd or Tony timba. Like incident again, we're somewhere where a cop is just has his knee on someone's neck or upper back and, and essentially kills them in that way I'm, I think it's possible to, to come to a place where we never see an incident or almost never seen an incident like that. I'm not at all optimistic about getting to a place where we never see an unarmed American of any particular race getting shot by a cop. But the problem is, I think, you know, the media has prepared black people to think of this kind of event as something that only or overwhelmingly happens to black people and therefore to react as if our people are being hunted. By selectively omitting all the cases where this happens to white people. And I see a lot of what seemed like purely symbolic, fake solutions to these problems being offered reparations, how does that help police brutality? You know, hiring more black people and C suite positions at corporations? Where's the link between that and fixing broken public schools? So I see lots of fake solutions being offered to real problems. And that worries me because they appear in people's minds to be real solutions.

**Bret** 11:33

Great, Thomas.

**Thomas Chatterton Williams** 11:36

Hi, yeah, um, well, to pick up on where Coleman left off, I actually do think that, that something some sort of reparations might go a long way towards repairing or healing some of the divisions in our society. I start from the premise that race isn't real, what racism is, and that a specific people that have been in this country, since the collision of Europe and Africa 400, some odd years ago happened, have been failed by their government in this specific geography. And then a lot of the kinds of inequality could be fixed with some type of solution that I don't have right now to go off the top of my head with but that the idea of reparations might do something towards helping racial division. I also think from where I sit in Europe, just looking back at America, it's extraordinary once you leave to realize how violent society it is, and how extraordinarily violent the police are, towards all American citizens, compared to other wealthy societies. So the police kill upwards of 1000 people a year, over 500 of those 1000 will be white 10, out of every million of those, those 1000 will be Native American, it's the proportion is six out of a million for, for blacks, 2.2 out of a million for whites, and Asians are very rarely killed by police. So there is a problem. And whites get the bulk of the numbers, but blacks are disproportionately killed, not in the worst situation compared compared to Native Americans. You can imagine a situation where a widespread call for police reform should be something that all American citizens are invested in. And so I think that part of the rhetoric that is already been said here, part of the rhetoric that this is uniquely or specifically back problem, does more to hinder lasting and important solution, then I'm trying to find common ground and common problems to deal with.

**Bret** 13:43

Excellent, john McWhorter.

**John McWhorter** 13:46

I think what we're seeing right now, at this moment, is that a certain radical strain of anti racism that's been present for a long time, it's been present for decades. It's intellectually mediocre. But it's extremely frightening to other people, because one of its main tenants is that to not agree with it makes you a racist. So we're in a society where to be called a racist is essentially equivalent to being called a pedophile. And you have this minority of people with this, frankly, half cocked notion of how we should deal with race in the society that entails burning everything down and starting again, policing language in a way that would make it impossible to say anything the whole philosophy is based on paradoxes that don't make any sense. It's it's all quite a mess. But there's always been a certain kind of person, many of them white, many of them black, who subscribe to this where, because of what happened to George Floyd and the response to it, which I think was conditioned actually somewhat fortuitously by How everybody has been feeling after quarantine. And it's been a really interesting series of happenstance. Because of that space, I think that these new anti racist sense this as a moment, where they can actually take over, they sense it as a useful time when they can make America believe what they believe. And I don't want to make it sound like they're evil. Most people like that are very nice people who sincerely believe that what they're thinking is correct, because frankly, a lot of them have been trained not to think very hard about race, it's all very intellectually mediocre, but they're not going to let go of it. And so the point that we're at right now, is that these people are threatening to tear down any institution that matters, and create this kind of Orwellian America, they don't know, the evil that they're doing. They're not evil people, they don't understand that their ideas won't work. But it is the time for all good men and women and humans to face this mob down. And that hasn't been happening before. Generally, the ordinary person who knows that all that stuff is nonsense goes along with it, because they want to keep their job and they have kids to raise, they have bigger fish to fry, it's completely understandable. But that's not going to work this time. And so I'm wondering whether the ordinary person who knows that all of that stuff is a new kind of Stalinism, is going to have it in them to start saying, No, they might not. In which case, I really do fear for what's going to happen. On the other hand, I see signs that they might, there might be a way of keeping this from going any further than it already has. I'd like to see what happens this calendar year as we go into the fall, how many people are going to be capable of standing up to this sort of thing, because after a few people did after a few organizations that then there will be a copycat phenomenon once once people start to see the sky won't fall in? If somebody says you're a racist, and you just stand there and say, Okay, once they realize that the world will keep spinning, that'll start happening more. I hope it does.

**Bret** 17:04

All right, Chloe.

**Chloe Valdary** 17:07

So I would say to piggyback on what has already been said, That, for me, this looks like a crisis of meaning in the country. So I think that we are as citizens, increasingly atomized and isolated both socially, certainly due to COVID-19. But we've been isolated prior to that. And I also think that there's a spiritual malnourishment in the country that manifests itself in certain ways, one of which is racially, I think that the way in which this idea of anti racism has been proliferating over the past few months is a direct product of that spiritual malnourishment. And so without addressing that issue, we'll continue to have these issues pop up every so often. And I agree that this will be able to be sort of kept at bay if the average person is able to stand up for themselves and say, No, but I'm not sure if the average person actually has that fortitude, and that confidence to do so. I will say that I have been approached specifically because of theory of enchantment. And the way it actually teaches, texts by a lot of the traditional African American scholars have, you know, the Harlem Renaissance movement and such, I have been, I have been approached by people looking for alternatives to some of the anti racist programming that's been promoted by Ian Kennedy in the workplace and in corporations and in schools, I have been approached by people. So in the name of diversity and inclusion, you know, asking me for an alternative theory of enchantment lens. So that is very, I think, hopeful just to see that people are actually looking for alternatives. And it's possible that the rise of folks like Ephraim chindi, and Robyn D'Angelo is actually very going to be short lived. I don't know, we shall see. But I also think, an a more hopeful sort of point that the people writ large the American people, in the same way that we are susceptible to being sort of whipped into a frenzy by the media and, and susceptible to being polarized and sort of turning against each other. Again, because of that spiritual malnourishment because we gravitate toward politics as a form of religion now, I think we are also encouraged, I've seen encouraging signs that we're also tired of a lot of this being whipped into a frenzy and tired of you know, tearing each other apart at the seams and are really hungry for something that would actually be unifying And bring us together. So I think that that is calls for great hope.

**Bret** 20:04

Great, Camille.

**Kmele Foster** 20:07

I do like batting cleanup in a situation like this, because so many great things have already been said. And while there is some disagreement and a couple of specific places, I think I am in broad agreement with the general theme, I will say that I think it's important to pay some attention to the context we find ourselves in I mean, this The country is in a very vulnerable position we've just had, actually are still in the throes of a global pandemic, we're at the very beginning, I think of a pretty profound economic crisis that might play out play out over the course of the next decade. And the specific manifestations of concern like the waves of it, the perixx as paroxysms of it are, are important. But interestingly, I don't know that that race is so central to it, it's a piece of this conversation, but it isn't all of it just as policing as a piece of the conversation, but it isn't all of it. We've seen ourselves sort of Korean from a place where people are particularly concerned about imagine genocide against all black people, to tearing down statues and monuments to reallocation of wealth to the the inculcation of these new ideas like the the notion that individuality itself is somehow a retrograde notion that should be condemned, and that we should be instituting new corrective curriculums, in our workplaces and in our schools to try and introduce new ways of thinking. A lot of a lot of those tendencies, the interest in sort of re education in realignment, it'd be one thing if they were happening under normal circumstances, I think the fact that they're happening under these extraordinary circumstances, makes the circumstance all the more disconcerting. So I do think it's important, these conversations about race and identity, I think it's important to engage on conversations about structural racism, and, yes, historic injustices that have perpetuated certain kinds of inequality. But I also think it's important not to lose sight of that broader context. And the degree to which rectifying any one of those problems probably doesn't get us out of the bind that we find ourselves in.

**Bret** 22:34

Great. Alright, so I want to tell you a little bit about how I'm seeing this and what I think we might do about it, in particular, right here in this conversation, or at least starting there. So my sense is that race is simultaneously Central and for a good reason, and a distraction. And that that is confusing us, because you can you can sort of see one version of the story in which races somehow been artificially elevated, and another version of the story in which it's the problem that has to be solved. And by dodging back and forth between those two perspectives, you don't get anywhere. There are several things I heard you all say, Coleman was talking about false solutions, in particular, and I think I said to john McWhorter, in the podcast I did with him, that I believe we have a an overarching problem, which has to do with the absence of leaders. And maybe it's not even the absence of leaders. It's the conversion of the idea of leadership into the idea of influencer, an influencer to me is a very much weaker position. And so I know that I'm looking at a screen full of people that are capable of leadership at every level, right, you're capable of understanding what a leader must do, you're capable of marshalling the courage necessary to do it well. But the roles you are playing, are ones in which the people who actually need your insight are functioning in the role of consumer rather than citizen, and that this is just an unhealthy dynamic. So what I'm hoping is to figure out how we can restore the we can restore leadership to the place in our minds that it should exist, and then figure out how to populate it with people who can handle the responsibility. And my guess would be, we have the ability to do something here, we can all say things that many will resonate with about race and it's being a distraction, or it's being a key problem that has to be addressed once and for all. But the other thing we could do is we could steer the ship directly into the store. Right? by demonstrating that it is possible to take all of the features of the conversation of race that people are afraid to Have and they are afraid that if those pieces of the conversation are raised, that the conversation will go out of control and modeling that, in fact, we can do it well, and that the result of that conversation is not itself frightening, that we might be able to indicate to people that there is a way out of this, which is really the question john McWhorter was asking, what will happen? Are we going to see people figuring out how to stand up or aren't we? And if we don't, then what Glenn said is right, we're in very serious trouble. So are you willing to steer the ship into the storm and deal with the hardest questions about race and just let the chips fall where they may?

**Glenn Loury** 25:42

Yes, let me suggest three questions, good. welfare, affirmative action, and crime. I'll be succinct. reparations is a terrible idea. mobilizing a trillion dollars through the politics of the state on behalf of a program of racially defined redistribution is a terrible idea. Very bad for the country, South Africa, like categorization of its citizens very bad for black people, sapping us of the possibility of dignity. It won't solve the problem. The issue here is differences in the capacity to generate wealth. If you don't address it, any wealth disparity will reemerged. Even if you reshuffle the deck. It's a terrible idea, welfare of the 60s and 70s, destroyed the black family welfare of the 20s and 30s will destroy black dignity. Affirmative Action, it's a fraud. Black people have not penetrated the venture capital industry, the cold writing industry in Silicon Valley or whatever it is, because not enough black people have exhibited the skills necessary to succeed at those tasks. The old idea of mid 20th century that black people are being kept out by animates bias and discrimination is false. Development of African American people lacks affirmative action is a bad day crime. The reason that you have so many incidents is because there are so many black people breaking the law. The police are operating in these cities, as Coleman suggested, in the face of a reality, an outsize level of violence committed by black people against each other. If we can't be honest about that school to prison pipeline, mass incarceration and systemic discrimination if we cannot be honest about what's happening in our communities, African American communities with the violent criminal behavior that makes life unlivable for most of the people here, we're not going to get anywhere. So it can we begin this deep dive by being honest, honest about welfare, honest about affirmative action is honest about crime.

**Bret** 28:02

I want to I want to go deeper than that. I hear what you said. And it's not that I disagree with any of it. But I also think it's not the root. The question is, why is there disproportionate crime. And I would argue that we have a systemic problem that is not fundamentally about race, but the race problem that we genuinely have plays into this economic disparity problem in a way that those who have not reached the bottom rung of the ladder are, of course, more likely to engage in crime. It's what anybody would do. Right? If you don't have legitimate opportunities, you will?

**Glenn Loury** 28:37

I'm sorry, Brett. I'm sorry, Brent, excuse me, I don't want to know is it really, is it really not patronizing a community to say of they're criminals. It's what anybody would do. When you just got through saying, if someone did, that they're almost no Asians being killed by the police.

**Bret** 28:53

Good. All right. So let's let's, let's take this apart and figure out what we actually are saying what we actually believe. And I, of course, I'm open to be convinced that I have it wrong. But my point would be, you have a very different history for people of African descent who arrive in the new world, and you have a different history for Native Americans in the new world. And then those two populations have had unique dysfunction as a result of the fact that their origin stories are different than the other populations that are here. And so the only point that I'm really making, it's not that anybody would do any of these crimes. It's that when you don't have legitimate opportunities, you seek opportunities that are higher risk, nobody wants to go to prison, and you don't choose to engage in things that will tend to get you sent there. If you have good opportunities, but if you don't, you may engage in behaviors that are likely to run you afoul of the police. And so all I'm asking is, I think one of two things would have to be true. Either there's something about the black population that is more prone to be criminal. There's something causal that results in that population ending up in that category more frequently. And I believe strongly, it's likely to be the latter. I've seen no evidence that this is endogenous,

**John McWhorter** 30:11

right? I think you're all of that is true. But I think you're missing one part. And if we're talking about deep dive, this is deep, and it's very hard to quantify. And it's partly why many people refuse to think about it, which is that there's a cultural issue. And it's not about black culture, going back centuries. It's not about black culture, or even going back 50 years ago. But there was a turn in the mood in the 1960s. Where, in ways that fascinate me how this percolated from a small radical group into a general mood and a whole community really fascinates me. But something happened between 1960 and 1980. That taught an awful lot of especially young black men, that black authenticity involves checking out that black authenticity means that you get a pass because the man doesn't like you. And as vague as that sounds, the difference between the black culture in 1970 and black culture in 1950, even among the poorest is Stark, and unmistakable, something happened. And we still have the legacy of that. And so to the extent that, you know, living in New York City, this is something that nobody ever wants to say out loud, you'll read in the times, or you'll hear on NPR, you know, seven youths killed last night at a barbecue. And you don't even need to wonder it's always always black people in certain neighborhoods. Now, that doesn't mean there's something wrong with the people. But the question is, why aren't any poor white people doing that? Why isn't that happening in poor Chinatown's? Why isn't that happening in many towns in India? You know, poverty alone doesn't explain that. It's partly what came to be seen as normal, in the wake of the Black Power mood, and also the expansion of welfare with black people in mind starting in 1966, which was pernicious for family relations, although nobody knew that's what was gonna happen at the time. So I think you're right, poverty is one thing, but to the extent that anybody is bristling a little bit, it's because there's more, there's a black thing. And it's a very hard thing to talk about. But it's there. I don't know if all of you agree with me on this. That's my, my take on,

**John Wood Jr.** 32:17

I'd like to, I'd like to offer an analysis of, of this period. I think that, by the way, I'm going to say all this with a great deal of humility, because there are several people on this call. And we're going to know more about specific aspects of what I'm going to lay out here than I do. But this is my sense that it is up for correction. I think that I think that john, john MC W is supposed to john w here is right to pin our attention to the couple of decades that followed after the Civil Rights boom 70s in the 80s. My sense is that for most Americans, on either side of this well, for many Americans, there is a sense that or at least there was a sense that the black experience in America was something rotten with state sponsored oppression and institutional racism, right up until the moment in which Dr. King was killed. And after the passage of the Voting Rights Act, so on and so forth, that after that, however, after the success of the nonviolent movement, the major sort of barriers to meaningful equality in American life and black opportunity had been eliminated. And at that point, it simply became a question of our own cultural commitments and personal responsibilities in terms of our ability to, you know, live up to the opportunities before us, and that, sadly, the black community has failed to do that since then.

**John Wood Jr.** 33:48

On the other hand, you have this other narrative that says that racism went underground and wound up being baked into the operations of our institutions and our systems. But it remained just as pernicious. And the white American majority remained just as committed to it. And so now we have to pull the structures of society down to get at the rotted sort of marrow of that, and that's the narrative that you see proliferating on the left. I think that there is truth enough in these perspectives to arrive at some clarity at what really happened, but it's very complicated, in my view, this is how I look at it. In the 1960s. You had a number of things happen, that set the cultural and the structural sort of preconditions for the development of a black culture, that wound up becoming self destructive in many ways that it was not self destructive before, but that has to be seen in its interrelationship with structural aspects of American society. So to go down some examples, hopefully quickly, economically speaking. You know, I live in Los Angeles, Southern California, blacks used to dominate the agricultural sector. The service sectors in California and I suspect other parts of the country with the Great Society program and the opening up of immigration policy, what they call chain migration, right? You have many immigrants coming from, from Latin America in particular who came in and dominated the agricultural and the service sectors, US pushing African Americans out at the same period of time, you had manufacturing opportunities begin to go over go overseas to places like China and elsewhere in the late 60s, going into the 70s, you had many working class opportunities for African Americans began to contract. that's point number one point number two, the advent of the grid society program, the the welfare programs, the great victory of the grid of welfare in the Great Society was that eliminated hunger for a good many people, right? The Heritage Foundation would concede that point of successful in that way, but it did not do is provide an avenue for social mobility. I provided some discretionary income to African Americans as economic opportunities were contracting point number two, point number three, and it also became a disincentive for family formation. And that's a very important thing. disincentivizing two parent households, because you get more benefits when you're a single parent. Point number three, eventually, as we move past the assassinations of major black leaders, you have the as we go into the 70s, and certainly into the 80s, the advent of heroin, the advent of crack cocaine, and a drug based economy that winds up being serviced by gangs that initially arise to replace the sort of black militant leadership of the community who saw themselves as defending the community against rogue police officers that wind up becoming the distributors of highly profitable narcotics in a way that in the absence of economic opportunity and social mobility, but in the presence of discretionary income and systematic policies that are already undermining family formation, in the black community, become an economic center in the black community, that is self poisoning and pushing of this, this substance in way that further decimates, the black family further decimates black men. But then also restructures much of the cultural foundations of the community. And that emerges in interaction with the police response to that epidemic. And so you have the expansion of the police state, you have the beginnings of mass incarceration that accelerate in the 70s and the 80s, you have a failing educational system in that moment, you have the flight of black middle class and black professionals into integrated communities, but leaving many folks in the inner city, all of this is the immediate ancestor to the anger and the vitriol we see erupting out of black America right now. But that nobody is able to positively identify for what it is, it really is a cluster of systemic forces interacting with our culture in a way that is pinned us in to self destructive behavior. And the most anybody can say about this is that well, this is systemic, white supremacy in action. Or on the other hand, this is just black people not living up to what they should be doing for themselves. There's some grain of truth in each of those things. But they're both wildly simplistic to getting at the truth of what actually happened to us in the late 60s in the 1970s, and the 1980s. And even though most of those problems have improved since then, as a matter of policy, within the black community, the memory of these things are people my age, his parents, and so forth, or aunts, uncles, the memory of all that has been passed out in a way that makes it seem particularly for people still living in Watson, Detroit and Harlem, etc, that these problems have never improved, because for many of us, we are living with the inherited legacy of the interaction of these forces. So if we can analyze this in a way that can allow for a conversation of clarity to take place around these issues, and disenthrall ourselves from simplistic cultural explanations on the one hand, or wildly alarmist and radical

**John Wood Jr.** 39:05

imputations of racism to just the nation broadly speaking on the other, I think we could actually get somewhere, but may I make a suggestion of where to frame for this? Yes,

**Bret** 39:15

I would like to make a suggestion about how to do that. I have watched this debate unfold between people who are focused on personal responsibility and people who are focused on systemic causes, and I find a great deal of truth in both of them. But I think we haven't gone back far enough in history in order to understand what's really going on. And when I mentioned the special origin story for people of African descent in the new world and for Native Americans. The point has everything to do with what john McWhorter was saying with respect to culture, which is, in both these cases, you had a systematic disruption of inherited culture, and a replacement of that inherited culture with something that was full of magic. In other words designed to serve the population that did the install. And so in some sense we are dealing with the outgrowth of that that did not manifest simply as white supremacy is, as it is now defined in the minds of white people. But it does leave people with the impression that the structure itself is unfair. And so I really don't want to dominate the conversation. We've got a ton of intellectual firepower here and many different perspectives. But I want to point out one way in which this unfolds, why is there a cultural problem in black America. In part, it has to do with something several of you have identified, which is a glorification of violence, which has something to do with the absence of fathers, which has a hell of a lot to do with the rate of imprisonment. So I just want to point out to you that I never hear this set by anybody else. It's a biological demographic fact, if you take men out of a population, it disempowers women in negotiations and mating and dating, men who have lots of sexual opportunity because they're in high demand or hard to pin down. So they don't play the role of Father, which means that to the extent that fathers are necessary to address questions of why you should restrain violent impulses, for example, their absence then manifests as increasingly violent crime, which goes to explain some of the patterns that several of you have mentioned about an increased propensity for blacks to kill each other. So what I don't understand is why we aren't having that discussion, right? Something causes incarceration of black men, and that has a bunch of predictable effects. It's very straightforward.

**Coleman Hughes** 41:47

Alright. Can I say something? Yeah, I think, you know, what I've noticed talking to friends about this issue is that it has become a kind of political chip that is used, sometimes cynically, so you know, the homicide is the leading cause of death for black men in their 20s and even their early 30s. That's not true of Hispanics, whites, Asians, that's a central problem. It's um, I I'm fairly sure I could persuade someone that it's, it's, you know, one of the biggest problems facing the country problem that we should have a national movement to solve. There's a difference between raising that issue on its own as something one should care about in itself and raising it as a reason to dismiss the arguments that Black Lives Matter is making. And I think when it's raised in that second way, people just Stonewall the conversation fully. That said, even when you raise it on its own people still Stonewall it, which is, which is very depressing. But I think I do think we have to be the issues obviously, are related in certain key ways. But I do think there should just be a conversation in itself about the first order and second order consequences of crime, not just for the victims, but for the cycle of poverty and unemployment, that it causes, disinvestment, any issue that almost every issue that you will be tempted to care about related to poverty is made worse by crime, and sometimes, you know, mainly caused by crime. So there's that and and the second thing I wanted to say is that sometimes I feel that these questions are posed backwards. So people ask, why is there such a big difference in crime between blacks and whites, for example? or Why do black people commit so much crime, and I, I want to just insert, you know, Steven Pinker's thesis in in a book that I admire greatly, which is the better Angel, the better angels of our nature, the which is about the enormous decline in violence over the past several 100 years of human history. And his thesis is basically that the question you should should ask is not why do Why does a certain group of people commit so much crime? But why do low crime populations commit so little crime? Because it could just be true that the natural state for members of our species is for young men to get together in groups and be ready for violence. There's nothing in human history that that that that says that behavior is so pathological that it needs a special explanation. Really, what needs to be explained is the fact that we now have societies where young men don't behave that way. And as for crime disparities, if you look in the early 20th century and compare how much crime Irish immigrants were committing compared to Norwegian and Swedish immigrants, you Find disparities every bit as large as between blacks and whites today, if you look at the crime disparities between Southern whites and northern whites, to this day, it's rather large. So So what I want to say is there's nothing strange or cosmically unusual about two groups of people with very different histories, different cultures, different circumstances, committing very different levels of crime. And and I'm, in a way, it's the wrong question to ask to get to the bottom of why it is, unless, of course, you're solution oriented, which I am, I'm very curious about how we can lower crime rates, violent crime rates, and I'm dismayed that that conversation is either only used as a way of dismissing police violence or just seen as synonymous with racism. And we're going to keep seeing all of these problems play out until the turn, you know, until the end of time unless we address that central problem.

**Bret** 45:59

Great, I know there are several others of you who are wanting to jump in, I

**Thomas Chatterton Williams** 46:04

just like to make a couple things. The first is that I certainly agree with what john McWhorter was saying, about culture. I mean, John's first book, losing the race was really influential in my own thinking, when I wrote my first book, about the ways in which ideas of black authenticity can be tied up with ideas of street authenticity. And I want to tie that into the thing that Glenn is one of the most compelling arguments that I have ever come in contact with. And so I hesitate to disagree with him. But I do think that there are ways in which conversation around reparations would make a lot of sense, and would not be demeaning, or have anything to do with anything like blood or skin, or what we think of as race would have to do with a specific population that suffered a specific harm in a specific society. So I don't want to beat that drum again, but it's not about repairing black people certainly has nothing to do with repairing an immigrant of Nigerian origin, or Jamaican origin has to do with a specific set of people who can trace themselves back to American slavery, and have been identified to haven't passed out of blackness. It can be identified on official documents as having been black. And you know, those people usually you can find people that are still walking around who have been harmed in certain ways by government policies, whether it be redlining in their neighborhoods, or what have you. employment opportunities. It's pretty straightforward to me that that might not have all of the dynamics that john was talking about, which are the ways in which oppressed people can find themselves are contributing to their own oppression through their own choices. But I think that it certainly couldn't be worse than doing nothing.

**Chloe Valdary** 47:54

To add something to that, I agree with, with Thomas's last point, I actually shared a, I had a conversation with a man whose full name I forget, but he goes by Sandy, who wrote a book about reparations specifically for for the descendants of slaves and would not apply to those who were simply part of the African diaspora, you would have to prove that you were you actually identified as African American for the past 12 years, it would not be in the form of giving out cash, for example, it would be it would come in the form of giving out trusts, and actually set up in a way so as to generate wealth in the black community. It would also come with programs to promote financial literacy. I see no problem with this. I don't think that the argument that it would be somehow condescending to black Americans to do this really holds water, especially when you consider that this country has given reparations, for example, to Japanese Americans, and I don't think it was condescending to Japanese Americans to do so. That aside, I like to comment a little bit on this issue of mass incarceration. I volunteer for an organization here, and that's called children of promise, which mentors kids whose parents are incarcerated. And I can tell you that like, there's a huge dichotomy between the rhetoric coming out of the quote unquote, anti racist movement, and the way in which you are you are forced to mentor kids who, you know, whose parents are no longer in the home. And I think it's just worth mentioning that if you were to take some of that rhetoric that is being promoted in in so called anti racist spaces and put it in a place like children of promise, you will cripple those children and you would continue to perpetuate mass incarceration and violence, and not and so I think, just to add that we need to think about like the psychological effects of fatherlessness in black America not only on a mass level, but also just in terms of, you know, how do you actually ensure that a child, our mass amounts of children are instilled with a confidence enough, and a sense of self worth to actually overcome these these cycles of poverty and the cycle of violence that we're talking about, especially if they're looking up to their parents, on the one hand, because they're their parents, but on the other hand, they're also like, and I've heard this being said, by these children, you know, why did this person leave me? Why did this person neglect me? What does something I did? Is it my fault. So we have to really think about in terms of, again, breaking out of the cycle, and overcoming some of these cultural trends, how to create that kind of psychological healing within our own community, but also as Americans writ

**Thomas Chatterton Williams** 50:51

large, I just piggyback one point, very quickly. White people are in terrible shape in America by many measures, as well, right now. And you know, Charles Murray's book coming apart has tons of statistics about this. All of the things that people used to say, specifically affected black people, and were so bad about the out of wedlock birth rate. In the Moynihan report, white white society has come to do the same thing by those numbers. And we don't have a conversation about how bad are we, we're not having enough of a conversation about how bad Americans in general are doing. When it comes to out of wedlock births, the lower classes, across the board struggle with this marriage is something that's increasingly an upper middle class perogative for the educated, well employed, but it's not just what's not I mean, I'm as much of a critic of, of self defeating culture as anyone, let's not pretend these are uniquely black problems. America looks crazy from the standpoint of many other wealthy societies.

**Glenn Loury** 51:55

Let me piggyback on that. Let me piggyback on that. Wait, what's going on? I'm back to my reparations point, you guys. Here's what I'm saying about the dignity point. Exactly. There were a lot of poor whites because a lot of like drug addicts, there are a lot of white people struggling. There are a lot of broken white families, there are a lot of white kids who have lost their way. Why can't leave black people Lind our weight to the real justice problem, which is constructing a decent society, why do we have to carve out a separate settlement? Why are we carving out a separate settlement? Point 1.2. What's the settlement has been reached, don't come back here talking to me about America's racial legacy, because you negros will have already been paid. You take a sacred obligation, rectify the consequences of our history, you commodify it into a chip, and I don't care what number you put on the chip, then you discharge the obligation by passing the chip across the table. That is the wrong kind of politics for America and for black America.

**Chloe Valdary** 52:58

I still disagree. I don't I don't think it's a I don't think it's a zero sum game. When it comes to rapper again. And I raised the issue with Japanese Americans. I don't understand why I don't understand the argument that it is somehow an insult to the dignity or it was somehow an insult to the dignity of Japanese Americans to give them reparations for a wrong that was done by that was state sanction. And I don't see why that is that necessarily has to

**Kmele Foster** 53:25

be a completely different Can I get completely different cases wasn't merely sanction. It was actual state state action. And I think that makes it fundamentally different. It's also the case that for the most part, we're talking about reparations that were paid to specific people for a specific injury, perpetuated by the state. It's certainly true that slavery and various other sort of egregious things that have happened to black people, in some instances, you do have the state that's the actor with Jim Crow is the state that's the actor. But I don't know that that permitting the existence of an institution like chattel slavery, for example, which is older than writing is something that really sort of fits the same bill. But I'll take it a step further. I think there's a fundamental principle that is perhaps somewhat undermined, by taking culpability and making it something that is intergenerational, and taking even the injury and making it something that is intergenerational, like the the notion of rule of law is something that is not merely a like good goal, or even a sufficient goal. It is a pretty extraordinary thing that has evaded most people throughout most of history. And to the extent that instituting some regime of rewarding people for things that have happened to their ancestors on account of their being black, essentially, I think that that might actually impair that fabric. And I know one thing I I would say, well, I've got the mic for a moment is I suspect there are people who will watch a conversation like this and will immediately think that oh there. These are the folks who talk about culture as the fundamental problem. It's certainly the case that there are many unenlightened conversations to take place around these issues. Lots of thoughtless people who invoke culture as a response and just talk about black on black crime in a sort of flippant way. It's certainly not what's happening here. I think the vast majority of the conversation that is happening in this country now, with the ascendancy of the anti racist movement, tends to focus narrowly, and specifically on the structural problems. The fact that the folks on this particular in this particular conversation are interested in the complete complexity of the origin of those problems and the complexity of what's required to actually address those properties. Whether or not we agree on the appropriateness of reparations as part of that solution, I think is very, very telling and important. And that is what's happening here as opposed to a sort of flippant emphasis on on culture.

**John Wood Jr.** 56:11

Yeah, I'd like to pick up on that, Camille, and I really appreciate you sort of distilling that at the end there. Because I think that and while I appreciate the the perspectives that everybody's offering on reparations, and I, you know, I have sympathy with so much of it, I don't think the question of reparations is, is the fundamental one here, because whether we do or don't initiate anything like reparations, eventually, anything we do or don't do, there's going to succeed or fail on the basis of whether or not we have a larger framework for the conversation over race and black America, specifically, its relationship to the structures of our largest society, that is actually able to salvage what is true, or what is, you know, the what has the root of truth and the different perspectives that are on offer in these sort of simplified narratives? The question is, is can we, you know, on this call, and folks like us, can we help build out a frame that actually captures of that in a way that can sort of emerge the coherent narrative? That's, that's point number one. Point number two is how are we able to grow that frame that narrative within you know, the larger American conversation within the internal conversation in, in black America, where the social sort of volition towards, you know, a particular type of, of activism, is, is gaining momentum at an incredible pace for reasons that are understandable, I think that a frame such as that needs to sort of find a way to reconcile sort of the the proper, or the real relationship that exists between between three things, I think, one is the role of culture and in, in society and human populations generally, but certainly in black America, too, is the interaction between culture and structure and three, the interaction between structure maybe structure and culture, but the variable of of whiteness, right? Because that is something that people are looking at as a tangible sort of sort of thing here. What is the relationship between these between these things? My sense, again, is that culture is sort of the fundamental question within within black America. But that interacts with a pattern, a history of systemic evolution, that excuse a sort of critical formation in the 70s. And the 80s, I think, and that, because of a longer arc of history, and the way in which that history has moved, you have a lot of people who look at whiteness as having animated this sort of perfect, perverse kind of evolution of those systems, precisely as you come out in the 60s, during a period of time where we're from another lives looking at the cultural impact of Martin Luther King, Jr, the nonviolent movement, the integration of the the integration of our popular culture changes that took place in the south and evangelical community, America became visibly less racist, in terms of how we presented ourselves to the world, really the reality of the evolution of racial attitudes, in in the majority in the minds of the majority of Americans coming out from that period of time, how did racial attitudes really shift in white America, they shifted, I think, in a positive direction. But when we account for whiteness is animating this systemic oppression, then you get a very different frame for understanding that. So if we can lend clarity to those three variables, I think, you know, what does it mean by whiteness? How did white attitudes change or not change? What is the relationship between systems and culture and what is the cultural relationship between culture and success in black America, then we can get into build out something that is actually coherent, that can bring in a coalition behind it.

**Bret** 1:00:04

So that's

**Kmele Foster** 1:00:05

interesting. That's it. I think that's an interesting proposal. But in my mind that actually underscores the degree to which race actually pollutes so many things. And the degree to which the aspiration to make progress on all of these really, really important, incredibly complicated problems is compounded by the flattening that the indication of race requires the the thinking about groups the thinking about culpability as something that can be ascribed to one group or another, the thinking about dysfunction is something that can be ascribed to an entire group. The reality is that there are particular behaviors, perhaps even particular pathologies that we want to address. And those pathologies and behaviors exist in all manner of groups. And I think that we perhaps almost concede too much when we only have the conversations in terms of these disparities, the fact that blacks are overrepresented in certain categories, and not have specific conversations about particular concerns that we have about particular kinds of of dysfunctions in our society that need to be addressed. That because the solutions, the remedies, again, setting aside reparations for the moment, are generally things that that are going to be race agnostic. If children ought to be reading more, if schools aren't functioning properly, if literacy rates are too low, if hunger is a fundamental issue, then the actual consideration of race in most of those contexts may not be all that illuminating. It may only offer friction. And that is, I think, a really important point for us to at least consider.

**Bret** 1:01:54

So I can I can just jump in quickly here. A I don't think the problem is complex. I think it seems complex because we stand in the wrong place. And until you stand in the right place, you don't see that it's actually more straightforward than you would imagine. And the reparations question is a perfect one in order to reveal this. So I would argue we should separate it into two different questions. is a remedy justified? And is reparations? The correct that is to say most likely to succeed remedy available to us? In my case, I would say I absolutely believe there is a justification. I do not believe I believe very much what Glenn said that what you will get if you use monetary reparations is you will get white Americans discharging a real debt without having solved a problem. And then what? right that is going to be a disaster. So the real problem, the place that I think we should stand, is that race becomes an issue when the structures that are supposed to cause us to cohere as a multiracial society, break down as a result of artificial scarcity, when you have scarcity because something is hoarding opportunity, and well being, we turn on each other that's natural, biological, predictable. And so what we are seeing is a symptom of that hoarding. Right? And we can talk about the details of how that that functions within each of these populations. But the real question is, why is opportunity being hoarded? How are we allowing that to happen? And what do we suspect about each other as our reason to cohere breaks down? So Chloe, I interrupted you, do you want to jump in?

**Chloe Valdary** 1:03:38

Well, I was only going to say that to this day, I have no idea what whiteness is. And I really have no idea what that means. I agree with you that that we should be looking at it sort of as like a scarcity slash abundance model and ask the questions, why the scarcity exists? And what are the policies both legislative and cultural that we can enact to rectify this issue of scarcity? I don't think that, you know, to Glen's point, I don't think that any reparations bill should be if it were to pass should be an isolation or set apart from the cultural question or, or other conversations that had nothing to do with, you know, a legislative imposition. But I do in general agree, Brett, with your with your point that the question has to be asked, why is American structure so inadequate, that we are tearing each other apart? What are the areas of scarcity that we can actually rectify, legislatively or otherwise to help heal that and I do agree that this exists across the board. And this is not merely a matter of racial category.

**Bret** 1:04:58

If I can, if I can, just ask one bit of nuance, what I'm arguing for is that we have an artificially high level of bad luck, that the good luck has been hoarded, the bad luck is more widespread than it should be. And it disproportionately falls on some communities more than others. So it's not randomly distributed, which causes the impression that we have a race problem. And we do, but the race problem isn't driving this, what's driving it is the fact that there's something that doesn't want to share. And you know, we can talk about redistributing wealth, but that's not what I'm talking about, I'm talking about opportunity, and any decent patriotic American ought to be interested in opportunity being as widespread as possible, I've literally never heard an argument, that opportunity should not be widely distributed, you can make arguments about wealth, but not not opportunity. And so that's the problem is, if you're going to hoard opportunity, and the lack of opportunity is going to fall very heavily on some communities that have a cultural problem that has a long, that is to say, multi century history, and a history that is largely understandable, then that's where we have to go in order to address this so that we don't continue to have this boil over every 50 or 100 years.

**Glenn Loury** 1:06:10

But there's a real question, Brett, excuse me? Sure. The question is, okay, there's any quality of resources, and there's any equality of opportunity, and it's partly plays out across racial or ethnic lines. The question here is the question, are the groups that are on top culpable? If the groups that are on the bottom, are themselves in some sense or another being victimized by society? Are the groups that are on the top? vulnerable? If we fixate on groups, in terms of the inequality of opportunity or access to luck? Don't we have to somehow implicitly indict the successful even as we offer up our support for and are concerned about those who haven't done so? Well? Are there too many Jews? Aren't there too many Asians? Aren't there too many, etc? Do you see where I'm going with this?

**Bret** 1:07:08

Oh, yeah. I would say the the answer to the question is, this is the thing that is special about America is that it aspires to allow us not to do that. And we must not do that. Because this is this is a very beautiful structure potentially, and a very fragile one, if we start seeing each other in through that lens. And so what I'm arguing is, the villains are not a group of people. It's not Jews, it's not Asians. It's not white, it's rent seekers, right. And some of the rent seekers don't even know that they're doing it. Some people get to the category of rent seekers through the production of something that spreads like wildfire and makes them rich, and then being rich allows you to get richer, and you start hoarding opportunity, because it is natural to want opportunity. But it I guess my point is, the villains are self defined by virtue of the fact that they are interested in fielding their own children, for example, from competition from other people's children. Right, it's an unAmerican thing to do. And I don't know how successfully I've answered your question. But the thing we must not do is try to figure out which population is guilty? It's a bad question. And B, it is the route to rapid disaster.

**John McWhorter** 1:08:27

This is that I'm going to be really quick is that, let's say that you are correct in this hour. And I really mean, let's say that you're correct. The problem is that the people who talk about this the most and with the most authority are highly unlikely to have that clinical view of this sort of thing. Because there's there's a different cultural problem, which is that the American intelligentsia is complicit with encouraging the black segment of that intelligentsia to have a noble victim complex. The idea is that being a victim is the bedrock of your identity. It's what makes you interesting, and what makes you special. And so that means that even if the opportunity here were offered, and Chloe, I'm with you to an expense on reparations, I get it. I see it. As you know, there's very similar to the Japanese case. My feelings always been reparations, and before and not too much happened. But I could get on board with the idea that we do it again. But the problem is that the kinds of people who talk about racism other than a very few wouldn't be placated by the racism. If opportunities were granted, they would see it as their responsibility to pretend nothing significant happened. And what I mean is simply that I'm going to pick somebody because he's in the news a lot lately. And because she really gets around, I'm not choosing her because I think she's ridiculous, just choosing if reparations were granted, think about Nicole Hannah Jones on a podcast or on a TV show. Think about her general demeanor, which is that of being a warrior against a major, a major tort that has been leveled a major injustice has been leveled against her culture. Think of her facial expression, and I'm not making fun of it. But that facial expression that he often adds, which is kind of similar to mine actually represents something that it would it wouldn't change. would it change? Can you imagine somebody interviewing her in say, five years after reparations happened with her having a different facial expression, and because this is gonna seem like I'm attacking a woman, I will say the same thing about Tanase coats, think about his facial expression in interviews, the facial expression, there's a reason you can't imagine it ever changing. there would always be that sense that the battle is still on. And unfortunately, that kind of person has such an influence that I think we need to look at more than just these cold figures that you Bret the biologists, understandably, are trying to see these things. Because the people who talk about this with influence will never be placated, including reparations for granted. Yeah, I

**Thomas Chatterton Williams** 1:11:00

just want i think that actually coats coats. Yes, I

**Chloe Valdary** 1:11:02

was gonna mention sorry, Thomas has

**Thomas Chatterton Williams** 1:11:04

changed since he got really paid. And he's an optimist now.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:11:08

Yeah, I was gonna say, coats coats is actually interesting, because he, you know, when Obama was in office, he had this very long interview with him in the Atlantic magazine about reparations, where Obama was specifically saying he actually wasn't for Reparations, and just the fact that he was able to have that conversation with him without necessarily it was in print. But without that sort of very rigid, you know, facial expression, I think, is is maybe telling, but I think the larger question would be, so how do we disincentivize that kind of a response culturally? And I do think it's possible, because I do think we have, you know, might not like the term influencers. But I do think we actually have a lot of influencers, culturally in the black community that are that are willing and able to have a much more nuanced conversation about this. I brought this up at a talk that, Glenn, you're at the Manhattan Institute two years ago, when I talk spoke about The Breakfast Club for all of its problems, and it

**Glenn Loury** 1:12:05

was you.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:12:09

There are, you know, there are serious conversations of the caliber that we're having right now, from influential folks in the black community that talk about the problems with our culture, that talk about the proliferation of violence, that talk about the proliferation of incarceration, as caused by us. And so this idea that there is just none of that happening, and that we can't somehow incentivize that. I just think it's not laid out by the fact. So, again, my question, and I agree with you, john, but my question would be, then how do we disincentivize that from happening? And maybe, maybe come up? I saw you shaking your head? Maybe you don't think it's possible. But I I do so. But I would love to hear you guys's thoughts on that.

**John Wood Jr.** 1:12:52

Yeah, I'm calling is asking the right question. That is the question that highlights the limitation of the conversation that we've been having up to the moment. Brett, I think that your frame about the hoarding of opportunity, being a major, major part of what leads to the cultural and other issues that we're seeing, I think that's spot on. And I feel like that overlaps with my analysis and the analysis that others are, are giving here. But I think that the communicative potential of that analysis is only made viable if it is deployed within a larger context that begins to sort of address the kind of intercultural and cultural internal cultural conversations that are already taking place, right? Because Glenn and john in in different ways, you guys are both sort of highlighting the fact that the empirical arguments are just not enough, right? And so if we're going to talk about what does a solution look like, for moving the community forward, it can't be a conversation strictly over what the material solutions are, what is the best version of reparations Should we do reparations, X, Y, and Z kind of way, it has to be a conversation that actually joins with the narrative currents that are flowing out of the black community and other parts of society. At present, the reason I mentioned the idea of whiteness is not to is not to lend, it's not to amplify an already sort of, you know, somewhat toxic kind of concept. And the term that what that in the way in which that idea sort of engaged, it is rather to sort of set the stage for a conversation that allows us to understand that the good news in American life is that people generally have gotten less racist over time. And we can look at that and lift up that truth in a way that perhaps can set the stage for some sort of reconciliation here. But the other part that has to be acknowledged is the fact that the systemic, the reality of systemic problems, even if, and I myself don't prefer the idea of it being you know, it's I don't like the phrase institutional racism, I don't prefer it. I don't prefer the phrase white supremacy, but to acknowledge the fact that there are systemic problems that are interacting with the legacy of racism, even as Americans in general have become less racist over time, it sets the stage for us to have an intelligent of policy based conversation, while also being able to arrive potentially, at some deeper sort of reconciliation in terms of our personal communal feelings across these across these cultural divides of black and white, left and right in the ways in which they, they interact. And so I want to mention a book pursuing john john Coltrane conversation that way is the way to go. Yes, go for it, john.

**Glenn Loury** 1:15:31

You're getting a lot of airtime. Okay. I'm gonna be very concise. Everybody should read this book. Everybody should read Rogers Bru Baker. ethnicity without groups. He's a theoretical sociologist. It's an obscure book. It's theoretical sociology uses art, what's his name? What's Rogers with an S, Rogers brew bake. He says, this ethnic groups don't just exist, they have to be called into existence through the actions of strategic actors in the press in the academy in the, in the organizing community in the economy. And we need to think about how it is that we frame issues and how it is that they that's what I've taken from this conversation for the last 15 minutes. Critical institutions matter. The universities are absolutely fundamental here, what's taught in our universities to young people who are going to end up being strategic professional actors and all of the key venues, they're going to end up Manning and women in newsrooms. You know, they're there, they're going to be the young professionals, what's taught in our universities is absolutely critical. So the press is absolutely critical. I'm appalled sometimes when I pick up the newspaper, and I look at the tendentious way within which events that are very complicated, are framed in simplistic black and white racial kind of framing. So anyway, I just want to make my point. Take it as a footnote, john wood to your long disquisition. The conversation before you jump in the plane sometime, let's go ahead, right. Well,

**Bret** 1:17:17

I just want to say before you jump in, very frequently, we've got a problem. We've got two things that have been fused together in our minds, and they have to be pulled apart in this case, is it the pointy headed intellectual discussion that needs to be had? Or is it the visceral narrative thing? Obviously, it's both, you've got to figure out what's actually going on, but the only way it's going to reach anybody is if you get it into poetry, or music or narrative or something like this, which is obviously Chloe's specialty. So, anyway, I'm not arguing that let's get this intellectually, right, and then share the good news because nobody's gonna listen. But if we can get it intellectually, right, and then figure out how to say it so that people understand actually, there's hope down some road other than attacking the nuclear family and taking apart stem and all of this other nonsense, then, you know, maybe we can go in a good direction. All right. Yeah.

**Coleman Hughes** 1:18:09

Brett, I'm curious how, you know, it's the case that our racial tensions are caused by a, as you put an artificial scarcity. And the implication being if if there were more opportunity, or racial tensions would lessen? I'm not convinced of that. I think it might be too optimistic. How do you know that? Well,

**Bret** 1:18:34

hey, this phone calls pretty good demonstration. All right. We're doing all right.

**Coleman Hughes** 1:18:40

But so so is the New York Times op ed page. So are all the college educated black activists class that that is at the forefront of the misunderstandings Oh, no, no,

**Bret** 1:18:49

no, no, that's not what I mean by doing all right. I mean, that we are reaching each other, hearing each other making points, concessions, all of the things that are necessary for people to collaborate in a non race first way, but let me let me flip the thing on its head because here's the thing. Okay, let me just, I'm going to go the analytical route for a second. Until the last five minutes of history, there was only lineage against lineage competition, right? People competed with each other on the basis of who was related to their eat. There is another mechanism that unfolds, which is a collaboration based on reciprocity, right, where one puts aside relatedness, and collaborates based on the fact that it is profitable to both parties to engage in collaboration. Now that has ancient roots. But at the level of the scale of nations, in general, you have a closely related population inside of a border, and it may compete with a different population across some other border or sometimes they're within one border, and you'll end up with a genocide every now and again, but a structure that attempts to stabilize our culture operative instincts with each other, and sideline our lineage level relatedness questions is novel, what we know is that it can work because the best moments in our history, it has worked. And in fact, you can see that moments of productivity are ones in which we actually make progress on this front, and then you get a contraction, and suddenly we're at each other's throats. So all I'm getting at is, the scarcity in this case is artificial, we know that there's plenty being generated, and we know that it's being very badly distributed. And if we're careful, we know that it isn't just the wealth that's badly distributed, that it's actually the opportunity. And in part, you're watching what we're calling the anti racist movement, attack many of the solutions, this is a conspicuous tell, right, the idea that you would attack the nuclear family, when having two parents is actually known to be a very positive factor in terms of pointing kids in the right direction, the fact that it is attacking academic study, the fact that it is attacking science, all of these things are an indicator that in some sense, it is declaring that it has given up on the structures that work rather than tried trying to acquire those structures for populations that need them. So did I successfully answer your question? Or did I just model it?

**Coleman Hughes** 1:21:17

Not really, I agree with many of the points you made. But I'm so like, what I'm looking for is like, this seems like a very interesting hypothesis to me, which is that what we think our racial tensions are actually caused by something totally different. It's something I've actually heard a lot of activists say that they want us to fight each other. Because if we're fighting each other, then we're not fighting them, where them is defined as like, you know, the 1%. It's something actually a lot of Marxists think they think a lot of the racial issues are actually just class issues in disguise. And if we solve the former, the latter will at minimum be lessened. And I'm curious whether it's true, like have we looked at the past 100 years of history and seeing that when when race relations are worst, it's always during economic downturns or that, like, have we done a rigorous this, this is the kind of thing that sounds like it might be true, but it also just might be might not be true. So I'm looking for like the rigorous evidence

**Bret** 1:22:10

can well, so first of all, let's see if we can take this out of the American context for a second and actually take it out of the black context as well. Think about anti semitism. Right, anti semitism is a recurrent theme in history. Why? Have you ever heard an explanation?

**Coleman Hughes** 1:22:29

from Thomas several his his middle man minority that people don't understand what they bring economically and resent them was pretty, pretty persuasive to me, but I haven't studied it rigorously.

**Bret** 1:22:40

Well, here would be my argument, I think his argument is right, but that there's a deeper level. And the deeper level is this. Jews live as part of a diaspora, it means that we're a minority population inside the borders of other nations. And when times are good, people collaborate with us, when times are bad, they find an excuse to eliminate us or to steal stuff from us not because there's any justification for this, but because it creates growth for the population in a position to do the stealing. And the population that's in a position to do the stealing is the majority population by its very nature. So all I'm getting at is when times are good, when you can afford to collaborate, because it's not a zero sum game, it's a positive sum game, as things go into zero sum or worse, negative sum, you can actually create the appearance of growth to one population by robbing a different one. And in some sense, what's going on in the us is that the black population is continually being robbed. Right. And so the thing that I'm having trouble with is I'm watching this movement. And it is motivated by something that I think is very, very real, but it has mis diagnosed it. And because it's mis diagnosed, it's about to botch the policy level. And in fact, it's going to botch the policy level, in a way it's going to take down the entire experiment, rather than doing something that would positively address the real issue that has caused the anger, which obviously, has a racial nature, but isn't entirely racial, right? People are suffering in a very general way. So again, I feel like I haven't perfectly answered your question.

**Coleman Hughes** 1:24:17

Yeah, I don't I don't want to I don't want to take up too much time. But the Federal Reserve recently, I think, last year did this economic wellbeing report it pulls Americans and ask them are you doing better financially than your parents? And something like 70% of black people answered that question yes. And that that percentage was higher than then for whites? And I feel I'm you know, I'm not sure I buy the idea that this is a I think this is its own problem is what I'm saying. I think it's a problem that's generated by ideas by social media by, you know, select by, by coverage bias covering certain instances and not others. But I, I, I fear that your analysis might be too optimistic in pinning it as a consequence of this other problem.

**John McWhorter** 1:25:08

Well, I'm not here, either very quick thing, Brett. Yeah, I I would have to agree with Coleman here in that. I suggest to her mystic, I say this all the time on the Glenn show, but I think this is important. Whatever you're trying to come up with about race problem, whatever analysis you're trying, you have to always keep in mind this very simple thing. Every summer, in big cities across the United States, black teenagers and 20, somethings start killing each other in alarmingly high numbers over nothing at all. Now, whatever explanation you have based on the economy, or opportunity, or has more the chips, the question has to be Why that? Because I don't think anybody would say, I don't think you would say that those boys are killing one another because they don't have enough to eat, because they're not making as much as they is there that there's something more going on. And it's not to say that these are pathological individuals, their reasons for this, it's a tragedy, and you want them to stop this. But what's going on, among many other things, is that and so your analysis has to cover that?

**Bret** 1:26:11

Well, of course it does. And I mean, look, there's a really bitter pill that comes with the analysis that I'm trying to foster, for one thing, I don't think very much depends on the precision, right, which I think is what we're arguing about. The question is, is it? Is it in the ballpark? is it accurate? The problem is that so much of this is deep enough, that the solution is not quick, there is nothing that you could deliver, that would solve this in less than a generation, you could start to make it better very quickly. But you can't, you can't solve this because the problem does involve a failure of the culture of fatherhood, for example, you have to resurrect the nuclear family not attack it, right? You have to resurrect a respect for meritocracy for achievement and achievement in order to resurrect a respect for it. It has to be possible. So the question is, if people don't see that there is a way for them to get ahead by being personally responsible, they don't engage in it. And so there has to be something to shoot for.

**John McWhorter** 1:27:14

And if I see it, and still not do it, that's true, too. That's quite good.

**Kmele Foster** 1:27:19

Is it? Is it your Is it your position, Brett, that there is not a sufficiently meritocratic system in place today, when you talk about this this deficit of opportunity? Is it a function of just lower productivity during the period that we find ourselves living in? Or D state? Do you think that there is something that is broken, because certainly when I look at, when I look under the hood of what we call black America, and we look at the various cohorts that exists there, the different immigrant communities, there are lots of successful people there. And I think that's also true across the United States, when you tick off certain boxes. And when you have certain characteristics, you actually tend to do pretty well in this country, and you can have attained some of that upward mobility. I think there's there are things certainly, prior to the pandemic that we're working on, there are other things that weren't working. And, you know, one concern that I have is, is the degree to which we imagine that that we can engineer better political systems that will give us better societal outcomes. And I think a lot of the political fixes, like the affirmative ones that have that we often imagine putting into place to try and uplift people out of poverty and to, to better distribute opportunity. They tend to fail in ways that are pretty profound. And for reasons we don't understand, because the mechanisms that actually allow us to create prosperity are there, they're distributed, and they're very difficult to actually try and game and they're way too complicated for most of us to actually understand.

**Bret** 1:29:11

Well, so this is, I think, is where this dynamic between conservatives who tend to favor personal responsibility solutions and liberals who tend to favor systemic solutions tends to to go awry, because there is clearly if I was advising somebody who was in an oppressed population, I would be full time on the personal responsibility issue, right? Why? Because you have a very good chance of improving your well being by being personally responsible, whether it's fair or not, you have a very good chance of getting out of your situation if you can keep your head down and do the right sorts of things. So if I was advising an individual, that's the only game in town, the problem is if it doesn't adjust how much there is available Then if you succeed through personal responsibility, somebody else fails somebody whose name you don't know, right. And so my point would be, it's not one or the other. In this case, from the point of view of individuals, we don't want this de individuated, anti racist movement that basically turns people into, you know, a just a mob. We want people to recognize themselves as individuals and to recognize that they have agency. And, and that's important, but to the extent that the problem is, at the end of the day, if there is enough to go around, it isn't available to most people. That's an issue to be addressed at a different level. And I am not I was decades ago, a believer in these architected top down solutions, I'm no longer a believer in those things. So that's not what I'm advocating. But I am advocating that we recognize the degree to which bad luck, for example, is non randomly distributed. And we say, Look, that's just an unacceptable phenomenon. Right? It is our obligation, there's going to be bad luck, but it should be evenly distributed based on race and zip code and all of these things. And until it is, we've got a problem that can be addressed at a different level, that personal responsibility does not have any impact on.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:31:13

Yeah, but how can it be addressed in a different level? Because as you were saying this, I was thinking of the recent spate of shootings in Chicago. And I was thinking, we're talking about bad luck, right? I was reading some of the bios of those individuals who were killed, who were doing, you know, personal responsibility, who were taking care of their families who just so happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, and were shot by killed by a stray bullet. And what is the piece of legislation that's going to effectively change that bad luck? Well,

**Bret** 1:31:44

so first of all, there's a deeper problem. And you're right, the focus on culture in this conversation is I think, key. I want to tell you a very brief story. I was on a subway in Harlem. Last time, I was in New York, and there was a group of kids, they must been 1314 years old. Seemed like interesting, good kids. They were black. And they were horsing around on the train. And one of the kids a girl sort of looked a bit book. And the other kids that she was with took her knapsack, and they started making fun of her for studying and giving a damn about school. And they literally turned her backpack upside down and spilled out, her notes just spilled out across the floor of the train. And she was embarrassed picking them back up, because it demonstrated that she gave a damn, right? That's a deep problem, right? That's a serious problem. Because it means that even somebody who is interested in the kinds of things that does allow them to that would allow them to deploy personal responsibility, and lift themselves up by their bootstraps faces something else, which is that if other people around you don't have the same capacity, they may even resent you're doing it. So this is deep stuff. It doesn't it's not just legislation. But if you were gonna do it legislatively, what would you do? I would think instead of reparations, we'd be talking about massive investment in these communities. It's not like we don't know how to build a good school, right? They just don't happen in certain neighborhoods, and they do happen in other neighborhoods. And that's not an accident, which neighborhoods have the good ones. And if you really want to solve this problem, and you were willing to invest 20 years to do it, then placing the things in the locations where the tools that are most useful, are accessible is at least a prerequisite. I see.

**Thomas Chatterton Williams** 1:33:38

It's not it's not a racial, white kids that I grew up with Italian Americans with do the exact same thing. They throw your books on the ground, you have a problem of discussing class. In terms of race in America, there's this is not inherently black behavior. I knows that this is so but no, but it's the idea of acting White is something that affects I've, you know, I've experienced that, but it's not it's not a fundamentally black thing. It's a it's a fourth thing JD Vance talks about is in hillbilly elegy, you know, we need to find a language that this was, we have to find a language that doesn't occlude the problem by by, by this kind of Hocus Pocus talk of, of race,

**Bret** 1:34:19

I hope. I hope you don't think that that's what I'm saying. It happened that the kids I was looking at on this train were black, but that's not what I'm saying at all. And in fact, I think what I said earlier in the conversation is that as soon as we start seeing these things as racial, we lose sight of, of what's actually going on, and we default into this ancestral mode, which

**Thomas Chatterton Williams** 1:34:38

I'm on the same page with that, yeah, it's

**Glenn Loury** 1:34:41

a real problem. It's, excuse me, Thomas, I just want to make this point. It's a network phenomenon. It's about individuals embedded within a social structure of interpersonal contact. Now, those tend to be racial given racial identification and racial organization in society. They're not intrinsically racial, but they are In their manifestation de facto often racial.

**John McWhorter** 1:35:03

Exactly. Brett The reason I was shaping shaking my head was because whether that phenomenon is racial or not, that's a very complex question. I think it's worse and more dangerous in the black community than say, Thomas among working class Italians, because there's the whole issue that that girl with a glasses is supposedly not black, not just nerdy, but nevertheless, let's just call it anti intellectualism. The sad fact is, that when that kind of culture is entrenched in a school, you can put money into it for a generation, and you go back in a generation, and the place is still a mess that has been shown in this tragic case in St. Louis. And then there was another tragic case, Justin, New Jersey, pumping money into those schools and have telescopes, then people learning how to make sushi and all of that. And if the culture is such that school is seen as alien, the problem is not solved. And I wish that weren't true. But I actually

**Bret** 1:36:01

I agree with this, let me just say, you would find it funny if you saw the classroom that I ran before the Evergreen meltdown, because the Evergreen the classroom that I ran didn't look like school for exactly this reason, I was not a good student. And so I'm not suggesting we just duplicate some good school in a bad neighborhood. I think we have to re envision what school looks like so that it's fun and engaging.

**Kmele Foster** 1:36:25

Well, I actually actually like that a lot. And I would say that there's something you said a moment ago, we know how to build good schools, and I'm not so sure about that. We know where some good schools are, we know what the qualities of those good schools are. But those schools tend to fit in particular contexts. They fit the particular they have cultivated a culture over time, perhaps some mechanisms for inculcating that culture within the professor, the leadership and the students themselves that they're complex. And the actual mechanisms that get us to better institutions are likely to be the same things that get us to better goods and services, it's probably greater competition, it's probably greater choice and in the, in the context of education. And it is most certainly an environment that encourages innovation, which is something that we have not seen in K through 12 education or in higher education. Neither one of these things has changed materially in the past 100 odd years, and with K through 12. In particular, it's not even like the material that we're teaching is much different. Yet, we still see falling test scores in certain contexts for whole swaths of the population. And we still have these incredibly inefficient meccan circumstances where we used to anyways fill classrooms with 30 kids, give them textbooks, and sometimes laptops and calculators. And it's not terribly different than the way it's from the way it's worked over the course of the past century, anyplace else in America. And I do think that we need to break that old model and find new ways of educating students. But I also think that this process is hard. And it is likely to be something that needs to actually grow organically in order to work. Last point on this is that it is very clear to me that the most beneficial thing that's happened to any student who has been trapped, or who had ran the risk of being trapped in an underperforming school, over the past 3040 years, is the advent of school choice, and the charter school movement, and we need more programs like that, to actually improve their circumstances. And here again, you know, we're having a narrow, specific conversation about a particular aspect of, you know, the problems that are often thrown in to this bucket of things that are viewed as you know, the challenges facing black America, or, you know, the, the repercussions of structural racism in this country. And I just think that those conversations tend to be a lot more productive, and they tend to yield a lot more in the way of remedies. And I, I'm, I'm at least a little bit pessimistic about the broader sort of global projects to try and create a new language for us to talk about these things. And as much as I engage in some of the intellectual aspect of this routinely, I do think that it's the practical mantras. It's the simple slogans that end up getting it done. It's Martin Luther King's assertion that he has a dream and the specific idea and that dream being that we would all be judged by the content of our character, like that resonates with people that has legs and I think that is, to the extent you're uncomfortable with the current moment and the wave of anti racism and the degree to which it is centralizes us you're uncomfortable with it. Because of that idea, that piece of software, that is that travels really, really well.

**Bret** 1:40:06

Well, I'm not sure what you mean, I'm uncomfortable with it, I'm concerned that we are about to uninvent America and that the horror that will replace it is something that ought to frighten us all. But I agree with you completely about what you said about school, what I should have said is we know how to make better schools, we don't know how to make good schools. And it's very important that we figure it out. And it should look radically different.

**Glenn Loury** 1:40:28

But then I say something bad, just quickly, I'm struck by the contrast. So there are two big areas of public service provision which have massive impacts on black communities, policing, and education, both of which are unionized, both of which are provided by public employees, and so forth and so on. And both of which it could be argued can seal the community. Look at the discourse within the community, about the failure of public institutions to measure up to the needs of the people. With respect to police, we've got defunded police, we've got throwing bricks at cops. We've got what we've got. We've got black lives matter. With respect to education. You have the left of center politics, implacably opposed to doing what Camille foster just said, needed to be done. That confining to the last man to keep it from happening. Now my point is not about them, I expect them to defend their interests. My point is about us. Where's the criticism of that? For people who think that black lives matter?

**Bret** 1:41:34

Can you say what exactly the criticism? What is that in that sense,

**Glenn Loury** 1:41:38

that is the failure of conventional public educational services being provided to black people, to convey to them the opportunity in this life to which they're entitled. So this is why which can't be remedied. Camille suggests by expanding educational choice, which policy is implacably opposed by the Democratic Party.

**Bret** 1:42:02

So I believe the problem is both parties that the parties have effectively got a stranglehold on power, right, and that stranglehold on power means that policy does not serve the public, and it hasn't for decades. So this is why I started where I did, I believe, if you were to get anywhere, if Camille is right about what the solution actually looks like, then what you need is a governmental structure that actually gives a damn what the consequences of its behavior are, rather than parties that are cynically pointing us at each other so that we don't notice the corruption that they're involved in. That I really think is ultimately the only route out of this, because if we let the parties continue to play their role, they're going to start a race war. I mean, very predictably,

**Glenn Loury** 1:42:48

I may be true, but you don't mean to be saying that the democrats or the republicans stand in the same place visa v. school choice. No, no, because that's not true.

**Bret** 1:42:55

No, I think the democrats are basically cynically toying with partnering with the so called anti racist movement, and that that is going to back whites against the wall and cause them to start seeing things racially in a way that they haven't in more than a generation, and that the net result of those two phenomena is that we are going to be headed to a conflict that nobody knows the way out of. And what's more, unlike our first Civil War, there's not even a geographic description of a solution. Right? It's not

**Thomas Chatterton Williams** 1:43:30

about that, because you have quite a lot of whites that are no longer interested are exhausted in their own identity, who are not going to be taking up that war. So it gets a lot more complicated than white versus black.

**Bret** 1:43:44

I agree it's more complicated, but do you see a way that it ends acceptably? I mean, you have a well armed rural white population that is now correctly understanding that it is being targeted by a mob that claims it's guilty of all sorts of things that it actually isn't guilty of yet and threatening to redistribute the opportunity that it has it's it's a catastrophe unfolding in slow motion. Although although the segment

**Kmele Foster** 1:44:11

of the population that is so well armed, generally speaking, is probably not the same segment of the population that is enjoying all manner of privileges and opportunity that's

**Bret** 1:44:22

that's exactly what I'm saying. The people the people who are the rent seekers who I believe are the self defined villains here the rent seekers would rather that we fight each other they would rather that people have average means both white and black and every other description that we fight each other and that we not notice where the opportunity actually went. That's the Yeah,

**Kmele Foster** 1:44:44

I I hear the I hear the argument and I i understand, I understand the what you're advancing. I do wonder though, I don't have to suppose any kind of cynical or sinister motive on the part of the lawmakers in Detroit who've continually failed the people who elected them to office to try to improve their circumstances over the course of the last 50 or 60 years. And it's possible they've even instituted policies that people want, they're to the best of their ability, and those policies might still fail. I don't know that most people have a very good sense of what works and what's likely to yield the best outcomes. I'm not certain that you know, democratic outcomes are even necessarily going to give you the best outcomes. I think a lot of people would like to see someone take all of the money and give it to the schools and engineer a good outcome. It's just not obvious to me that that that is actually consistent with getting what let's just narrow this to education, again, a competitive, innovative, choice driven educational system, I think most people are far more comfortable with something that is universal, and is equitable in the sense that you at least, you know, you know, you're getting a token and it's funded corporately, by all of us, and perhaps is consistent with the status quo.

**Bret** 1:46:13

I don't think I don't think you're hearing what I'm saying. I don't think the democrats have the solution. I think they've gone stark raving mad, right. But I do know that the way you would discover the solution is you would have to eliminate the conflicts of interest, and then have a discussion in which the proposal that you're making is on the table. And it's defended in terms that are, you know, analytical. So it is, it is necessary to eliminate the corruption in order to figure out how much we know about what to do and to discover that which we don't yet know. So that's really my point is it's the corruption that is causing the problem. And until we deal with that one, we don't know how much solution making is readily possible.

**Glenn Loury** 1:46:59

I'm sorry to interrupt. But are we thinking of concluding soon, cuz I only allowed two hours for this?

**Bret** 1:47:05

I think we have to do that. Do people have five more minutes?

**Glenn Loury** 1:47:09

Yeah, I just,

**John McWhorter** 1:47:11

I want to very briefly say I said St. Louis, I'm in Kansas City, for anybody who wants to check up on that case.

**Bret** 1:47:16

Thanks for the correction. So how should we use the last five minutes I can talk about corruption and what I think we should do, or we can continue the discussion and you guys can wrap up? What you've heard and what you think it means.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:47:30

I just want to add to support what Camilla just said, I'm not sure that the corruption is merely talked out in the sense that like I, it could be that we the citizens have not, we don't have this like in her internal feeling of actually do like fulfilling our duty as citizens and holding our politicians feet to the fire. And so that pays that pick that plays a prominent role in terms of stopping the corruption that you were referring to Brett and that's not something that's easily solved. Who's up?

**John Wood Jr.** 1:48:07

Yeah, my mind the the cultural question with cultural question terms of the larger narrative question. Really is what's what's key. I mean, Camille mentioned, Dr. Dr. King, the simple principle of us being judged by the content of our character, but King engaged in a larger narrative project that challenged both the narrative coming from the racist establishment, but also the narrative coming from the militant establishment of the civil rights movement. And basically, the whole spectrum of dehumanizing perspectives in a way that that shifted the conversation in America but bore fruit in the actual cultural lives of Americans. left, right and center, black, right, etc. to me. That is, that is the key question. That is the key project. And that's what I hope folks on this call will focus on.

1:49:00

Great.

**Bret** 1:49:02

Who's next?

**Thomas Chatterton Williams** 1:49:04

I just said I think that in America, we live extraordinarily segregated lifestyle. And the only way that a lot of these problems are going to be solved is how is if we figure out how people can meet each other on more equal terms. So I come back to I think I'm agreeing with what I think you were getting at Brett is that there has to be some form of material equalization going on before we'll ever figure out the actual division that still play access. Great. Coleman.

**Coleman Hughes** 1:49:39

I can't help but feel like there are various ways of trying to say that this problem is actually another problem in disguise, whether that's political corruption or lack of economic opportunity or economic inequality, and I I'm I'm left feeling unclear evinced by those I'm left feeling that this problem is hopelessly self generated and will outlive and persist. And in spite of our being able to potentially solve, or make progress on all of those other issues, I think it's a problem of perception, it's a problem of beliefs that are often that often have no other cause outside of the inherent appeal of the beliefs themselves beliefs about what what it means to be of one race rather than another beliefs about what you inherit by virtue of being one race, beliefs about how much racism there is in society. So I yeah, I'm I'm, I think it's very interesting to consider the possibility that they're actually caused by something else that we can focus on some of the root cause of these issues, but I'm left feeling that they're hopelessly self generated.

**Bret** 1:51:01

Before I ask someone else to step in, let me just say, root cause is one way to look at it. But basically, failure mode is another that a lack of leadership and political corruption are two sides of the same coin. And that in effect until you have solved that problem, you're you're navigating blind, right or worse, some some interests that are above the public interest are steering, and it results in failure after failure. And so I hear your hopelessness, but what I want to convince you of is, you know, to the extent that somebody has hooked up the controls in the control room backwards, solving, that one thing actually immediately has downstream consequences that are very positive.

**Glenn Loury** 1:51:41

I want to identify with Coleman, and I, and I'm not sure I agree with you, Brett. And here's why. And I'll be very concise, shut down stem. Okay, so the problem here is an intellectual identity problem. It's not a resource problem. It's not people being poor, who are the people who are saying shut down stem, their graduate students and biochemistry at Stanford, there are some of the most privileged people of color on the planet, their beef, like the beef of every news room that has a plurality of African American journalists who will fire it editor, if you run to the wrong, op ed piece is up here. It's not in their belly, it's in their head, they have the wrong ideas. I don't think at the end of the day, we serialism is going to get us to where we need to go.

**John McWhorter** 1:52:36

I would have to agree with with Glenn. And you know, Clint, and I sometimes do that it's sometimes don't but I think that um, this this question is not primarily about resources. And that's what makes it so damn hard. Because I think modernity and diversity bring with them. Unusual frames of mind that I think psychology and sociology are just beginning to catch up with their ways of thinking that seem counterintuitive, from the outside. And yeah, we have to think of, for example, the affluent black kid at Stanford who's saying shut down stem, they're there. They're not hungry, they haven't been denied anything. It's an ideology. It's a peculiar self serving comfortable and destructive ideology that you wouldn't think a group of human beings would embrace unless you think about the fact that it can only often emerge when resources are distributed relatively equitably. That's the challenge that we have. These are very, very modern people.

**Bret** 1:53:41

They they are, but I would just point out shut down stem, which was particularly galling and frightening, is not organic. It is a demonstration of power, getting people to say shutdown stem getting scientific establishments to say shut down stem was a demonstration of the amazing power of this movement. And you can't necessarily assume that the people who are saying are saying it because they believe stem doesn't work. They're saying it because they're serving. They're trying to get out of the way of a mob, or they're trying to their wrongheaded, and they're trying to serve that movement. And so they're saying things that make no sense. But I guess what I would wrap up with is I would just say, look, I have moments of hopelessness, too. And I do see a problem that's going to be very difficult to solve. However, the ability to think clearly without conflicts of interest is a prerequisite to solving. It's not sufficient, but it is necessary. And so I would urge you all to consider what what do we lose if we solve the corruption problem. And it turns out not to be sufficient. We have lost nothing because we're headed for a disaster anyway, if we solve the corruption problem, and it turns out that it is causing us to be unable to think about what good solutions might be what they would look like, Like unable to innovate, as Camille said, then we potentially have a bright future ahead of us. So I would just say, I hear your doubts, I share them. But holy hell, we're headed for very, very dangerous waters. And we might as well do the one thing that makes obvious sense, which is restore our ability to think without conflicts of interest. Yeah,

**Kmele Foster** 1:55:22

I will say maybe perhaps building a bit of a bridge that I do find your observations about leadership and the interesting development with respect to the role that these leaderless political movements are playing in society, that combined with the way that we're communicating with one another. Now, it does strike me as something that is more than just a little novel. This, this is a pretty substantial development. And it may very well be that a lack of having a significant personality in the intellectual landscape that can actually help to direct some of these energies is a real deficiency grasps even a danger that we might want to try to deliberately rectify? So that's very interesting.

**Bret** 1:56:10

All right. So I would just point out, we all know we all know that neither Donald Trump nor Joe Biden has the answer here. And I think we all know that we don't necessarily have four years to wait for a solution that makes sense. So I would ask you all to consider something like the Unity 2020 proposal for rising above politics and fixing this problem directly. Okay,

**Glenn Loury** 1:56:35

take a look at it.

**Bret** 1:56:36

Appreciate that. Really do. And I appreciate all of you. I appreciate your courage, your generosity of spirit, your willingness to engage in a very dangerous exercise and your patriotism. So thanks, folks. I hope we can do this again soon.

**Coleman Hughes** 1:56:52

Thank you. Thanks so much, Brett. All right. Be well. So long.