DarkHorse Podcast with Brittany King & Bret Weinstein (192kb...

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**SPEAKERS**

Bret, Brittany King

**Bret** 00:03

Hey folks, welcome to the Dark Horse podcast, I have the pleasure of introducing you today to Brittany to Lissa king who is an independent journalist and freelance writer, host of American shade with Brittany King on YouTube. She received a master's in journalism at New York University, and a Bachelor's in writing at Indiana University. Brittany, welcome to Dark Horse.

**Brittany King** 00:26

Thank you so much for having me.

**Bret** 00:28

So I should probably tell our audience you and I have spoken before gotten along very well. And my sense is that we could just simply have a conversation and not say any more in terms of the ground rules or expectations. But just so everybody knows where we are. I believe as I think you do, that we have serious issues surrounding race in the country, that there's a lot at stake and that we are in danger of coming apart in some way that will be disastrous for all of us. And that the best thing that people like you and I can do is to model courageous conversations. And I should tell you, I I have a thick skin. I don't love discovering that I've got something wrong, but I would much rather discover it than have it go unsaid. So please be candid and courageous and pointing out anything you think I need to know that I might be missing. And I will do the same in return. Okay, Sound good?

**Brittany King** 01:25

I have thick skin too. So this would be great. Terrific.

**Bret** 01:30

Okay, so, Brittany, I know that you consider yourself to be on something of a journey with respect to your understanding of race relations in the US Do you want to say something about where that where you are in that journey and where you started.

**Brittany King** 01:49

I'm where I'm at on that journey is is ongoing. To be honest. I don't think I'll ever stop because I'm always a student. So I'm always going to continue to be learning. But my journey started with being a leader of a black lives matter in Columbus, Indiana, which is the hometown of former Vice President Mike Pence. And my journey started kind of before that with protesting for Black Lives Matter after 2013 when they first had that hashtag on Twitter with Trayvon Martin. And I was doing diets for Eric Garner and for him, and then in 2016, when Alton Sterling and falando Castille died 24 hours back to back, I had a very overwhelming sense of anger and rage, and I felt the best way to get that out was a protest. That's what I need to do. So I went down, got 15 or 20, friends of mine, and we protest in front unclose City Hall, were there for two hours. And I looked at a few of my friends and I said, I am tired of protesting. And I'm sick of the fact that we can recycle these posters over and over again, year in year out. And long story short, we spontaneously started a black lives matter of Columbus after thoroughly going through their objectives and seeing how it would make sense for Columbus, Indiana. And so that is where I guess my journey began on really diving in on what was going on with race relations in America.

**Bret** 03:28

So I know I have a history in protest as well. And I know that it's often very easy to see that things are wrong. Did you have a sense when you began about what you wanted to take place? What change you were hoping to bring about?

**Brittany King** 03:44

Yeah, so during this time, this was the first year Donald Trump was president. This was when a lot of hate crimes was happening. This is when Charlottesville happen. and things of that nature, different white supremacy groups were popping up around our city. And for me, I was like, it's a matter of time before it happens here. What I want it to happen was Okay guys, let's finally just pop this bubble of delusion that racism is not here in our city all because we can smile at each other and all because there's, you know, a bunch of different colors of people here that we have a lot of things to take care of. And let's nip out the you know, but in and get down to what's going on here locally. And so what blacklivesmatter did was we created respectful, unsafe spaces for dialogue to happen where we talked about national issues going on and then we talk about local issues. And we also had another objective where we wanted a bridging with police and with community. We want the police to see who they were protecting and serving. And then also we wanted to be more involved with The ways of how the police hire police officers. And then also that included is going to the city council boards and the police board meetings and things of that nature to see what was happening on a fundamental level. So that was the three objectives for Black Lives Matter of Columbus.

**Bret** 05:18

So is it fair to say that your activism at that point was targeted at preventing bad things from taking place and affecting black people? Rather than transforming the system? as we know it into something different than it is?

**Brittany King** 05:40

I would say yes, it was more so the former, but I would also say that it wasn't, it was a Black Lives Matter chapter. But the majority of people there and in our organization were 90%. White, there was 1800 black people in Columbus, there's 40,000 people there. So while there might have been 15 people, part, BLM there was, you know, 100 white people. So I wanted there to be and I know we at that point, when I look back, now I see, we were more of an unorthodox BLM, if you want to say because we wanted white people to get on in on the conversations and talk and be candid. And I know that that raised the eyebrows of some other BLM Fs. Not to say they told us like, you can't do this. But it made more sense when they would come in our city and see what was going on. But for me, I knew that it made sense for Columbus, I couldn't act like we were Baltimore, Gary or Chicago, I had to see what was going on in our landscape and see how effective we could be locally, and not try to shoot for the stars to change the entire world or changing United States. But let's just change this town. And hopefully that can ripple effects out.

**Bret** 07:01

Very interesting. I must say, in some ways, it's sort of two directions I want to go from here, but one of them is that I have a very mixed reaction to BLM. Because on the one hand, the idea of BLM resonates with me and has from the beginning, my family has a long standing, understanding that there is a chronic problem for people of African descent in in America, and that that demands a solution. And so I also believe that black lives are chronically undervalued in the US, and that that is something that can change and must change. So at the level of the label, I'm on board, but at the level of what I discover, as I try to get closer to BLM, I'm frequently horrified by some of the things that the organization at least seems to be about. And it sounds like your chapter is one where Frankly, I would have been welcome and I might have felt at home. Is that fair?

**Brittany King** 08:10

you would you would have had a seat right next to me you wanted? Um, I would say and I tell people this because I guess we'll get to that later. But I did kind of publicly in a way kind of announce my them distancing, I guess you can say myself away from the National BLM of 2021. But I will tell you this I feel like there's been phases of BLM there's like we were in the phase I believe from like 2013 to about 2017 of its most like organic state, like we're in it was about anti police brutality, which I think any American should be for because it benefits everyone. And and then there was 2018 was a particular time. I think that was like phase two of it, of me even looking at it. When I was at the last year of leaving my BLM, I started looking at the National meal and I was just kind of like something's off but I internally was questioning I wasn't outwardly like saying like let's get in front of this because it wasn't really peaking. But just something was kind of off. This is when Robyn D'Angelo came out with her book white fragility, and this is when a lot of other things were happening. And I saw that the organization's objectives started to get ambiguous and kind of vague. And then also, the white people participating who just came in with good intentions of just like we want to learn, we want to listen, we want to help. And it seemed very organic. It felt like at least in our organization, and other organizations that I was treated like a peer at that point. To 2018. I felt like in a sense that people were worse. Books and lectures and seminars and things of that nature, to say some being good intentions not good enough. Like, you have to showcase how, in a way, show off how anti racist you can get. And it became a performative, performative ally ship at that point where people were more so invested in BLM to perform ally ship weather than to do it to act like they weren't a part of the problem than fixing the actual problem.

**Bret** 10:31

That's fascinating. So it sounds like I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you. But it sounds like you had an organization built around what seemed intuitively meaningful and worth pursuing locally. And you it was overwhelmed by a perspective on racism and anti racism that was being sold by big names at a national scale that transformed your organization, away from your what sounds like very reasonable intentions and into a movement in which effectively, whites were forced to show off and to one up each other in order to remain in the good graces of the of the of the organization.

**Brittany King** 11:17

Yeah, I would I want to make a point, though, with I'm not not to say that that happened with every single white person that they became this moral monster or something like that? No, I would say I was just saying in a national level, with like, just seeing protests and things of that nature. And just like, even on social media, just I felt like it was a performance art piece where people post an Instagram photo of their arm around a black person and being like, I'm like, is that for you or for them, but for my organization, I was pretty tight knit with, with stuff. Like, I had people, I had a mission, I said, we invite all creeds or races, this is for respectful and safe space. And I mean, I had it a very clear thing to where you had to sign it. And if you did not abide by this went rogue. If on social media, you were creating hostile environments within your post or whatever, you're out.

**Bret** 12:19

So you had a code of honor of sorts.

**Brittany King** 12:23

Yeah, people would sign it. And I kept on file, and I gave them a thing like it was, it was to keep everyone accountable. And this is the bar, it's set. And you need to stay at this bar. Because if you're not, you're not, you are going to veer off the direction in the path that we're for. But just to pick up on the phases, so the last phase, now, our 2019, to now with blacklivesmatter, I feel like with the blessing of getting a lot of funds, and getting a lot of attention, that can actually be a disservice. And I think Black Lives Matter. There are so many businesses after 2018 that poured into black lives matter. And then those people kind of gain control that what what was happening, that the three black women I don't feel like had much of a voice anymore, that the money had the voice. And that I feel like BLM became more of a marketing brand. It was a way for businesses to buy in to showcase how racially tolerant they are like Netflix putting BLM up or whatever I'm like, I for me, I could see through I'm like you don't, I don't think you really care. I think you're just trying to save your business. And like it's almost like I'm not going to get my biblical but it's almost in the sense of, you know, putting blood on your door and like the ghosts coming by. And I don't know what's going on. I don't understand it. But this is this don't come in here. It was kind of like just a safety net safety guard. See, BLM? We can't be racist. And I think that's the phase we're in. But the thing is, is not it's it's it. People aren't really outwardly talking about this, but there's been at least 10 to 15 other Black Lives Matter chapters that started when I started and started in 2014 that have come out and I believe it was in New York Times piece I'm not sure but there's like 10 Black Lives Matter chapters who called out the national BLM and said you guys have millions of dollars and you're not helping any of the chapters there's so people homeless people hungry there's we want funds poured into schools for for black children, minority children, and you guys are hoarding the money. Why are you hoarding it? Like Where is it? Where's the leadership? Why aren't these steps happening that you said was gonna happen six years ago, like people were calling them out. And of course, that's not really shown on social media. It's the antithesis to what I believe beyond was one To be, but now I don't recognize this BLM, like so I can't, in good faith attach myself to it anymore into the national BLM. But I do support grassroots, they are also very frustrated, because they believe in that original idea of BLM. And it's almost like they don't. And I've had these discussions with so many people who are not for BLM at all. And I and I will have these talks with them. And they're like, you know what, that's awesome that these people are doing great work, but why don't they just change their name? Like if they are so like, discussing what's happening right now I'm like, you know, when you've done something for six years, and it's, and you've done a lot, and you put all of yourself in it, and then you know, people on the tail end come and try to make it something that is not you're trying to fight for the originality of what it's for. And maybe it is a losing game. But for me, all I can do is my work be separate. But when I do see people online, you know, talking about BLM, they're all Marxists they're all socialists they're all commie. I'm like a really, all of them, like a few people say it, and then everyone says, That's everybody. But then on the same in, they wouldn't want to be generalized by what they believe in either. So

**Brittany King** 16:30

I try to be a bridge, I guess. Because even though I, I might go to a BLM protest as a journalist, as someone like to report about what's happening, but I haven't done like, you know, BLM work since the end of 2018. But I do champion the grassroots that are still out there feeding people doing all the things that they can do, that you'll never know about, because they're not in it for the clout. They don't care about the attention. They're doing it because they care about black lives, they care about what's going on in America, and they cannot stand it when they see other BLM and I believe was in Washington DC, where they're telling white people with their hands up and say your if you don't you're wise premise and, and the funny thing is most of those people were white. Right? So I actually called that out on Twitter. I said it the national BLM, if you don't denounce this behavior, you are tainting your organization. And the people who did this majority of them were white, so you guys don't care about black lives at all. Because when this comes out in the articles, and they see a BLM told white people to put their hands up or the white supremacists, no one's gonna think I wonder if they're white? No, they're going to assume ports that they were black, and they actually jority of them weren't?

**Bret** 18:03

Yes, this is a pattern I have seen as well, many times that there is this large number of white people, some of them I'm sure think they're doing the right thing, maybe most of them, but it's very destructive. And you know, the bill doesn't necessarily go to them. There are a couple points I wanted to make just before they get lost here. Your point about businesses putting up Black Lives Matter, signs and things. My wife Heather calls that a don't hurt me well, right. And we see them all over the place in Portland here. And really, once you start seeing them that way, it changes your understanding of what's going on, you know that power is being wielded, right. And anyway, it's a it's it's very important not to take those signs at their word. Some of them may mean what they say. And some of them do not mean what they say. They're really about fear. And it's not healthy.

**Brittany King** 19:06

Yeah, it's not. Um, that's fine that your wife says that. I believe that's 100% true. And it is like not to say that some people, when they put that up, they don't mean it. Or they put a George Floyd picture up. They don't mean it. But I remember when I was in Bed Stuy and this was like, right after I would say the George Floyd. protests were going on. And I was going through Brooklyn and and I told my friends, my and most, I told my friends that were black. That and showing them pictures of these stamps that were on the ground. And it was saying, it's okay to be black. Like everywhere, and I was just like, excuse me. I was like, thank you for giving permission. That it's okay to be me like I was. So Mad So then after that I just it like I did I would walk by on the street like everyday to go to space where I would run and then I start looking at every business and then it was like Black Lives welcome black lives this George for this people selling George Ford sure some like about I thought capitalism was racist so why are you using capitalism to sell George Floyd shirts? Like I was just like, Why Why? Why do people want to want sell black death? Why are people wearing these the saints I can't breathe, and just wear them just casually out with their dogs and just smiling at this, the picture of that was just odd. And yeah, I'm like, our skin, our tragedies just become trendy. And it's just, it's like, almost cool. And it's hard. And this is something I'm working on. So I don't want to keep elaborating on this. But just yeah, I unfortunately, when I see that, I don't feel it's authentic. I feel like like you're just trying to safeguard and be like, just don't don't hurt us. We're not we're not the problem. And that's unfortunate, but that's where I am.

**Bret** 21:26

Well, it's interesting. There's a reversal here on the standard narrative. What it sounds like is you put together an organization, it had beliefs and objectives that were reasonable relative to what you were experiencing, and what you saw. And then something washed over you. And it's hard for me not to reach the conclusion that effectively what you're facing is colonization by a large, powerful entity, right? You had an organic, organic, local entity that suddenly got swallowed up by a movement that had beliefs, many of which I would say are clearly not true. And has motives that you're describing as potentially not pure, not true to the, to this to the hashtag. And so that that does feel like you got colonized, and that those who say, Well, why don't you just change your name the answer as well. You know, one should think very carefully before you tell somebody to surrender the thing that they've built, or the place where they've lived and just hand it over to the colonizer. Right. I mean, that's part of the problem.

**Brittany King** 22:35

That's exactly if they would, they would say it just like that they don't want to surrender. The mission to what they see isn't the mission. And like I said, they do their best to combat it. But the media is not on their side. So

**Bret** 22:54

I find myself in a weirdly parallel position here because I have been a proud liberal my whole adult life. I come from liberal stock several generations back. And I have watched not only the political party that is supposed to represent me, but the the mainstream of liberal thought, go, what I would say is insane. In many cases, it represents views that look more like the opposite of liberalism than they look like liberalism to me. And many conservatives Tell me well, then you're really one of us. And my sense is No, I mean, even if even if I'm the only person even if there's nobody standing for traditional liberal principles, they're still right. And so the point is, I'm not I'm not surrendering them. I'm not handing them over to anybody else. I appreciate that. There are conservatives who are now defending these, you know, you've got conservatives, conserving liberal principles that were consensus principles until 20 minutes ago, right? That's interesting. But I feel the same way like, Well, no, I'm not moving. I'm sticking with this. And these other folks are wrong and you know, win or lose. I'm not I'm not going to, I'm not going to surrender it.

**Brittany King** 24:16

Exactly. And I feel like in ways I'm like, I'm independent, and I don't affiliate with like being Republican or Democrat. I haven't for like five years. But depending on what I say, people like no, you really are on a liberal. No, you really are concerned I'm like, I'm just here thinking and if it sounds that way, fine, but I'm telling you, I'm not on a side. But I think what's going on, especially when I do talk about, you know, kancil culture or with the anti racist movement going on, and I speak out against the movement, not necessarily the people, but the movement. You know, I might be called, you know, a conservative or whatever. But I'm calling out the fact that they have turned something that's more realistic with jizz respecting each other into some unrealistic goal, where it's not even about, about progression anymore. For them, it's about perfection. Like, they want everything, no racism ever, and any iota of it, that means we're not done, we haven't, nothing's changed. We're still, you know, there's still, whatever racism here and the needle has been moved. But you can't end racism. And I think that's the goal on that extreme side is to end racism. And that is some unrealistic tasks that you can't do. So emotion, people choose to be racist. I mean, with laws and policies and legislation, that's where you can make a change with racism,

**Bret** 26:05

the so I don't know if we disagree here or not. But my sense is that if I listened very carefully to what I hear from the the large, mainstream BLM movement, I can't even make sense of the various claims if I try to compare them to each other, you know, the idea that we have to obsess over the bigotry of whites. And then we're also told that it's incurable, right, these two things don't fit naturally together, either. It is curable, in which case obsessing about it is at least arguably a reasonable thing to do. But if it's curable, then you have to ask the question about which whites are cured already and which aren't. And it's like in order not to do that in order just to say, Hey, this is actually really simple. All whites are racist, you have to imagine that it's incurable, but then you've undermined the entire rationale for, for doing what you're doing. It's really just about retribution.

**Brittany King** 27:08

Hmm. Do you mean in a sense, just so refer, like when they say, like, white people can never not be racist? And like, it's an endless work that forever? They'll have to be okay.

**Bret** 27:21

Yeah, exactly. And I mean, it personally, I believe, I believe this is actually not difficult for people to sort out in good faith. And if I can just lay out my rubric if you tell me if I've got something wrong, as you see it. But my feeling is that racism and white supremacy require at the very least one of two things, they either require that you're actually rooting for your race above others, rather than rooting for a level playing field, or that your ignorance of the challenges is willful. Right? So my sense is, we all have ignorance, I am forever going to be ignorant of what it is like to be a woman to be gay to be black to be an Indian. I won't know these things firsthand. But I'm interested, I want to know as much as I can, because it makes me a better human being. And it makes me a better partner. And so I don't I don't want to be convicted of being a bigot. If my point is, look, I'm actually working to understand what I don't know. And I acknowledge that I will never know it as I would if it were me. Right. So my senses, okay, broad brush, that's a fair position to shoot for, and it doesn't deserve a conviction for white supremacy, or racism. And so what does one do in a world where we're told no, no, no, you you have these things built in, there's nothing you can do and your intent doesn't matter. Right? It's like well, didn't you just tell me I lose because I lose. I mean, it's a tautology

**Brittany King** 28:58

Malcolm X talked about and this is one reason why I really like Malcolm X he talked about a lot with with the black homes with black families just black people that we can't wait around for white people to change we can't wait around for America to catch up to our freedom we have to just live free be free take authority of our lives. And before you know someone else does and so he was for just go out there and be American anyways. And I think it's hard to it's hard. For me, I don't believe that. Racism is something that is on an interpersonal level, like terminal. I think this country Yes, was founded on American slavery. And racism will always be within the fabric of America. Inevitably. Unfortunately, it just will. So we either realize that and try to have different conversations about race. So try to unbind ourselves and untether us away from it as much as we can. Or we keep being in within a fight that we are basically telling to the world we're going to lose. Because if you're always trying to get white people to not be racist, but they will always be racist, you're fighting a losing battle. So if that makes sense, I go on tangents. No, no,

**Bret** 30:42

no, no, no, that this is important. And I think it's exactly where we should be. I will tell you, I'm less fatalistic about the idea that there will always be racism in the US. I mean, you know, at one level we can measure with such precision, you know, it's a big country, will there always be somebody somewhere, you know, who espouses of noxious beliefs? Of course. But will it be a meaningful feature of the landscape? I really don't believe that that has to be the case. And in part, I think maybe the difference in your perspective, and mine might come down to our age. How old are you? I'm 3131. So I'm 52. And I've seen so much change in this even, you know, 52 isn't that old? Right? It doesn't take me back into the 60s, right? This is more recent than that. And yet, I still saw a tremendous amount of progress. And I also, you know, I mean, there's a lot I don't know, if we can even really do this well, in a conversation. It's, it's, it's very fraught at the moment. But my own personal interactions with people cross racial, not just black people, but across many different racial divides, gives me an ability to see how this has changed over time. And part of that is my own growth as a person. But part of that is also just a measure of where we are. And I think the thing that's really is hopeful about the sort of longer term trajectory and very frightening about the last few years is that I know that we are making rapid negative progress at the moment, we are moving in the wrong direction, and relationships, that we're moving in the direction of better comprehension of each other, and more compassion are now definitely disintegrating. And, you know, I used to, I've never been uncomfortable interacting with people of other backgrounds. And I'd noticed that I was in a part of town, and I was walking, I don't know, back to my car or something. And I was passing through a park where there was a large black family. I mean, it was clearly a familial gathering, probably 15 1520 people, kids playing and all, they were having a barbecue in the park. And I know that five years ago, I wouldn't have thought twice about walking through this park. And that, it was almost certain that I would have a nice exchange of words with somebody about the beauty of the day or nice day for a picnic or whatever, whatever might have been said. And I can't speak for what's on the other side of that interaction. But I know that every time I reach across some line, and I get back a sense of camaraderie from the other side, it feels good, it feels like a little bit of building of a project that I know we're all working on. And I know, or at least we should all be working on, and that it's a long term thing, right? And instead, when I saw this, it's like, well, I don't even know where I am anymore. Because I don't know what the assumptions of, you know, a white person walking through a park and you know, interacting with somebody, family barbecue, I don't know if this is the interaction I would expect from the past, or it's a new interaction in which the assumption is that race is the, you know, is definitely the subject that of the interaction, right. And it's, I mean, it's both terrifying and sad.

**Brittany King** 34:27

That's interesting. Because so I want to say like, Is it your hesitation because of the racial climate now or certain instances like the woman who called the police on?

**Bret** 34:46

No, I think that was a pretty extraordinary event in in a number of different ways. So I just take it as an unusual anomaly, but I guess what I there's a phenomenon where, under normal circumstances, what I'm Calling normal circumstances and who knows what I'm missing? Right? Who knows what I don't know about the interactions on the other side of these interchanges that I've had for my whole life, right. But my assumption is I read people pretty well. And that I know when somebody is uncomfortable, and when somebody feels at ease, and there's something that strangers do within race, between race, within sex between sex, and it is just like a little. You know, in computer science terms, it would be ping ack, right? It's like, you send a message, it says, Hey, I'm here, I see you, and the other person sends a message back, so see you right back, right. And the point is, that could be like, tense interaction, right? You can imagine having an interaction in some part of town where you didn't feel comfortable, or in some department of your work where you weren't welcome or who knows. And and you know, that ping Act would be tense. But in general, in public people actually kind of like, camaraderie that's built of unspoken stuff, you know, we live in the same town, we're enjoying the same day, right? We're, you know, delighted to see the kids playing in the park, on the equipment, whatever it is, or just something nice about feeling at ease, and comfortable with whom you're around. And so the problem is that I've now seen so many interactions, where, if there is an interracial dynamic, then race is the subject. And race is the subject from a perspective of that we have an urgent problem that must be addressed here. And now because the problem is definitely here in this park. Right? And my sense is, I don't know if it's here in this park, maybe it is, but maybe it isn't. And if we don't leave open the possibility that it isn't in this park, then we're in big trouble.

**Brittany King** 36:47

Yeah, I saw I'm smiling. Because what you're describing is this sense of like this paranoia, right? That is something black Americans have gone through before all this, I will say, I know what you're feeling is what we feel what I felt, when I really understood that I wasn't white, at like, 910. When I really understood before, then I would go in anywhere like yeah, you know, but then when I had that, these encounters where I'm like, I know I'm not white the day, and I didn't realize there was some difference. Okay, now I moved different in the world. And then since then, that's how I feel when I would be the only black person going into a white space. What do they think of me? Did they say this thing about me? Because I'm black? And it could be not that at all, but the paranoia lingers there? And in the same as, am I being followed around, you know, in this store, because I'm young? Or is it because I'm black? Am I not being served because this or because I'm black or, and people now want to shut down those those narratives, those notions and just say, sorry about your race, I quit talking about your race, you stop talking about it, it won't be an issue and they don't get the paranoia, you don't like that. You don't want that. You wish it wasn't there. I don't want to go into a store and feel like my race is the one thing people see I hate. Like, it's annoying. And now I make sure that if something happens, I make sure I actually think about it before I react before me mostly. But before what you're filling in that park is what black Americans fill all the time. And we're not exaggerating, where if someone's like, oh, you're very articulate, yeah, that I am going to think you think, and I won't the whole script paragraph you think I'm articulate because you think why people are stupid. Therefore, you're shocked that I can say a sentence like that is just very, and it's annoying. And the thing is, is like, sometimes, you know, you or someone else that might feel like, Oh, I want to interact with this black family or whoever. It might feel like a tension of don't come over here. It might actually be more of us feeling like, we're not a danger to you. So it's a mixed signal thing. Everyone's on edge. But if someone could really rewind and listen to what you said, that is exactly what feels like when you feel people have a problem with your skin and they don't know you and you're like, Is it because of that though? And just that paranoia is like a buggers so annoying all the time. Like when will this stop? And yeah, exactly.

**Bret** 39:47

I totally agree with this not lost on me. But I would say a something I've said many many times is the problem with this Work revolution is that it is not interested in ending oppression, it is interested in turning the tables of oppression. And so in some sense, I feel that this is and it's not irrational, right? I actually do think that people who do have racism, by the definition that I spelled it out somebody who is actually rooting for one race over another, that such a person needs to experience this in order to just develop compassion, right, that that is an important experience. But my sense is that the interactions I've been having for my whole life, when, and let's take it out of the racial dynamic here for a second, just so that we can see what we're talking about. I have also watched the same positive thing collapse between men and women. Right? So it used to be that if I was walking down the street, and there was a woman walking the other way, there is a way to exchange a look, or a greeting or something that diffuses any fear that I'm a creep, that I'm a danger to her that I'm on the make whatever it may be, right? That has become almost impossible. There is this way in which women walk down a street. And it's just short of an accusation. I don't feel the accusation. But I feel like, you know, I'm attempting not to make eye contact, because there's only bad stuff that happens when I do and so there's no ability to signal. I'm not a threat to you. And I know that there are threats to you out here, but that's not me. Right. And this so I think the point is a little bit of positive work was done in the past, when, let's take the the experience that you report that paranoia of not knowing what white people are thinking of you because of your skin color, right? Do you have the experience that sometimes you meet a white person that you don't know, in some circumstance, and that paranoia is diffused by the way they interact with you?

**Brittany King** 42:10

Um, that they have a problem with me being blocked?

**Bret** 42:14

No, no, I'm wondering if, let's say you enter an interaction with some white person that you don't know. And maybe the paranoia is there because you don't know what they're gonna think. Right? But then in a few minutes of interacting, you realize, Oh, yeah, this isn't, this isn't a problem person. This is somebody who's, you know, they don't understand what it's like to be you, but they're on board with the idea that rice shouldn't matter in, you know, except in the rare case where it has to matter for some reason, right? Like, it matters if you're talking to a doctor about skin cancer or something.

**Brittany King** 42:48

Yes, happened before. Um, that's definitely happened. I don't know when this was I think this was in Brooklyn. I know that I was being waited on for a little longer. And my waitress was white, and she like, made it very apparent of why it was taking a while. Like, why Pete? Like, not even like, I know you weren't served, but just like, I'm so sorry, we were backed up, like being really apologetic. And I don't know if she just saw like, maybe I didn't know and saw my face and or if she felt like Oh, she thinks she's not mean surface. She's black. I don't know what she thought. But she made it a point to make sure that I knew like, it's not for any other reason, then we are back in staff. And then that was when I was like, okay, but I mean, those those happen I can't really like is that really pinged in my mind, but throughout my life, that's happened a lot, just with maybe going into certain. Specially with Black Lives Matter, okay. Especially when I would be going into meetings, where I was like, highest city officials were there and I'm in the room and we're talking. And I'm assuming people are want to grill me or whatever. And then just the conversation is just different than I thought, and it becomes one of few great conversations I've had just, yeah, things like that happen a lot throughout my life. And while that might happen, and negative experience happens, so that is why that paranoia stays and sticks, because you just don't know. And I hope to always be pleasantly surprised. But it's not to say that I don't, on my end, I don't make sure that they know I'm open to this exchange to I don't wait for them to think they have to do the work. Yeah, it makes sense. Like I also engaged where it's like I know There's an elephant in the room, which is our skin. That's not happening with me. Yeah. So, yeah,

**Bret** 45:08

well, so I want a world in which effectively, it is, you know, everybody is aware of the same thing, right? I don't know if this is exactly fair, you can help me, correct it if it's not. But my sense is that there's a gray area, but that by and large, a black person knows when they're dealing with somebody who's got an issue, they may not know exactly what the issue is, but you can detect it. Right? There's something hidden, you know, I deal with this a little bit being Jewish, there are people who have some kind of suspicion about what that is, is pretty rare that I encounter it, but I do encounter it, and other people who have some very superficial, you know, they'll like recognize that My name is Jewish, or that I look Jewish. And, you know, I have the sense that, you know, it is noted, and then in interacting, it doesn't typically end up being an important fact, and it dissipates. But my sense is that you probably in general, no, whether or not somebody has an issue, that's unstated, or whether somebody really doesn't have an issue, and then there's probably some gray area where you don't know for sure, is that fair?

**Brittany King** 46:24

Definitely. Okay. And when there is gray I, I, like you say, Make might take notes, but I don't create it into something, I kind of let it be

**Bret** 46:34

perfect. So imagine that the well intentioned white folk knew that this was kind of the rubric, right? That when you meet black people, if you've got a real issue, they'll know it, if you don't have a real issue, they'll figure it out. And if you're a little bit uncomfortable, that might get noticed, but it's not, you know, it still leaves room to discover that you're cool and that you have, you know, cool stuff to interact about, you have shared interests or whatever. If people knew that, and the point was okay. Most of us, in fact, I will tell you, I think the thing that I know, that you can't know, is what gets said when you're not in the room. Right. So I know what those conversations

**Brittany King** 47:18

I don't want to know. You do? Know I do? in general?

**Bret** 47:22

You do? Because it's general, it's not what you fear, right? That I never hear that conversation are almost never right. You know, so anyway, I'm in a position that to help you calibrate, because I mean, this whole, you know, you mentioned the question of using the word articulate with a black person. This is now a problem for white people like me who use the word articulate, because it's something I value and I would use it for anybody who is articulate, and now there's this very difficult calculation, which is, okay, I'm pretty sure there's something wrong with the fact that I think being articulate is good. And if somebody is black and articulate, I can't use that word, right? That's a problem, right? But I get why it's, I get why this is an issue, I get that it is used by whites, and it has this coded level to it. But it doesn't mean that everybody who uses it uses it that way. And yet, even though I don't think I have a problem with this, I now don't know what to do what that word right yet is allowed for certain people and not others.

**Brittany King** 48:22

Yes. It's sad that that's a word that's taboo. But there's a historical context with that. I will say, just examples of that. With my American shade podcast. A lot of people come on and I get these comments all the time. Let's just say I might have a bandana on in one of my videos, and that's all they see in the thumbnail. And then they click and they hear me talk and then the comment is like, I'm going to be honest with myself in public announces, I thought you were going to be the typical woke like thug. Yo, yo, yo, like, I'm not kidding. Like, they will say this, but they're like, but you're very intelligent, articulate, young, wise woman and blah, blah, blah. Thinking that I'm going to like the comment. Like, it's, I understand that they're trying to be open. So I don't delete these things, though. I'm not like Billy No, I let them be. Because I'm like, those are the moments where like, I just really like, try to pull in my Christianity as much as I can. I'm like, you know what, they're human being vulnerable. And there's even though this is very ignorant, my channel is about these conversations, and they are telling me explicitly what they thought of me. And now they don't. So at the end of the day, is this something it is bad, right? But it's something that changed their perception. So maybe next time when they see a group of kids with bandanas, maybe they won't have that initial reaction that these are thugs. Maybe Maybe that will help. But I get these all the time. And then when you hear, you know, especially with Obama, yes, he was articulate. But when you just hear like, this president was this, this this and they just are, you know, but then when it was with Obama, who were like, wow, like, he can speak clear. Yeah, that's gonna be annoying. We're gonna like, Well, why is this one president, the articulate one? I mean, weren't they all? Or is it expected for the rest of them to be in this one wasn't?

**Bret** 50:49

Well, if I can, if I can just say For my part, I should say I have mixed emotions about Obama. I voted for him once. I didn't vote for him twice. And the problem is I actually really interpersonally I like him. I think he's a very likable guy. And I did find him extraordinary as a speaker, like he stood out, right? He was really, really good. It was at a policy level. And I still don't know why. He I thought he was a mess at a policy level. And, you know, it's possible that he couldn't do better. But there were some things I just can't explain that way. But nevermind that. I think I think the problem is that in his case, he he'd be unusual in any configuration he was of, I don't know what exactly explains him unusual developmental history that, you know, a very singular human. And so anyway, the problem is that in describing such a singular human who happens to be singular, as a president in this particular way, also, right, our first black president, these things get tangled up, because you're no matter what you're doing, you're describing, you know, a one in 7 billion phenomenon, right? No matter what, yeah. And so, anyway, I don't know what to do with it exactly. But the problem is, at some level, let's just both agree, you and I have both encountered a problem with the word, articulate. The problem with the word articulate that we have is inverse. You don't know what people are really implying when they say it. And I don't know how to use it anymore. Because I know that that's a hazard that it's like a word that now has all of this potential energy built up in it. And even if I'm perfectly even handed and how I use it, and basically I just use it, anytime somebody speaks in a way that impresses me, there's no way any individual could know that. Right? So you can't know if it's charged, right? So what we need at some level, I'm certain is enough interaction, that we're not dealing from these anecdotes. And the problem for me, I tweeted about this earlier this week, I tweeted, segregation causes racism. And I don't mean that the opposite isn't also true, because I believe the opposite is clearly true. But I think the problem is much of the what passes for sophistication in these social justice circles is the idea that what we need to do is group by skin color, right? And while I know that there is the need to be able to do that sometimes, right? That, you know, makes perfect sense that if a group of people is facing a phenomenon, they might need to talk about it amongst themselves, right. So the right together in such groups is, is important, and it's a fundamental right. But the need to always gather in those groups is causing us to know less and less about each other. And I feel like that's utterly counterproductive that it is going to create racism, we're actually racism was getting better. I now feel like in the last couple of years, it's getting worse. And part of the problem is that it is getting harder to have a casual interaction that might actually allow you to understand more.

**Brittany King** 54:26

Yes, I agree with that. And I think just the shorter answer is there's just a big trust issue. It's just a big trust issue. And it's not with every single American or black American. But like you said, when you're walking in that park, you don't know if that person has that trust issue with you or not, and it's better maybe she's better I walk around them and don't interact

**Bret** 54:55

which then creates more of a trust issue.

**Brittany King** 54:57

Exactly. Because if you don't Just do it, you'll never know. But then there are organizations that really have a trust issue with with white people coming in, because they don't know if they have good intentions. They don't know if they can trust them. They don't know if they're actually another organization trying to infiltrate them or trying to like, you know, co OPT or whatever they don't know. So they're like, well, it's better that we just keep it all black, because at least we know that everyone in here is for this cause. And better safe than sorry, I think people rather just be better safe than sorry. Now. For me, there are definitely times where you have to be it's better to be safe than sorry. We'll have conversations. Now I will have conversations with anyone, and I'll be cautious, but I rather be like, dang, that didn't go the way I want it to go. Like I'd rather that than never talking to someone that I might feel might not be receptive to me or whatever. But yeah, at the end of the day is a trust issue. And I don't know how that is tackled, other than people just coming out of their comfort zones. And, yeah,

**Bret** 56:28

so let me ask you about something I agree that coming out of there. Stretching with respect to our comfort zones, is the thing that allows us to discover our shared humanity and get past the, you know, bigotry, if it's there, or ignorance, which is definitely there, you know, reducing ignorance would be a great goal, it's never going to be zero. But the thing that allows us to do that is contact. And all of these tensions and suspicions make contact, more fraught, more likely to go awry, and less capable of doing what it needs to do. So I just wanted to add one other thing to that. I've, I spend a lot of time listening to conversations, and I deliberately listen when I can to conversations that are primarily or exclusively black if I'm allowed to participate. And I'm noticing, actually, it is true of those conversations, but it's actually more generally true of the social justice landscape, not just with respect to race, but there is a pattern in which, amongst people who are gathered around an injustice, there is a tendency to be unable to reject any claim that is consistent with that overall concern. Right? So there's almost no assertion you can make that's too absurd to be thrown out, you won't get a bunch of people who are concerned about racial injustice, who will say, Well, actually, that thing you're talking about is innocent. But the problem is real. But that particular example isn't right. It's like anything, is an example of the thing in question. You've seen this?

**Brittany King** 58:20

Yes. Um, I think a very popular example of this is white silences violence, or? Well, actually, well, actually, yeah. So that was actually something that came up that I was like, this is a contradiction. That when it comes to the protests in when it comes to showing up for black people, or non white people, at these demonstrations, it's like, white silences violence, it's like, if you aren't there, you are racist, or you're part of the problem. But when it comes to having conversations and dialogue like this, or talking about the injustices, what's going on, that we want white people to be silent. You can't talk like you it's, it's our call. It's our voice. You support what we say. And that was some definitely a narrative that was really after white fragility. Actually, now, I'm not gonna blame everything on that book. This was before that, but white fragility really pushed it for white people just to listen in black people write about race because we don't go through racism. And even though my organization would be lm was not participating in that. I definitely retweeted that though. I definitely shared that sentiment online. Definitely. Because I thought that was agency. Like I thought that was like, you know, but then I realized Does that even make sense that white people can't speak? Because racism, yes, happens to black people. But there are certain parts of racism that we will never experience from different angles. And if we allow white people to speak in give their point of view of what's going on, they can let us know of the blind spots, we're not seen in what's going on. Everyone has to participate in this issue. Like you were saying, it's not just our issue. It's not just this go educate yourself. The best education is dialogue. It's not reading a book. It's talking to me about it. And but I think why we don't want that is because it's like already the stress of the incident and the injustice. And then that additional stress of having to talk about it makes sense to it to other people who don't just get it on ground level. But it's like, when has racism or race or the conversation, promised to ever be comfortable, it's always going to be ugly, and hard and exhausting. And that's what has sobered me up to this. Because I was always like, I'm not talking to white people about racism, go Google it. I'm not exhausting myself. Like I'm like, at the event, I talk at the meetings I talk but after that, but now I'm like, when I look back at my lineage, what happened I'm like Dr. King, and then fought for our civil rights in our voting rights and other rights. Like, and then my ancestors, you know, everything that they were able to do, fighting for me to be in this moment in 2021. And I can't have a conversation with a white person, because it's exhausting. But like, tell that to Harriet Tubman. Oh, my Curia. Tom, I would be like, if you don't go into like, when I think when you contrast that with that. Now for me, I definitely. I'm human. So I definitely have conversations with people that definitely go somewhere. And it might be a four hour conversation at the end of it, it might have. So many things might have happened that were great. And I might go to bed crying because it was so hard to do. And it is exhausting. But I'm like, but what they did for us, this is a luxury. The fact that I can tell a white person how I feel, and they'll listen. And then change could happen. Like now I'm like now for me. I just I exhaust myself, because what happens afterwards, it's always good. Even if there's been tension, of course, I consent to being offended, they consent to getting offended, we were like we're mature, we're like this might happen, it might get ugly, maybe it will probably actually will. And it always though, it just is surprising to me of how I felt almost

**Brittany King** 1:03:25

like all the things that they did with the struggle that was happening. And they pushed us along each era push the the other era like, okay, we're free, we're free out of bondage, and we're pushing you forward to whatever the freedom is. And then after Reconstruction Era pushing you after Jim Cole, now we're pushing this generation. And we just and I want to say we, I'll just speak for me, and then I was willing to sit down and fold my arms and be like, I'm not talking to anyone. When I looked at that way, I'm like, always I'm lazy. Like talking is the least I could do, if anything else. But I don't want to put that on other. All black people, we have different experiences. And for me, because I grew up in a white town. I do have a tolerance. I because I'm used to being around white people. There's people in Chicago and other inner cities that they've experienced. encounters with white people way different. And I'm not going to tell them like you need to do what I do. No, I'm just gonna do what I can do. This is this. Well,

**Bret** 1:04:42

I would say yeah, it's not incumbent on any individual, but it is vital for all of us to the channel remain open. Right, that there be the ability to have those conversations. Yeah, yeah. And I I like your point quite a bit about this. instinct to silence. White people, especially as we are told that their silence is violence. But even putting that aside, the silencing of white people in a conversation about race is just simply destructive of the ability of that conversation to reach insight, because the point is we're actually talking about a dynamic and as much as I don't know, what it's like to be black and can't therefore speak, from personal experience, to to that, that phenomenon. It is also true that, you know, you can't know what goes on, as we said before in the room when you're not there. And interesting to me, that your first reaction when I talked about what was said, in the room, when you're not there was that there was something to fear about that. And can you tell me what you feared might be said in rooms? When, when you're not in there when you walk out?

**Brittany King** 1:06:03

Wow. I would say, honestly, this, the little things that just came to mind that might be said, If I walked out around maybe like, I can't stand these people or this just, I actually don't even like, I can't stand these people or, you know, why they always try to take up space or your we go with another BLM? Like just the stereotypical things one might think someone's thinking in their mind when they see them anyway.

**Bret** 1:06:46

Wow. So no, I

**Brittany King** 1:06:49

sounds like that's not what happens.

**Bret** 1:06:52

Never, never, I mean, I do sometimes hear people say stuff that I think might have racial content in it. But it's usually not that a person is saying something that is negative, it's that a person is doesn't know what to do with race. And so they're sort of revealing their ignorance about it, or something like that. But no, no, no. I, you know, and and it's funny, because I talked to other white people about this phenomenon, like, you know, I was, in fact, having a conversation with a journalist, Jeremy Lee Quinn. And we were talking about he, he's a left wing is actually an anarchist, who's done journalism, looking at right wing protests, including the one at the Capitol. And he encountered a guy who was overtly racist. And he and I had this little moment, it was like, Oh, you actually met an overt racist in the wild? And it was like, Yeah, I did. And it's like, well, that's interesting, because you and I, he and I are constantly being told that it's everywhere. And we never meet these people, right? That's not how it works. And I'm not saying that there is not severe bias in our system. But it's not written into the system where you would expect it to be right. It's much more like your zip code is not racially diverse, and predicts how well you will do in life. Right? That's a very backward thing. But it doesn't, it's not working through the active racism of white people. It's working through a historical fact, which did come from racism, right? The segregation of our neighborhoods, and it has tremendous impact does lots of harm. But it isn't working through what said in the room, when the black person leaves or when there are no black people present. It's a totally different thing. And so this is part of this is part of the problem, I think, is that the the picture of racism that is being portrayed is so at odds with what's actually going on. And so much of people's acceptance that it is right is a based in their fear, rather than their personal encounters with it, that we're just stuck in this, I think fake story. And frankly, it's fake on both sides, the story about white racism as a caricature of what that actually is. And really, I think we're dealing more with historical racism that we are being we are failing to address rather than current racism. It's not to say there's none, but it's to say there's a lot less than people say. But, you know, on the other side to the the understanding on the right, is cartoonish, because the right is unimaginative about the ways that harm can afflict a population that doesn't require active racism, they just think it's all made up, or not all of it, but a lot of it. And so the point is, look, actually, both these stories have to go. We do have a problem and it is not primarily Active racism by living white people. It works differently than that. But, you know, so let's figure out what the problem actually is. Right and not demonize people who aren't guilty of something. And then in so doing, we could actually address it, which I think is a central idea. I don't think the country is complete until we really do address it. But you know that that story gets lost. I mean, it's a little like your BLM chapter that got overwhelmed by some bigger BLM phenomenon that didn't speak for you, right, that view that like, Yes, we have real problems, but it's not based in the act of racism of white people, or at least not primarily. So it's just, there's no oxygen for that discussion. Because we're so busy having a different discussion. I think what I was saying we lost contact here for a moment, due to a zoom hiccup, I think what I was saying was that we've got two false stories that are taking up all the oxygen in the room. One of them is that, on the right, there's a belief that inequality and race based inequality is much less significant than it actually is. And I'm by this I mean, equality of opportunity. And on the left, there's a story that the reason that things are so unequal, is about active racism on the part of whites, that is interfering with the ability of blacks and others to succeed. And what I was suggesting is that I'm virtually certain that there's obviously some degree of bias based on the fact that I am likely to encounter white folks who are more similar minded to me than different, but I do a lot of

**Bret** 1:11:49

I intermingle with people across the political spectrum, I've done a lot of traveling. And it is exceedingly rare that I run into anybody who is actively rooting for white people over black people, it is not exceedingly rare that I run into people who have very little understanding of people of other races, there's a lot of ignorance, but I think very little of it is willful. And so the point is, what I really want to see is a discussion in which we say, Okay, why are things so unequal? And what can we do about it? because, frankly, from all of our perspective, equality of opportunity is a great thing. But we can't get to that discussion. If folks on the right are increasingly emboldened in believing that there isn't a problem. Because folks on the left are painting the problem differently, and more personally than it actually is, then it is actually occurring.

**Brittany King** 1:12:51

I want to play devil's advocate on what you said, please. Um, do you think that you might not encounter overt racist because it's not socially acceptable, and it's almost like, you know, someone that is very, let's say, misogynist, or or whatever, they might not say that overtly to someone, or showcase out overtly to someone unless, like, they have a commonality with that person, a friend, or close to someone where they can be like that?

**Bret** 1:13:30

Well, you know, that's a possibility. But I would, I would say, I'm a very careful student of human behavior. I mean, it's professionally, one of my primary interests. And it's also something I I delight in, you know, I've done a lot of traveling, I spend a lot of time talking to people and listening to people, for a lot of different reasons. Partly, I hold the view that the, if somebody will let you look through their eyes, that that is like an incredible privilege and that you should take that opportunity for the amazing thing that it is and not treat it frivolously. So. You know, I do sort of discover people's myopia, people's creativity, because I'm sort of curious about what it's like in their heads. And I did this professionally. Also, as a professor for 14 years. The college I was teaching at. Students and professors took one class at a time. So professors taught one class students took one class and it could go on all year. So I knew my students really, really well and they knew me. And so all I would say is that I can't be certain of what I don't see because people won't say it around me. But I know that I'm not depending entirely on what they say that I'm actually looking for patterns and that I frequently find ignorance. I rare Find what I would call racism. And that I think, yeah, there's bound to be some bias in what people will say to me and some bias and who I'm talking about. But I don't think that's what explains that I think most people across the political spectrum actually really do believe that an equal world racially speaking is better. And what we differ on is how equal things are.

**Brittany King** 1:15:27

Yeah, I just wanted, I just wanted to be safe, do that devil's advocate, but I will say like, after I leave this, that paranoia isn't after any exchange with any white person is certain times where you're going into an unknown territory, and you're just unsure what people say, and you don't know if they're being pleasant to your face. And when you walk out, you have no idea what they're really saying. But it's nothing that I go to bed thinking of rocking back and forth. And like, I wonder what, no, I don't think that. Can I ask you a question? Um, and I don't I don't say, well, this might not be a question for you.

**Bret** 1:16:09

But you're free to ask any question you feel like you should ask,

**Brittany King** 1:16:13

um, do you feel the same way? If you left the room of black people? Or people, non white people? If they were saying something behind your back is I won't go ahead. I want your answer. And then I'll

**Bret** 1:16:32

yeah, it's a good question. I think it's a little bit different now than it was, I never would have worried about it. But now, there's a different question, which is, you know, did I overcome the expectation that there's something hidden in my mind of that nature? And it's getting harder and harder to overcome? But no, I never, I never would have worried about that. And I think, you know, I think I deal across my entire social life, you know, race just being one small aspect of this, but I deal across my life with the sense that if you if you approach people openly, and you're candid about what you see, and you're quick to put things right, when you screw up, which we all do, then people get that message pretty quickly. And, you know, my sense is that it used to be generally true, that one could establish that at the very least, I'm trying to live in a world that we should all like, a good one, right? I may be wrong about the details, but I'm shooting for it, because I think it's good for everyone. And I'm not doing so trivially I'm actually invested in it. And that when people detect that they, they tend to accept your decency. And the the difficulty in establishing that now is, I think it's, it could hardly be more dangerous to us. So I do I do worry about it more now than I did. And I will say, you know, I have my social universe changed in 2017, when the story at evergreen happened. And I'm in contact with lots and lots of folks at, you know, an especially high number of black intellectuals. And I must say, it is the place that retains this sort of sense that this is an arbitrary issue between us. It's not a central issue, even though it's become much more a focus of our conversations, because it's happening in the world. But there is sort of a sense amongst these folks that, you know, we know we're well intended, we've established that and we can talk about virtually anything, and it seems comfortable, but it's like that general sense that you could talk about anything with anybody, once you established that you were decent, has been edited down to a smaller and smaller group of people who are capable of you know, keeping the flame for that style of interaction.

**Brittany King** 1:19:30

Hmm. Yes, I do think, though, that the more I have conversations with people, where I would assume that they have this, they would have a visceral reaction to everything I would say that don't. I feel like just the extremes on both sides of the left and the right I feel like they're it's such a small pool, but because it allowed us they are like almost the brand ambassadors for that side. And everyone thinks that they represent what the other side is. And I think when it comes down to it every I think everyone wants a decent interaction with everybody, and everyone's wanting to put the weapons down. But they just don't know, are you really going to drop your weapon and not pick it up? And I think that's why we carry around the weapon because we have a paranoia. Are you going to use it on me? I won't use it. I knew, but I need it just in case you do. But I think everyone's exhausted, I think I think most people are the more the most. The more talk in interacting with people and I say this in the sense of, I'll talk to someone that figuratively has the weapon like ready to swing. And the more we talk, the more they just feel like they don't want to hold it. Like it's heavy. That's all I that's my, and I can't say like my all my anecdotal interactions are like, that's just everyone. But when I encounter people who I would find Teater, being extremists on the left or right, and I see how they're only being this way or holding these weapons because they assume the other side wants revenge, or they assume an overwhelming amount of people on that side wants to get them really, that there are people that do, but majority of people don't feel like they do.

**Bret** 1:21:54

That is okay. So you've now surprised me quite a bit here, I think maybe similarly to my surprising you, with respect to what gets said, when a black person leaves the room. But my sense is that we are, I feel like I'm watching a revolution in whichever institution that I know of is being transformed. And they're adopting not only beliefs, but policy that I know just can't be made to work, right, because simply will not work. It's going to result in all of these institutions falling apart and failing to do what they need to do, which in some cases will be very sad, and in other cases will be a catastrophe. But the idea that most of the people who are part of the movement that is driving this might be exhausted and interested in putting their weapons down. I don't know. I don't know how that deal gets brokered. But why would it be smart for us to figure it out? Because, you know, this is gonna be a short ride. If this revolution wins, it's going to destroy the stuff that makes us strong. And then it doesn't matter how the pie gets divided. It's not going to be much pie, you know? Yeah.

**Brittany King** 1:23:17

I do want to be clear, I guess I don't know if I heard the full question of what you ask definitely different between interpersonal relationships or conversation happening with me and like institutions and universities like it's, that's a different story. And I feel like these kids are just echo chambers or what their professors are saying and they don't even know what they believe. But yes, I do think though, even even them there, they might just feel like this is the way I show that I'm a part of this movement and that I want change. And but there's been so many people who have walked away from being a liberal because they're just like when they see that as counterproductive and the whole ideology backfires on itself. And they say it was exhausting to go into every single room all the time and having to like detect if this is racist, this is sexist. Is this something they're like in oftentimes, I was actually creating it in my head, and it wasn't there at all. And then any click on the other side. And I'll just use this man as an example, Dale Davis, you know, befriending Ku Klux Klan owners, not just people that voted for someone that people might not like Ku Klux Klan owners who say they hate people who look just like him, where his friendship has, you know, allowed them I guess, in a way to 200 to 300 of them to leave willingly, not that he said, you know, if you if we're friends, you can't be in this, no, he would go there, because he knew what he was doing. And he knew it was kind of like a strategic move of love on his part. And that's what I mean, the weapons like, people don't, at the end of the day, those men when I listened to the podcast, and I actually saw him in person at NYU, and I, and he was with a former cuckoos cleaner, who talked about how my hate had nothing to do with black people, it had everything to do with the fact I hated myself. And he said, the majority of people in these movements, who cooks cleaners are usually boys that don't have a father figure who's looking for community, who is looking for a place of love, he's like, it's almost in the same contrast as maybe an inner city kid looking for love with a gang. He said, it's just like, we're looking for something. And instead of doing internal work on ourselves, we projected on something, and that's easy to project it on black people. And if I have to do that, to have kinship with these people, I'm going to do that. And so when you hear these stories, time and time again, on other sides, for me, I've come to the conclusion. People are are exhausted, but they just don't trust the other side. And, and don't want to be vulnerable for the other side. But who who goes first is the question.

**Bret** 1:26:39

Well, So interestingly, Darrell Davis is an example. If I think back, I have heard many, many conversations about him. In many different racial contexts. I've never heard anyone say anything negative, right? Everybody likes the story. Right? And it's a it's a surprising, interesting, wonderful story. And, you know, it does, it does say all kinds of things, you know, I understand the impulse to do what he did I have that same impulse, I would not have thought it would work at the level that he made it work. It's, it's a marvelous testament to his insight into the situation and his courage to do it. Because, you know, the instinct to do it is one thing that actually taking the risk of doing it is quite another. But in any case, I think, again, you know, I'm still a little bit surprised by your sense that at least interpersonally, people are interested in escaping this dynamic, right, I see it accelerating, but if people really wanted it to be stood down, that would be very, very healthy. Now, as for, you know, I think you're pointing to exactly the obstacle that will prevent it from happening, which is, somebody has to go first. And at this moment, that's a very vulnerable thing to do on either side. But there's got to be a way. And, you know, I increasingly think it's probably going to have to do with modeling difficult conversations, so that people understand what that would look like. In other words, if we could illustrate the standing down of the tension between individuals where the tension existed, then there's a lot of room for other people to to follow suit.

**Brittany King** 1:28:33

100% and that's why I'm, I do engage in conversations with people. When I the first public, like, person that I think was kind of, you know, well known. Benjamin Boyce. I had a conversation with him in September, after my article came out in talent magazine, free black thought and one I had the conversation because I think it was needed at that time. And to I knew his base when not ever searched for me, they would not know my name. Even if people were here might know me, I might not be in their algorithm ever. And I I felt like I was not walking into the lion's den, but I didn't. I was talking about Black Lives Matter, and I know how his base feels about it. But I felt like if I can humanize this in a way where the weapons are, are down in this conversation with Benjamin and we're having an organic conversation authentic. And they can see into why someone would do a BLM. What's the purpose what's, why would they want to be on this mission and just humanize their sentiments. I was like it's worth a shot and I was shocked by the reception. And it was funny because a lot of the comments, and then people will come on my channel and give comments. And these come scrapped subscribers and it wasn't because they agree with me at all. I mean, they made it very clear. I don't agree with BLM, I don't agree with the fact that you were willing to have this conversation, and that you're willing to listen and that I actually did gain some knowledge into something I never would have considered. That was a when I was like, This is okay, this is why we continue to do. And I've gotten a lot of comments now with my channel where people are speaking up, and I'm not gonna say there's hundreds, but I've gotten at least 15 comments from white black men and women, and other in Hispanic and Asian people talking about, you know, I have to do this diversity training or this inclusion training. And I wouldn't cry, what I tell people is I encourage you to participate and raise the issues while you're doing it in good faith. Like, don't just be like, I don't want to do this, but raise it when you're doing it. So they see that you're actually trying and that you're now questioning like, well, this actually, I see a flaw here, like, Can we discuss it, like discuss it when you're there with them? Because they're not gonna hear it? If you are just, you know, but then there's a lot of people are like, these are the thoughts I've had a lot of black people feel like this is the thoughts I've had, they're like, I agree with the sentiment of Black Lives Matter, Black Lives Matter. But I also have these issues. And now and now I'm voicing them, like stuff like that is enough for me. Then also with with white people saying they're willing to be more open to to hearing other people's point of view, and voicing their own point of view. And feeling like okay, now I know how that actually shaped my conversation where someone's not thinking I'm trying to attack them. Like, that's enough. And I think that is what more people need to do. But it's not easy at all.

**Bret** 1:32:14

at all, it's being made more difficult. Because you mentioned Benjamin, I don't know if you know, Benjamin is a good friend of mine. But he is portrayed, as I am actually as being somehow on the right and sometimes even portrayed as far right or outright and there is actually zero to it. It's just simply not accurate. And so the problem with that is on the one hand, yes, it's very annoying to be dismissed and portrayed this way. But the worst effect, and I think the reason that it happens is because there is a desire to keep the very people who need to hear it from hearing it. So if you are on the left, trying to figure out what to make of things at the moment, then you're very unlikely to end up going to listen to a channel that you've heard is far right, outright, whatever, right? So the point is it that stigma means that the number of people who saw your interaction was less than it might have been. And that means that it can't do as much good as it needs to do. Which, you know, frankly, if you take people like you, or Benjamin, and you put them in these conversations, of course, it will do good, right? these are these are model individuals who are capable of having a model conversation. The problems aren't zero, but they're solvable. And the way to solve them is for people who don't know, you know, the details of what's on the other side of the conversation to discover it together and for the audience to come along. So, you know, I don't know what percentage of the problem has to do with people are being driven away from channels that are the ones they most need to hear, but I think it's significant.

**Brittany King** 1:34:00

Mm hmm. Yeah. I, I you know, read up and watched, you know, the Evergreen issue with you and then with visum in post a lot about it, before I did the podcast with him. And I was just dumbfounded at how that even happened at all like, but the thing is, is I was like, but Brittany, you would have been one of those people five years, six years ago. Which is why I always give him I'm not saying for you to do this because it happened to you. So well. Keep that I tried to give not try I give like this, that grace because who am I but like keep the empathy tie with people that I once was online with because I Know what you are feeling. And you actually are usually questioning yourself because you're human. And there'll be times where I would do things to where it wouldn't align with my moral compass inside. But outwardly I'm, I'm putting my fist up, but inwardly I'm like, there's some off. And I feel like there's there. I'm not saying all of them, but there's people over there that know something's off about this, and the more people have the conversations about why it's off, the more people are going to start listening and being like, you know what, they're right. And I and I have to stop this. But I would say, one thing I did on my channel, which actually made it, which actually kind of went viral was I knew that. Okay, so Jordan Peterson, for instance, I learned about Jordan Peterson. After the controversy, I had no clue who this man was. didn't know he was a controversial figure at all. I just came upon a panel he was on. And he specifically just stood out. Because I was like, wow, he's really challenging me not necessarily on race issues just by critically thinking like that is like really insightful, how he's thinking about these things and reframing things I never would have saw that way and it makes perfect sense now, so I kept listening to him and listening. And then I stumble across a controversy that says he's a transphobic white supremacist the I was like, Oh, wait, wait, let me see if I put that in Google right? Because I don't think that's what the that's not the same man. And I'm like, What what? So then I was watching those videos of people you know, calling him that and chanting him and shutting lectures of his down protesting and I watched the C 16 bill all the way through in him and I was just like, but I would have been those people to it before I would have went with the mob. And the fact that these people are so off in the fact that I was so off on being too I that's still dumbfounding, but long story short, I'm a fan of I'm a fan of him. I like him not to say I love everything like course I don't agree with everything he says. But as a thinker I think like he is very important and I did a video about five things I learned about Jordan Peterson on my channel and all it said was dear Jordan Peterson from a former Black Lives Matter pro and I knew I okay yes clickbait sue me people are trying to live in this world but but I am and I knew people like that click on it because they're like this black lives matter person's going to try to grill Jordan and I'm going to but all they saw was me just you know coming in with a funny intro and being like I heard about this guy Jordan didn't even bring up the controversy didn't just as a man that I just found as if I didn't know anything about the controversy at all and just said learn this thing and this thing and this thing and now it has almost 14,000 views and almost 50% of the comments are I was coming in here thinking I was gonna have to defend him and then I left like sharing this with someone and then this gives me hope on this this end and they're like we might not align politically but the fact that you see who he is it just stuff like that I'll do and I know that I don't need to say much the fact that a black woman is talking about Jordan Peterson is enough I don't have to do his revenge tour. Like just me giving that video was me negating the fact that I don't think he is someone that hates women and that is a white supremacists.

**Brittany King** 1:39:03

Yeah, there's there's people that are like he's the only go somewhere but stuff like that, like. Yeah, and then guess it's not easy to do. Like everyone's like, Oh, you're so brave. Like, I don't know if it's bravery. But it's necessary. I think things like that's necessary. And so I do things like that on my channel. And then and then I have another video about how tanahashi coach was my professor and I love him. People just don't know how to wait, you like Jordan and Tom. How do you like them both like, Well, you can't? Yeah, um, maybe you should understand why I do. I wouldn't like white supremacists. Right. So yeah,

**Bret** 1:39:52

so that's that's marvelous. I there's so many things I want to say in response. I'll try to try to remember that But one thing is, it's pretty clear in your story, that if you had encountered Jordan Peterson, if you had encountered his reputation first, and then you might not have even seen his videos, right? If you're, you know, or heard that he was this vehement white supremacist, you might not have given him enough of a chance to discover that actually, you got a lot from his perspective, is that fair?

**Brittany King** 1:40:28

Even even with where I am now, if I just came across it, I wouldn't go out on a campaign against them. But I would just click to another video, right? Definitely I wouldn't. Yeah.

**Bret** 1:40:40

So that's amazing, and very lucky that you encountered stuff in the order that you did, I'm quite fond of Jordan. But the other thing is, what I what I love most about your perspective is that it's clear in many of the stories that you've told that you start from the evidence, or from your experience of the world, and you reason from it, you're not working backwards from the conclusion that, this, that or the other is true. And so you keep arriving at places that don't align with these stories that were being told, and you have the courage to stick with what you've figured out rather than be bullied into accepting what the crowd is saying. So that's marvelous. And, you know, I also hear in your, in your story, you said, You know, I mean, amazing for you to say to me that, had you been at evergreen, you probably would have been on the other side. But I'm, I'm glad that you did say it. And I, you probably have heard from Benjamin, when you spoke to him that, you know, he and I both have maintained from the beginning that most of the people who were on the so called other side, were good people who were confused about what was going on. Right? There were some bad people, but it was not a large number, it was a tiny number, and they misled a lot of other people. And so, you know, I take a certain amount of flack for saying that people, they actually don't like it when when I leave that open, and I say, you know, good people acting on bad information that feels like I'm giving more credit than is due. But I know it's not the case. Right? I know, that basically there aren't, you know, it'd be hard to accumulate that many bad people, right? These had to be people who were, you know, I think too easily persuaded. But nonetheless, people recoverable people, people who aren't, you know, intent on doing harm. Yeah. And so it's a, it's actually lovely to hear that from you that you recognize in yourself that you would have been on the other side, and that you know, and that your your growth has put you somewhere where you now see that that would have been an error. That's great.

**Brittany King** 1:42:56

Yeah. And encountering Jordan in that way. Because when I went to NYU, the concentration of my journalism degree was in criticism. So I was already on this journey of going there and thinking I'm gonna be a cultural critic. Yeah, but I was being interrogated by my own way of thinking all the time and being challenged and realizing I needed to get a new vetting system on how I looked at stuff but what Jordan was such a stark it was it was this evidence of you have to wait to make logical sense of something for yourself before you make a conclusion. You cannot just go based on the majority because it was such an example of the majority of people in a sense you would say think this of him is objectively not true. I get and it wasn't a conclusion that I said one with one video. They're wrong No, it actually I would say about a week I was looking at stuff and I'm like yeah, I've seen enough this isn't real like I but I had by understood like you said the mob if your friends say that's the enemy this person's bad, you trust your friends. You trust the people that are on your side that's aligned with you. If you don't ask questions, you pick up your weapon and they're the enemy and that is the how it goes when the majority of the time I feel because there's times for me so let's i don't i don't know i'm sorry if I'm going off of your friends but I'll say I made a conclusion about this person. And now we've had zoom calls in where I would say, friends I hope he was commies friend, but um my my peace free black thought when I The reason why I did that was one, that experience with Jordan Peterson and other things and going through my program made me realize that people have to really the art of critical thinking is is very important. And not to make assumptions of people before hearing out what's actually the evidence. So Coleman Hughes when he gave his speech at the congressional hearing against hanasi, coats, this is when Tanase was my professor. And I remember being at NYU, and tuned in and I was rooting for my professor. And as I was reading for him, I saw Coleman, I'm like, Oh, he's he's anti black. He's confused. He's akun, whenever. But then, now, a year ago, when I went through all of this stuff, and really taking myself to task on why I've come up with conclusions that are kind of faulty, actually, that don't really make sense that I'm like, Am I an echo of something? Or is this my idea? I went back and I watched that congressional hearing. And I still thought Coase was right, in certain respects. But then I listened to Coleman, I'm like, and he's for me, he's also right. They have different point of views of this thing. And yeah, it's controversial, but it's truthful. stings a little. But what he's saying, I don't know if it's all the way wrong. And I still agree with quotes. And now it's just like, wow. And I remember writing to Coleman, giving him that, not knowing what he's thinking because I, in the piece, it says I call macoun. So I'm like, I don't know how this is gonna go over. And he was just like, Wow, this is amazing. And he retweeted it, and then everyone saw it. And then him and I have had conversations. And I think also that's what it comes to it comes to when people realizing they're wrong, and are willing to admit that and make amends with it. And hopefully, people that down the line who mobbed you to say the least evergreen, hopefully they come to a reassess that moment and maybe realize that they were wrong and find a way to make it right. But people just don't want to be wrong. Yeah, people just want to believe what they're doing is, right? Because at the end of the day, people

**Brittany King** 1:47:50

want to be good. And I think everyone's confused on how to be good. So they go down, well, antiracism Ali, I'm going to be the best anti racist, I'm gonna call it everyone and on we're going on this way or this way, this way. People are trying to find a way. It'd be good. And not to say someone has the solution. But obviously right now we're all confused. Yes. can't make sense of it.

**Bret** 1:48:24

That's true. I say the most any of us are as half awake. So every so often, somebody contacts me, and they tell me that they had, they were on the wrong side of the Evergreen situation, and I get apologies from them. And I always tell them, I don't need an apology, as long as you are willing to be honest with yourself and others that you were on the wrong side. And, you know, that that's good enough. That's that's what I need from people. And, you know, so anyway, that I hope maybe some will, will hear this and think about that possibility based on your courage. I mean, you obviously weren't there, but your courage and modeling your you know, you don't even have to say what side you would be on and yet you're courageous enough to say that you would have you would have called it incorrectly. But I also maybe the last thing we should talk about since we've been at this for quite some time, is you know, you mentioned Tallahassee coats, and Coleman Hughes and Jordan Peterson and I must say, these are all people that I get something really important from I'm a huge fan of Coleman's there are a couple places in which he and I differ but overwhelmingly, I think he's, he's got it right. There are substantial places where I differ with Tallahassee coats, but I will say our family together Read between the World and Me, and we got a lot out of it. And I I think It's very valid. I don't see him in the same light as I see. Ephraim Kennedy, you know, or Robyn D'Angelo, or other leaders of this movement, who I see as either so painfully confused that they are beyond help. Or cynical, you know, but no, coats is a very different, very different phenomenon. And, you know, Peterson is so anyway, I guess the point is interesting that you and I have coming from very different perspectives land on all of these individuals as simultaneously tapped into the truth at an important level and not saying the same thing as each other. Right? So that tells me something, this is a this is a worthy list, and I would love to see more interactions that allowed their differences to be sorted out.

**Brittany King** 1:50:58

Hmm, yeah. And, and with that, I think people think because if one likes, you know, let's, let's just say Thomas soul, they can't like Tanase quotes, or a Walt Whitman, you can't like James Baldwin. For me, I don't take anyone as a Bible. I don't believe in someone wholeheartedly. Um, oftentimes, I find that I look at thinkers and writers and philosophers, not like the solution to it's almost like arithmetic, like not a solution to it, but like a factor to get to a solution. Because there's so many essays that I've written where I will bring in, you know, I'll bring in Thomas Sol. But Thomas Sol said something that might not be completely let's just say finish. But James Baldwin actually says something that helps connect and flush this out. But then Coleman said this, and then, you know, Tony Morrison said that in Jordan Peterson actually says something about, you know, cleaning up your room. And this actually helped, like, I see all as like, spices on a rack in the kitchen, and that every spices for every dish, but sometimes you need to mix it up. So that's how I see thinkers. And I don't, I don't think because you're on a side or this, I think the whole side thing is arbitrary. And the binary needs to be squashed. So I don't even think of it like that, I just read something. And if I get some now this person, and I realize they have a lot to give, then they go on my shelf, and I pull them off if I need to pull them off, and they might be completely polarizing and ideas. But the thing is, is sometimes they're looking at the same thing from different angles, and then I'm adding my angle, and that's actually filling out and fleshing out the issue more than seeing it through one lens.

**Bret** 1:53:03

Yep, you know, I actually, I got this from your, your tablet piece about the debate between Booker T. Washington and w. Eb Dubois. Just I must tell you, I was completely unaware of the historical level about the two positions and the conflict between them. And frankly, it's funny, we're almost having the very same discussion to this day about, you know, it's sort of a personal responsibility versus, you know, active correctives. And, and, you know, it ain't one or the other. There's a nuanced conversation to be had about what the right admixture is. But we're not having that conversation because of as you point out the polarization. So anyway, I would suggest that people who are interested, check out your article in tablet magazine, which is available online. Anything you want to say in closing?

**Brittany King** 1:54:12

Let's get along. Um, I like it. I mean, yeah, I mean, I think that everyone, if I can give advice on how I've been able to get on this journey, because I'm not done at all. In our personal work, looking at yourself and figuring out what you believe why you believe certain things, and seeing what your ideas are made of, and trying to reassess the conflicts in your life. Are they your conflicts? Why are they just simple answers? solutions to your own self first. Because if you don't do that, all you're going to do is the work you may be doing for yourself. just reject that all on someone else and be like, no, they need to fix themselves. They need to do the work, and you haven't even touched what you need to consider about yourself. So Be the change you want to see. Alrighty, Shay? Well,

**Bret** 1:55:26

it's it's, there's a scale at which that advice doesn't work. But I think it does scale it works great. And I would say, based on what we've talked about, I think we need a I don't want to overcomplicate it, I think we need people to embrace something that I would label, let's try this, right, where people have conversations that are more difficult than they should be in order to see how far they can get, you know, the conversation you and I are having is such a conversation. But I think you and I are probably both built to make this easier. But in general, what I want to do is have people who wouldn't ordinarily be sitting down together, and who might fear what would happen if they did, right, trying it out. And maybe you know, I think your your idea of setting out an explicit code of ethics or conduct. For your BLM chapter, when you started, it is exactly the right one, I have advocated this many times that the way to prevent institutions from falling apart is to make what people within the institution owe each other absolutely explicit. At the point you walk through the door and not figure it out after things go wrong. Right? So conversations in which the ground rules are clear, right, that you can set a limit for how bad things can go, right, let's let's do this, let's have a conversation. And if it goes completely wrong, it ends here. Right? This conversation is what it is, but it doesn't go farther than this. And then let's be candid with each other because I think and I hope that it was true of this conversation, that maybe each of us learn something about what we can't personally know. That was actually positive. I know that I did. And I have the sense based on what you said of, you know, your fears about what gets set in rooms when you're not there. And what I'm telling you the reality is that's a that's a big discovery.

**Brittany King** 1:57:37

It is. And that will help. And yeah, just people willing to have the courage just to have the conversation. What's the worst that can happen? And what really is the worst that can happen? Yeah, especially on zoom. Like, come on, just shut the laptop, if it gets too heated. I mean, that's, um, but that actually is like, what is the worst that can happen? And don't knock until you try it? Yeah. Because I've had the best conversations this past year with people that I never, never would have before. And it could have been a push of quarantine, but it's a push in my curiosity as a person. But yeah, I would just say, just have the courage to try this try.

**Bret** 1:58:27

So beautiful. I think this is this is a wonderful note. And I'm glad, I'm glad that we did this. And I hope it serves as a model because you know, it does, it creates exactly that positive sense of, you know, having looked a bit through somebody else's eyes. So anyway, I am grateful for your willingness to do this and, and the grace with which you approach what has become a very difficult problem.

**Brittany King** 1:58:59

Thank you for having me. Enjoy this conversation.

**Bret** 1:59:02

Awesome. All right. Well, I think where can people find you?

**Brittany King** 1:59:08

You can find if you go to American shade on YouTube, you'll find all my social media handles there. So

**Bret** 1:59:15

American shade on YouTube. Yes. Terrific. All right. Brittany King. It's been marvelous. And to everyone who tuned in thank you for doing so and we'll see you next time on dark horse. Be well, everyone.

**Brittany King** 1:59:31

Thank you.