Science is Open Mic Night - With Eric Weinstein - Bret and H...

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people, black, science, claim, point, question, understand, oppression, open mic night, trans, meritocratic, stem, movement, problem, day, fact, caltech, world, community, talking

**SPEAKERS**

Bret, Heather, Eric Weinstein

**Bret** 00:09

Hey folks, we are back with the 22nd Dark Horse podcast live stream the q&a section, we are joined through a feat of Well, yes duct tape and baling wire, but we ran out of duct tape so it's almost entirely baling wire that we are using. We have Eric, our Weinstein PhD on the phone ready to join us. He is, it turns out this will surprise none of his followers. He is not shutting down stem. Isn't that right, Eric?

**Eric Weinstein** 00:41

That's true. In fact, my problem with the duct tape is that the feathers keep sticking.

**Bret** 00:45

Ah, terrible.

**Heather** 00:48

This is this is why people confuse the two of you. Yes, right. Yeah,

**Bret** 00:52

this is why I don't want them to.

**Eric Weinstein** 00:55

Yeah, all right. So be with you. In fact, I'm researching performatively in order to protest the stupidity of the moment,

**Heather** 01:04

researching performatively Yes, yes, yes. Excellent. Excellent.

**Bret** 01:09

So what do we do people are countering to the Maoism?

**Eric Weinstein** 01:14

Well, my feeling is, is that they may be smarter than us because at some level, we may be in the process of outsmarting ourselves, given how stupid this moment is. And it's really remarkable to me that, you know, as I've said before, if you had a movement called the save the adorable baby penguins from hunger, no matter what the movement stood for, you would have a lot of people who would sign on because they want to communicate just how beautiful and decent they are.

**Bret** 01:44

Dude, I didn't know there was such a movement. I'm making a mental right now to go sign up for it. As soon as this is done.

**Heather** 01:49

You heard it here. Well, I guess you're gonna hear second, right? Save the baby penguins from hunger.

**Eric Weinstein** 01:53

There it is adorable baby, I shouldn't put in the word adorable. Thank you for bringing that up. I also should say, somebody left a comment. Recently on one of my videos, which I quite liked, which was, we all see the cheese. Some of us see the trap.

**Bret** 02:10

That's very good. That's sweet. That is very good. Yeah, we all see the trees, some of us see the trap. That's that's very well,

**Eric Weinstein** 02:17

I wish I wish I wish it were mine.

**Bret** 02:20

I agree. I saw somebody referring to an outbreak of anti semitism, which I thought was a very good turn of phrase for what is sure what is happening? Alright, so what else? Can you tell us? What are we missing about this moment?

**Eric Weinstein** 02:37

Well, I think that the key issue is is that some concept of wronged is substituting for some concept of correct. So the more wrong you can claim to have been, the more correct you have to be because no one is allowed to challenge you the act of challenging a person who claims to have been wrong with an intersectional claim on that, on that issue of oppression is a person who cannot be disputed. And so the issue of if I have less intersectional, and you are more, more intersectional, as per the concept of oppression, then effectively I can't be right and tell you that you're wrong. And therefore I have to cheat you have reasonable feedback.

**Heather** 03:27

And this is where lived experience and claims of identity are used also to game the system because not only does your does your position in the progressive stack, how many intersectional points you have, contribute to how wrong you can claim to be, but it's only you who gets to do the math on how wrong Do you are?

**Eric Weinstein** 03:47

I wish it were that simple? Heather, I just don't think it is because I think that one of the problems that you have to deal with is that the underlying idea is that my history of being wronged has to do with my history of being able to succeed within a system. And the problem of let's say the Overseas Chinese or the Jews is that you have people who are often oppressed, but who are often very successful, well wrong. And the biggest problem here is that, for example, the Jewish claim on having been wronged is particularly problematic for this movement, because it rivals or even can exceed the black claim. And therefore the claim must be disposed of with extreme prejudice, because it gives the lie to the idea that one's level of oppression and one's ability to to sort of navigate the system. The assumed linkage is called into question.

**Heather** 04:58

Yeah, I think I don't

**Eric Weinstein** 05:01

want one more. Let me give another example of the kind of reasoning one may not introduce. Are you familiar with the killing of Daniel shaver in 2016? No. Daniel shaver was in a motel, I think, in Arizona. And he had some kind of a gun for pest control, I think a pellet gun that had been seen in a window. And the police showed up, and they forced him prostrate into the hallway. And they gave very complicated instructions for what he was to do if he didn't want to be killed on the spot. And having some alcohol in his system, he was unable to follow the instructions and was shot five times I think, died instantly. If you imagine that George Floyd, who was by all turns somebody who did not necessarily believe that black lives matter, because he I think he was present in a home invasion into a pregnant black woman's house previously served five years for letting a bunch of armed men into the house while he pointed a gun at this woman, if I understand correctly, you have a situation whereby we're the two killings exchanged? I have no question that Black Lives Matter would be enraged by the killing in Arizona, and relatively mute on the killing in in Minneapolis. And so what we're talking about is we're talking about a level of clairvoyance have a right to infer the belief that no white person fears the police. This is only understandable by black people. The entire concept is beyond preposterous. But it plays into a sense that I think white people and others who do not have many black friends are incredibly frightened of this. And I think those of us who do have black friends and strong black context are completely confused. Because many of them are saying what the app?

**Bret** 07:06

Yeah, in fact, I had forgotten the young man's name who was shot. But he is obviously In this clip, quite terrified that he is about to be shot. He's trying, he's pleading for them not to shoot him. And I think he is shorts, he adjusted his shorts as he was trying to comply with the orders and one shot. So the point is, the fear is obviously there, despite the fact that he's a white guy facing heavily armed cops, etc. You're right, it is it is a very interesting CounterPoint. And I think I mean, the shutdown stem idea is about shutting down the tools with which to test whether a claim is true. And the problem is what they leave is how intuitive a claim is. And in fact, what we are watching is claims that are not true, being converted into intuitive claims by force. Right? In other words, by the threat of contradicting them, resulting in you being punished, people are convincing them. So this is like a group rationalization that we are watching unfold.

**Eric Weinstein** 08:18

Well, you say group, I would say cult, I mean, I think what you're, what you're seeing is you're seeing an ideology occupying a place in the human mind, where the, you know, there's probably like a Trump skin like pre grammar for religion. Many people don't have a religion, this is clearly inhabiting that place where you have a closed circle of ideas, which is sort of a sealed epistemology. And science is the same threat to this, that it is to claims of the Catholic Church about, you know, if there's a miracle where milk is coming from the eyes of a statue. You know, more or less, we have a lot of sensors and detectors, we can probably tell through inspection, if a miracle is occurring. And this is a miracle in the same sense that that is a miracle, which is it's not true.

**Heather** 09:13

So the point well, the point I was making earlier, I don't think is a simpler version of this, but actually an adjacent point, which is that people who don't rise in the progressive stack because they don't have any intersectional points because their lineage or their sex doesn't have a history of oppression. There are claims that can be made now to game the system. And this is what we're seeing with with the trans ideology. And again, this is not to say that trans isn't real and rare.

**Eric Weinstein** 09:42

I want us to stop constantly saying this is not to say no, of course.

**Heather** 09:46

But But it's important right? I mean, I actually so this this is this is one point where Brett and I do do this thing. Because we actually do know trans people and you most people don't actually, right we actually had trans Students who we don't talk about because their privacy is paramount. And your who, who we understand to be really untruly trans, and to to not be out on the streets talking about how trans they are because they live in this deeply horrifying position of having their actual biological sex be out of step deeply out of step with what their brains are telling them about what their sex is. So that that is a real, but super rare phenomenon. So I will I will do it. In this case, Eric, just because I, because most people watching probably don't know any trans people. And it's really easy to dismiss the trans rights activism as in.

**Eric Weinstein** 10:38

Yeah, but let's, let's also consider a blanket statement, which is, of course, I don't mean the sensible thing x, but I will be in the future Miss portrayed is believing. And I would like to have a general statement that anybody who's put as many hours into the world as I have. This is like the jizya in Islam, where you have to pay a constant tax at a higher rate than anyone else. And effectively what they do is they grind you into a pulp. So what I would say is I don't believe that this is actually as opaque as we're pretending it is. The idea that this is, you know, a highly politicized demonstration of power, I think is evident to everyone. Whether or not we echo it is a different question. But I can tell you if you want to know that the federal government through the National Science Foundation and the National Academy of Sciences, studied the fact that a tight labor market would bring women and minorities into science, and decided that it was far too expensive. Both in terms have a fear that the quality would be lower, and that the price would be too high. So they opted for a program to fake a labor shortage in the 1980s, which is of course impossible in a capitalist economy, because the wage rate rises to whatever the correct level of need is. And if these people were at all interested in the blackening, the feminization, the trans ification, whatever you want to call it of science, the best things they could do would be to put in term limits when they got rid of mandatory retirement for these positions, they would cut down the visa programs, which of course, they don't want to do, because it saves them a ton of money, trying to get what it wants, which is access to all of our labs, we get what the professor's want, which is cheap labor. And this whole thing survives only by virtue of the fact that there are no grownups anywhere in the sense making apparatus that the New York Times Washington Post and NPR used to represent. So that everybody who wants to tune into reality has to tune into, you know, a bunch of kids with their teenagers doing the audio and visual, yeah, but

**Bret** 13:02

I think you're I think you're you're missing something important. And I think it has to do with why Heather and I tend to be very careful about saying these preambles and saying you know, that their content is careful. It's not a don't hurt me thing. We've already paid the price, right? They can't hurt us. In a sense. We've already we've already been through. But there is a question. The paradox that is being deployed, is putting people who are facing something opportunity not being equally distributed, or whatever it is that results in. there being some populations not being represented in some fields at a high enough level. There's a question, who is really actually advocating for your interest and your point about Jews having faced a obviously appalling history of oppression, and yet being successful? Really points to the answer. The enlightenment was not a Jewish project. The tools are not resident in some particular race, they are absolutely democratize bubble. And the thing that empowers people is science. So to the extent that you're actually interested in taking a population that actually did face a unique kind of oppression, especially in the new world, and empowering them, the obvious tool is science. And for these cynical forces to be prying these populations away from science and tell it what they've done is they've taken the antidote, and they've labeled it as a poison which we've seen in other contexts. So sure it is necessary. It is necessary to put that message into the world actually.

**Eric Weinstein** 14:51

I think I've gone to a much more pointed perspective and let me let me just share it with you. I don't know whether you saw my walk and talk on this. But the The My feeling is when I started here hearing abolish the police. And I think about the threats to Jewish schools and places of worship, for example. My feeling is, I had it with you. I want to be very clear and adamant. You are overstepping your bounds, whoever you are as to what you are advocating for. Because maybe you feel in some way that you will be marginally safer. And boy, do I not believe that black families would be safer in a world without the police, but you have no right to endanger everyone else pretending that everything is about you. And the thing that I want to get very clearly across is we had a world in which COVID created tremendous unemployment, it created tremendous need to see other people because we are social creatures. We are all pissed off we are everybody. Are you guys there? Sorry, I just lost you for one second. We are all in a situation where everybody was amped up. And I don't know if you remember that film Animal House. Of course. There's a scene in the in the end where there's a parade. And the person leading the parade has a giant baton, he throws it into the air and one of the animal Animal House members pushes the guy to the ground, grabs the baton and takes the marching band down a blind alley. And because everyone's playing their instrument, they can't have a conversation. So they all blindly follow down the blind alley. And the person represents to me what Black Lives Matter is an organization just did with a global anger and frustration, which is now 100% focused on the issue of race.

**Bret** 17:03

Not even the issue of race and issue of a particular race. So we saw in the Evergreen run up to this. We saw experiments with demonizing people who weren't white, right, Asians were singled out as part of the problem and offered an opportunity to be re educated into the fold. And now what we're seeing is this is about anti blackness pure and simple. And everybody else is the problem. And you know, it's all predictable.

**Eric Weinstein** 17:33

Well, you know, to your point about Native Americans obviously have an astoundingly good claim on oppression. I think at some level where we've gotten to is that we all feel very uncomfortable. Like if you're taking a person who's had everything go wrong in their life, every every knock against them as occurred, and you have a second person born with a platinum spoon in their mouth, right? What we can't allow to derange is that the level of badness that one can claim proxies for having a point, and you can't also then pick and choose, like, who gets to say, who can feel what oppression, I don't personally believe that anti semitism can't be understood by somebody willing to have an intuition pump put in. I mean, having friends who are black, and like being in New York City with my friend, Stefan Alexander and watching a cab that we were trying to take together slow down for me. And when it saw Stefan's speed away, it told me that Yeah, absolutely. I've now been through that, as somebody who you know, is very deep into black American culture. I can tell you that I got beat up at our at our high school bred for being what I guess I have to say an N word lover, although I guarantee you they didn't use the genteel euphemism. Many of us have felt enough of this through our close associations, that I don't think I can grasp the entire experience. But this claim that nobody can possibly understand what I've been through. There's a Turing test for this and it's called screenwriting. How many screenplays Have you seen where you accepted? That a, you know, like, you know, Kung Fu Panda was written by Jews and China said, Well, finally, somebody understands Chinese culture perfectly. Why is it an American?

**Heather** 19:36

This is brilliant. There's a Turing test for this and it's called screenwriting. I haven't I haven't heard you say that before. I haven't heard that formulation before. I think that's, that's a perfect encapsulation. And it puts it puts the lie to my lived experience trumps everything you have to say to me,

**Eric Weinstein** 19:51

Well, you know, you just just, I guarantee you that I could probably write a story about you know, a young black kids First day in a swanky private school, and my guess is it would be pretty credible. Yep.

**Bret** 20:10

So there's obviously a ton to be done here. This day is obviously just days obviously special. I'm wondering, before we

**Eric Weinstein** 20:25

I wanted to read something to you guys, and I'm wondering whether I can do it on my phone and talk at the same time. Give me one second. Okay, as it came became from Caltech. And what it was was absolutely chilling to me. And if I can just locate it here, yes. It went out to I think it's kept for Caltech alum. It's new, it says, what we face is the all important question, what do we do, we are a community that acts presented with an intellectual challenge, we would heartily dive in and puzzle it out. This issue of racism against the black community in particular should be no different black lives do matter. Now here comes the great part. We must continue to press the sentiment until there is no one left who would dispute it or rationalize it. However well intentioned the alternate perspective may be in brief in action is not an option as we are teachers and our training and education drive us to tackle complex problems that most challenge society racism included. Can you imagine a teacher or a researcher saying we must continue to press the sentiment until there is no one left? Who would dispute it or rationalize

**Bret** 21:50

that's a threat?

**Eric Weinstein** 21:52

Well, it's a complete lack of understanding of what sciences? Can you imagine if no one were allowed to challenge whether stress causes ulcers, or the wisdom of the food pyramid? Or whether or not Newton's laws could be violated?

**Heather** 22:09

It's a misunderstanding, not just of science, but if education it is indoctrination, not education? And it is anti science?

**Bret** 22:16

Well, we were, I don't know whether

**Eric Weinstein** 22:21

to just one thing off that Heather. Maybe the idea is that if we constitute it like this, then science is anti blackness, because science is not sitting around and say, well, you have lived experience. So I guess nobody else can say anything except the other people have lived experience, their lived experience doesn't matter. I think one of the very weird things about this movement, bizarre is the complete deadening of empathy towards certain groups, including groups that have a history of higher oppression.

**Heather** 22:53

Yeah, that's, that's right. It's dehumanization of everyone who is being we're being told our other even when we belong to those groups ourselves. And somehow, the majority of people appear to be stepping in line.

**Bret** 23:10

Well, it's just this is happening horizontally. inside of there is a social dynamic that includes people with names and identities inside each of these organizations. That letter you read is the result of some discussion that happened, somebody won that discussion and a letter went out, and we will never see the internal workings. We have seen it at evergreen, we were fortunate to have them film it and to actually see the inner workings. But this is a this is a show of force. It is advertising to us that it has the capacity to take everything that one might look to for protection and to invert it. And frankly, I'm not convinced that it doesn't. And the question is, how do we bootstrap a response that functions. In other words, somehow all of these major scientific institutions are tweeting, hashtag shut down stem, they've just alerted us to the plan. Some of us have been hearing this for years. So we have to, we have to announce that there is an alternative. And what it is, is it's the real deal. Your friends are not the people who have inverted ally ship and turned it into a subordinate relationship. Your friends are the people who understand that ally ship is a peer relationship. Right? Your friends are not the one with the simple solutions. Your friends are the ones who are telling you something that some part of you knows, which is that a deep understanding of science liberates. It is the antidote to oppression. So I would love it if we could hashtag something in response to this hashtag that is taking over the scientific establishment.

**Eric Weinstein** 24:49

I think that To be blunt about it, Brett that puts us on a level playing field and we have the high ground. Of course, I think it's very important to state very clearly you You know, you and I come from a scientific family. And our grandfather was a chemist, the family you know about the Brookside plunge. In the 1920s, there was a swimming pool in Pasadena. And one of the things that radicalized our family was that they had a swimming pool, that was the water was changed once a week. And the day before the water was changed. They allowed blacks to swim in the pool, and they called it International Day, because that way the whites wouldn't be contaminated by blacks, right. And our family was so sickened by this stuff that we began a project which is, you know, 100 years old, which has to do with using, you know, science and decency together, to eliminate nonsense and, and bullshit. And the idea that this is now going to be inverted, that the very people who have always been progressive who've always been, and I really want to use the word ally ship, because it's now so tainted and contaminated as some subordinate relationship. where we are, is that we, some of us actually have open conversations, loving conversations with people who are all different hues come from all over the world, all different situations, we feel least guilty, I think the great danger here is a huge number of people who have no actual intimacy within other communities. And those people are so moved, because they suspect deeply in their own hearts, that they're really deeply big. And I think that direct, you know, if you, for example, or an inner interracial relationship with interracial children, you're probably not all that focused on the idea that you absolutely hate people, secretly who don't look like you. So whenever this stuff comes around, you're just sort of feel sick to your stomach. And I think what we're doing here with STEM, is stem is the great refuge, where anybody of marriage should be able to force their ideas down the throat of the bigot. And this was even true in the Soviet Union, which, you know, had a very competitive culture. I remember I think, David, cause Don showed up to the Moscow State university entrance exam with the Kip pop, and they hated Jews, they found any excuse they could to get rid of them. And the guy said, Sorry, I'm coming through, there's nothing you can do about it. I'm that good. And, you know, I really believe at some level that what we're talking about the black community, at least, the black community that I grew up, knowing pretty well, was the most merit oriented community because what had been used to drive them out was trickery, you know, fake, you know, poll taxes, or literacy tests and all this nonsense. And so they develop a fiercely meritocratic culture. And that's what allowed m&m, for example, to win in rap battle. And maybe people didn't want him to win. But the fact was, he was better. The same thing about open mic night in Harlow, where the jazz people said, Look, whites are welcome to take the stage, but you don't mind if we blow you off the stage. If you can't play, if you could play you could Hey, and I think that the key point is science is open mic night. Think of it as Caltech is mittens Playhouse, and you've got some of the best people in the world. And man, if you can blow your horn, or if you can play the keys, you always should have a place and to lose that to a completely different sector of the black community. Which knows not the huge strides that were made through merit, right? being better, to be blunt. It's just offensive to 100 years of black history.

**Bret** 29:00

I agree. We're gonna have to go but I would say can we combine forces hashtag science liberates and also hashtag science is open mic night science

**Heather** 29:14

is open mic night that's what I just wrote down. No, seriously. Scientists open mic night is the is the second thing you've said. Just in this little conversation. Eric, that strikes me as the the gem of truth that no one else is saying.

**Eric Weinstein** 29:27

Well, I really appreciate that. I think that the thing that we have to recognize, though, is that part of what made open mic at mittens. Such an incredible meritocratic tradition to blow Juilliard, let's say out of the water, because of the the hotness of the improvisation was the fairness of blacks who associated star chambers and closed rooms and all that kind of stuff, with prejudice and bigotry. And the idea that open mic night was judged fairly. If you could play you could play there was no escaping. It is a beautiful photograph, called, I think one day in Harlem, which ostensibly people remember, as all of the greatest jazz players in one photo. And they remember it as black because the word Harlem is there. When you look at that photo, how many white faces Latin faces Do you see? One thing that you have to just admire black America for maintaining is that they were so pissed off about the anti meritocratic methods that were used to keep them down, that they were the most ferocious garden guardians of pure meritocracy, the only rival I can think of, were certain sort of subcultures within the Soviet Union. And I think that what we are talking about is, in fact, anti black.

**Bret** 30:50

Of course, it's anti black.

**Eric Weinstein** 30:53

But it's anti black, because the black cultural trait of saying, if a white man can play the horn, he gets to sit in if he can handle these time signatures, and these weird keys and these strange modes he's in, he's one of us.

**Bret** 31:09

Yeah, I mean, this is obviously anti black. I tweeted that yesterday about shut down stem. And that's the problem is that we have been saying forever, that these syllogisms, these false beliefs that are at the head of this movement, empower the worst people in the community and placed them at the top because they're willing to take advantage of this nonsense. And that this is the opposite of liberation, it's going to be a very short, very ugly ride. And there's nothing there's nothing honorable about it. So

**Eric Weinstein** 31:45

hey, guys, I wanted to just say thanks for having me on. It's a terrible, weird, crazy, interesting day. I don't think people even understand what the idea of changing the rules about what science is, and what it means. They don't understand the repercussions. And because it's uncomfortable to say, hey, you have definite claims on oppression, for sure. And you don't have claims on what you're trying to do now is such a new message to so many people. The idea that you could say, hey, you don't get to do this, saying no, just the way you have to say no to your children, if you love them, if you don't love your children, just tell them Yes, all the time. You can screw them up as badly as you want. But if you want to tell your brother, Hey, no, you've told me no, Brett. And I've told you and so when we use the word Brother, do I have black brothers and sisters? Or do I not? If I do I then know. If I don't, then I don't know where we are. But I thought what we wanted was you wanted complete understanding and recognition for all of your accomplishments, which personally I've spent my entire life in awe of. And this feels like a complete betrayal of everything that I've studied, in the black community. Everything that I love about the black community, I just don't understand this. This team's the height of non blackness. Well,

**Bret** 33:06

it is it is that but as you point out about the defund the police movement, which is really a shut down the police movement, you don't have the right to put people in that danger. You may not have the right to put yourself in that danger. But you're sure as hell don't have the right to put anybody else in that danger. But in this case, what we're really talking about is I was I was trying to alert Richard Dawkins to what was going on, he was not aware of shut down stem. And I was trying to compel him to this and and the thing is, what I said to him is, this is the dawning of a new Dark Age. That's what this is. This is the uninvented front of the tool that brought us out of the darkness, and you don't have a right to do it. Right. You sure don't have a right to do it to anybody else. And you're, you're a fool to do it to yourself.

**Eric Weinstein** 33:49

Alright, everybody tune into the dark first podcast, one of the best podcasts out there, it's been an entire, that means such a privilege to be able to get in with you guys. And hopefully we'll figure out a way to check in with video. And this is a little bit rough. But this is a very funny day. And the number of people standing up is few a number which means that it is definitely a great time to see who is cowering. I just did a little bit of a poll, and I'm going to check in with that. I haven't checked in with that. I'm going to read it to you and then I'm gonna leave it says, given the following statements which statement better if it perfectly represents your view, this moment is genuine. This time is performative, this time is hopeful. This moment is stupid. And the answers are so far with almost with over 8000 votes. This moment is genuine 12%. This time is hopeful 12.2%. People are not coming out in the open and saying what they feel because they're afraid that they will be portrayed in ways that are completely anathema to them. And I have noticed out that we're going to be portrayed in those ways. What I do know is that our record is 100% rock solid over a very long period of time. And that we are in a position therefore, in part because of the investments of our great grandparents, grandparents and parents. Of course, our Father marched on Washington, you know, it talks about that to this day. This is a very long process and those with the credentials to be able to say this is not in keeping with our best traditions need to speak up. Thank you guys very much for having me on. It's been an absolute pleasure. Thank you.

**Bret** 35:33

We'll talk to you soon. Well,

**Heather** 35:36

I'm going to advocate we take a quick break. And just set up a new link and have this be a separate, separate video. Okay, we got a whole lot more questions come in, so I'm not gonna be able to go for an hour solid for here without a break. So let's just take five minutes, five minutes, five minutes, and we'll be right back. Zack will set about another link. Sorry, Zack. Anna, you didn't see that coming. And we'll be right back with the third live stream for today. Awesome. All right. All right.

**Bret** 36:03

See you soon.