Bret and Heather 28th DarkHorse Podcast Livestream\_ A Republ...

Sat, 10/9 12:40PM • 1:08:12

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

point, people, fact, monuments, gaps, find, populations, means, happened, police, question, mount rushmore, strategy, idea, contempt, understand, concept, complex, thought, put

**SPEAKERS**

Bret, Heather

**Bret** 00:07

In our schools, Hey folks, welcome to this very special Independence Day Dark Horse podcast live stream. I am with my favorite Patriot, Dr. Heather Hyang. We have a lot planned for today. If all goes well, with the dialogue a little later, we are going to bring out some British friends of ours and shoot muskets at them. So there's a lot in store. I guess.

**Heather** 00:33

I was going to say that I was in Patriot, but after that, not sure it's tough at first, but right here, she's she she may be both of our favorite patriot.

**Bret** 00:42

Yeah, that's, that's, that's good. She's a very patriotic dog. Alright, so we should be talking today about what America is and what it is becoming your game? Sure, let's do it. Alright, so I want to start this in an odd place, the country was obviously founded. Well, before Darwin had written the origin of species and a century or more before we understood cultural evolution well enough to see ourselves through an evolutionary lens. But I do think there's an important evolutionary take that we all need to have. America is a very special country based on what it was founded to do. But there's too much focus on the Constitution. The Constitution is an important document, it's essential to this unique purpose. But the purpose is never really stated. Human beings, like other organisms, are built to compete on the basis of their genetic relatedness. The United States is first and foremost a grouping of people who are not related closely to each other. And the Constitution is a document designed to stabilize that strategy, all of the content of the Constitution is built to take the conflict of interest and other things that would tend to make an attempt to group people who are not genetically related to each other. It is an attempt to make those structures stable. So that is to say that under normal circumstances, evolution has one group competing against another based on who is closely related to whom, in the United States, and attempt was made to do something else. And that was to take the idea of reciprocity, which is itself an evolutionary concept, and to make it structurally sound such that we could continue on indefinitely profiting not so much from collaborating with those who are closely related to us. But collaborating with those who have a shared interest. And it is a beautiful concept. It is a concept, so good that it has been highly contagious. And I think we are all noticing now that as we look out across the world, we are seeing our protests spread across oceans, even though some of the things that are being complained about aren't necessarily distributed across the oceans. In this way, there's something almost incoherent about the idea of nations, because across the west, so much that resides in our national character has actually caught on because other parts of the world have discovered just how good it is to put genetic relatedness aside, and to collaborate based on other things. So my concern about the present is that what we are facing is a revolt against the very core concept at the heart of what this nation is, and that the results of that revolt are going to predictably bump us back into a prior state of being one in which people look at other people with suspicion based on how distantly related they may be. And that seems to me to be a disaster, and one that we should be considering, especially on Independence Day.

**Heather** 03:49

Beautiful. So just to add a tiny bit of flesh to the concept of reciprocity, which you invoked, I would say that the, you know, the golden rule, as outlined in the New Testament, presumably we imagine from Jesus first advocates for us to extend our trust, and, and goodness that works beyond that of kin, even to strangers, right. And that is of course, a kind of direct reciprocity, to use the language of evolutionary biology. But then we have an annual people were doing this long before it was named by evolutionary biologists in the 70s and 80s. But then we have a form of indirect reciprocity, in which it is exactly as you say, more distributed. And this is indeed you know, what was named in the I can't remember exactly when 6070s 80s the concept of indirect reciprocity was exactly what some of the, at least some of and maybe all of the founding fathers of this country, were basing their, their documents on the idea that we could actually come together without without Have a shared history in the past, but with a shared fate going forward.

**Bret** 05:04

You know, it's funny, I was wondering whether or not to point out this connection myself, I'm glad you did. You're right, there is something in the founding character of the country that I think we have to admit, is actually derived from the Christian roots of the founders. Now, of course, those Christian roots were themselves derived from Jewish roots. And the beautiful thing about them is that once you say, to your population, hey, let's put genetic relatedness aside, and let's collaborate based on something else. It's capable of spreading outside that population to an arbitrarily large group, potentially, to the whole world.

**Heather** 05:41

And it also allows for the borrowing of ideas outside of the group to which you say you belong, or that you actually belong.

**Bret** 05:49

100%. So in that, if we were to take this to economic terms, what we would say is that the generation of wealth that is facilitated by putting genetic relatedness aside is massive and more than compensates you for what you lose by giving up on viewing the world through this lens. So in some sense, Jesus, the radical democrat bias, I like to think of him was advocating for this sidelining of genes, there's a strong argument to be made, that you see this tendency evolve in many places. In fact, there's a rabbi Rabbi Hillel version is about the same time as Jesus. Obviously, Buddhists have taken this to an extreme. So we see this concept emerging all over the place. And you would expect that because it's so profitable to put genetic relatedness aside, you what you get is, is fantastic and incredibly profitable, far beyond economic profitability. Yes, I mean, profitable in human flourishing and human flourishing manner. And so it's not just the golden rule, I think this is also contained in the story of the Good Samaritan. And the basic idea is, hey, in all of these cases, it's not like, the relatedness doesn't exist. I mean, the tribes are very directly invoked in the story of the Good Samaritan. But the point is, that is not a bar to cooperation. So there is this concept dragged into our documents, and then there is what we would now call game theory in those documents wouldn't have been called that then you've got evolution and game theory that are built in because there was a keen awareness amongst these very sophisticated thinkers of their day, that it wasn't enough just simply to say, Hey, this is a good idea, right? You have to build something that stabilizes it. So you know, if we were to translate that into scientific language, I would say they were looking for an evolutionarily stable strategy, though they wouldn't have known to think of it in those terms. And they didn't find one, they found something that was quite durable. But we are now watching what takes it apart. And well, I

**Heather** 07:53

mean, they were explicitly looking for something that avoided tyranny, right, that that could stop tyranny in its tracks could see it soon, early enough that it would stop it. But even so, Jefferson says, that revolution will be necessary every now and again, he ever he does not think that they have come upon a strategy so stable not to use his words again. But he does not think that they've come upon an evolutionary stable strategy that is infinite into the future. He hopes that it will, it will go into the future for long enough that that there will be more insight by the time changes are necessary.

**Bret** 08:30

So are you thinking of the tree of liberty must periodically be refreshed with the blood of patriots and tyrants?

**Heather** 08:38

I do not remember I can I can try to find it. I can try to find the quote I'm thinking of,

**Bret** 08:42

because I'm not sure if that if that. Except my trackpad isn't working. I'm not sure if that quote is intended to suggest revolution or not. But it is certainly a warning that the system is not understood to be perfectly stable in its own right, and that it will, it will necessarily require vigilance and risk taking by people in the future in order to protect it. And likewise, Benjamin Franklin's statement Republic, if you can keep it. And I've begun to think of this now, as a republic, if you can save it. At this point, I think we're headed towards a different fate, and that those of us who get what we stand to lose, should think of it in these terms that effectively. This is the moment that Franklin was warning us about. And the question is, do we have what it takes to save this beautiful experiment? But it does mean that we should be having a conversation about what happens if we don't, because the reason that we must save it is contained in what happens if we don't save it, and I don't think there has been nearly enough public discussion of that that will reach the right people. You have something you want to

**Heather** 09:53

try. The computer isn't really working for me. I'm unable to find what I was looking for. I find from collected papers, but I can't figure out where I was quoting from. Even in democracy or in a democracy, rebellion need happened with some regularity. I'm paraphrasing him here and a piece that I published on college presidents a couple of years ago. But my citation is just from his collected papers, so I'm not sure where it is.

**Bret** 10:15

All right, well, let's put it aside the the quote about the tree of liberty, I think we'll we'll do for the moment, it's not exactly sure. It's not exactly clear what is being referred to, except that one should not imagine that this thing once set on autopilot is going to continue on indefinitely without, without bravery and patriotism to defend it.

**Heather** 10:35

And And to be clear, and evolutionarily stable strategy isn't one that is inherently static, right? This this is easily misunderstood. stability is easily misunderstood for stasis, and unchanging us. But a strategy itself can respond to different inputs in different but predictable ways. Yeah,

**Bret** 10:53

in fact, I would argue, and this is a great lesson from parenting as well as nation building is a static strategy is certain to fail, ultimately, because there will be cracks in it defects, and those things will be exploited by anything that has time to figure out how to do it. So you need a strategy that's dynamic enough to become anti fragile, right, another term that the founders didn't know, that was at the heart of what they were attempting to do. Exactly. So I had thought that maybe we would talk a little bit about what it is like to be an American at this moment, how it compares to what it has been like in the past, and where we might be headed. So I want to start by talking about what it is like to collaborate in a cosmopolitan society in which you are not closely related to most of the people that you are interacting with. And my sense is that there are many, many gaps. If you take any two people, there's a question of how many things unite them, and how many things separate them. And what I'm going to argue is that we need a kind of maybe a computer science approach to this in order to understand how we socially feel that essentially, if you took all of the characteristics that might unite you or might separate you, each one is a bit that can be flipped in the direction of affinity, where it can be flipped in the direction of a gap. And that when you encounter somebody, you're dealing primarily with all of the gaps. That's the obstacle to collaboration. And the question is, how many of those gaps are jumpable? Now, you had a quote that was relevant to this did you want to read that

**Heather** 12:43

it's actually an extended passage it's it's a few pages from Sebastian, youngers book tribe on homecoming and belonging. And I don't know if it should be read before or after the story that you want to tell?

**Bret** 12:54

Well, either way, once you start with it, and we'll come back, okay.

**Heather** 12:59

So this is, this is, I think his latest book, if I remember correctly, and it is quite excellent. It was recommended to me about a year ago by a friend of ours actually the same man who made the knife behind you. And I've since read and and come to know, some, some of his other work and the man himself. Today's veterans often come home to find that although they're willing to die for their country, they're not sure how to live for it. It's hard to know how to live for a country that regularly tears itself apart along every possible ethnic and demographic boundary. The income gap between rich and poor continues to widen. Many people, people live in racially segregated communities. The elderly are mostly sequestered from public life. And rampage, shootings happen so regularly that they only remain in the news cycle for a day or two. To make matters worse, politicians occasionally accused rivals have deliberately tried to harm their own country, a charge so destructive to group unity that most past societies would probably have just punished it as a form of treason. It's complete madness. And the veterans know this. In combat soldiers all but ignore differences of race, religion and politics within their platoon. It's no wonder many of them get so depressed when they come home. I know what coming back to America from a warzone is like because I've done it so many times younger rights. First, there was a kind of shock at the level of comfort and affluence that we enjoy, but that is followed by the dismal realization that we live in a society that is basically at war with itself. People speak with incredible contempt about dependent on their views, the rich, the poor, the educated, the foreign born, the President or the entire US government. It's a level of contempt that's usually reserved for enemies in wartime, except that now it is applied to our fellow citizens. Unlike criticism, contempt is particularly toxic because it assumes a moral superiority in the speaker. contempt is often directed at people who have been excluded from a group or declared unworthy of its benefits. contempt is often used by governments to provide rhetorical cover for torture or abuse. contempt is one For behaviors that statistically can predict divorce and married couples. People who speak with contempt for one another will probably not remain united for long. The most alarming rhetoric comes out of the dispute between liberals and conservatives. And it's a dangerous waste of time because they're both right. The perennial conservative concern about high taxes supporting a non working underclass is entirely legitimate roots in our evolutionary past and shouldn't be dismissed out of hand. Early hominids lived a precarious existence where freeloaders were a direct threat to survival. And so they developed an exceedingly acute sense of whether they were being taken advantage of by members of their own group. But by the same token, one of the hallmarks of early human society was the emergence of a culture of compassion that cared for the ill, the elderly, the wounded, and the unlucky. In today's terms, that is a common liberal concern that also has to be taken into account. Those two driving forces have coexisted for hundreds of 1000s of years and human society, and have been duly codified in this country as a two party political system. The eternal argument over so called entitlement programs and more broadly over liberal and conservative thought will never be resolved because each side represents an ancient an absolutely essential component of our evolutionary past. So how do you unify a secure wealthy country that is sunken to a zero sum political game with itself? How do you make veterans feel that they are returning to a cohesive society that was worth fighting for in the first place? I put that question to Rachel Yehuda of Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. Yehuda has seen up close the effect of such anti social divisions on traumatized vets. If you want to make a society work, she writes, she said to me, then you don't keep underscoring the places where you're different. You underscore your shared humanity. I'm appalled by how much people focus on differences. Why are you focusing on how different you are from one another and not on the things that unite us? The United States is so powerful that the only country capable of destroying her might be the United States herself, which means that the ultimate terrorist strategy would be to just leave the country alone. That way, America's ugliest partisan tendencies could emerge unimpeded by the unifying effects of war. The ultimate betrayal of tribe isn't acting competitively, that should be encouraged, but predicating your power on the excommunication of others from the group? That is exactly what politicians of both parties try to do when they spew venomous rhetoric about their rivals. That is exactly what media figures do when they go beyond criticism of their fellow citizens and openly revile them. reviling people you share a combat outpost with is an incredibly stupid thing to do. And public figures who imagine their nation isn't potentially one huge combat outposts are deluding themselves.

**Bret** 17:28

Unbelievably brilliant, and so many of them so many lines in there that could take an hour's worth of Converse sation to unpack completely. Now. Right before we went on, I noticed that Matt Taibbi posted something to his website. Now it is a four pay post. And I think one needs to think very carefully about the fact that journalistic outfits are falling to this new ideology and the journalists who intend to say important things are having to find ways to feed themselves outside those traditional modes. So I would encourage you all Matt Taibbi has been absolutely on fire of late and I would recommend that you all sign up for his website, but I want to read you the first paragraph of what he just released just

**Heather** 18:12

before you do that, I believe I believe he's on substack which is an excellent way for for writers in particular two to get paid for their output. So he's I think you can find Matt Taibbi on substack

**Bret** 18:24

Yep, he is on substack that's what I'm looking at. Alright, so Matt Taibbi writes it's the fourth of July and revolution is in the air. Only in America, it would look like this. An elite sponsored Maoist revolt couched as a black liberation movement whose canonical texts or a corporate consultants white guilt self help manual and the New York Times series rewriting history to explain an election they called wrong. Yes.

**Heather** 18:49

Oh my god, it's it's terrifying. It's awful. And it's hilarious because he's just he's just nailed it. He's

**Bret** 18:56

nailed it. And you know, you have to be able to laugh at it, you know, as people laugh on a battlefield and all sorts of other things, because that's human nature. But we are faced with something absolutely incredible. And it is the uninvented one of one of the greatest concepts ever devised, which is not to say that America ever functioned according to its objective, we moved toward it, we fought one terrible war over race already, we may be headed toward a second. But what is not well understood by I think almost anyone who is doing this is one, what happens when you take a flawed, but highly functional society like ours, and you break it, right, there is a sense and you will hear people say again and again, that we're going to have to destroy this thing in order to build something better. And what they don't understand is what a power vacuum does. If they had gardened, if they had tilled up some soil, and they had decided that that was the key to wiping the slate clean, and planting their crops, they would discover that they had just liberated all sorts of weeds that they weren't counting Hang on, and that it's going to take an incredible amount of work to fend them off. So we have a worst problem. And I would, I would analogize it the following way. I want you to think about nuclear reactors. And in particular, I want you to think about Chernobyl. nuclear reactor is not in and of itself a complex system. It's a complicated system. But a nuclear reactor does not run itself. It is embedded in a complex system of humans, the designers who set the thing in motion, the people who run it, the people who regulate it. And you could walk into the control room of a nuclear reactor, and there are a lot of buttons you could flip, that would not have a catastrophic effect, but you don't know which ones are which. And the Chernobyl story actually tells us something important. For those of you who don't remember, and I would actually recommend you check out the HBO miniseries on what happened to turn out well, what happened at Chernobyl was a safety test. It was a test designed to make us more secure, and they were going to run through some systems checks. And it happened, that some of those systems check set things in motion that caused the reactor to quickly overheat and people's tendency to delude themselves about what they were seeing prevented them from shutting it down and reversing course, quickly enough, and the rest is history. And the point is, what we are seeing in America today is the flipping of switches in something even more complex than a nuclear reactor. And the proposals for switches to flip next are quite frightening. Now I don't know what to make of the story of the McCloskey is this couple that came out in front of their home with guns and were filmed and photographed as a as a protest movement moved through their private Street. It's a complex story and you will see it portrayed in diametrically opposed ways depending upon which source you go to either it was white people brandishing weapons of peaceful protesters, because they were, you know, looking at the boogeyman in front of them, or it was people who were flagrantly frightening them by marching across private property and threatening to invade their homes. It's very difficult to figure out exactly what happened what what appears to be going on now is that having come to public consciousness, this couple is now a flashpoint for a war that some people seem to want to start. And if I'm to understand the story correctly, the protesters who were the ones to trigger this by marching through the McCloskey street are apparently going to come back. And that is not in and of itself. So surprising. But what I understand is that they have asked the police for help, so that presumably they don't need to brandish weapons of their own they the homeowners, they the homeowners have asked the police for help. And apparently the police say they can't help them. They have apparently also contacted they the homeowner, the homeowners have also contacted private security and nobody will take the job. I think that's actually not surprising. But

**Heather** 23:14

here's it's not the job of security of private security firms to take any job that comes to them. Well,

**Bret** 23:19

it certainly shouldn't come down to it. Every single American has the right to have their their rights protected by the police. And you know, as, as Sam Harris points out in not his most recent podcast, but I think the one right before the one in which he addresses the statistics surrounding police violence and race. He says that the monopoly on violence is one of the greatest inventions that humans have ever come up with. And I have to agree with him on this. So that is a reference to I believe it's max Weber's suggestion that government is a monopoly on violence that has its inherent nature, which does not mean that government is inherently violent. What it means is that a carefully wielded threat of violence, if you do not abide by the rules, is what keeps people in line. And if the rules are very good, then the threat to punish those who step outside of them. Ultimately, if you step outside of the rules, somebody with a weapon comes and they take you away and you go to a court and you face due process in this country,

**Heather** 24:20

the possibility of violence, implicit or explicit is what in fact, keeps the peace,

**Bret** 24:25

right. And you know, if you have, let's say, flagrantly violated the rules in some very serious way, let's say that you have assaulted somebody without cause than somebody with a weapon, they collect you, you face due process and you out, you end up in a prison. Now that prison is a kind of violence, right? those bars that keep you in are effectively engaged in violence, you can throw yourself after them in order to engage in your freedom to go somewhere and it doesn't let you it's the equivalent of violence. But in any case, the point is, I find something very chilling about the McCloskey story. I have no idea who these people are what their But what I do know is that you and I face something like this, and I do know us, okay, but we faced with you and i, you and i hurt

**Heather** 25:08

for those who can't see that you just gestured to me, you're talking not to the entire audience now. But right, we faced something very much like this,

**Bret** 25:14

you and I, at evergreen faced something like this, where a mob that was possessed of crazy ideas about what we were about, began to engage in flagrant violations of the rules and threats of violence, which ultimately became real violence. And our boss, the president of the college happened also to be the boss of the police. Because the police were a campus police force. They were real police, not a security force, they were a police force. But he was in a position to tell them stay out of this, which meant that the protection that we normally have from the police was pulled out, and we were left on our own with a mob that was clearly hell bent on re educating us. And as I've said before, I don't think they know what they would have done if they had caught up to us. And we had refused to go along with their description of the world, which we would have. So a very dangerous situation, the police refusing to be involved. This is something most people have never faced. And the fact that we are now seeing that little experiment and anarchy that happened at evergreen being brought into the wider world where people who have run afoul of this protest movement, who can be portrayed as zealots are going to be left without police protection. This is the flipping of one of the switches in the reactor on which we are all dependent. You flip the switch that says mean what is supposed to happen if the police refuse to help you and no security force will come to your aid when you try to hire them. What recourse do you have? Right? One would think that the recourse would involve going to a court and saying I have the right to police protection, the police are not protecting me. And you must insist that they do it by some sort of court order. But we know also that because this revolution is happening in a horizontal fashion, that the courts are not immune to it. So in some sense, that's which is read for a reason. We know that pulling the police out and making it so that people cannot get a redress of grievances in a court is the thing that will cause this nation to come toppling down, right? You cannot have some populations who have access to a court and other populations who don't. Now that is not to say that access to courts has been even in our history, it has never gotten to even but if you want to remove it from some populations, and you want to inscribe that into the core modality that we have with each other, there is no way that this experiment can persist. Right? It is not an evolutionarily stable strategy, which means we're headed to a power vacuum.

**Heather** 27:53

Yeah. And this this moment is not as it would have us believe about redress of grievances. It is about rather the thing that you and I both been saying from the beginning, about flipping the tables, turning the tables of oppression, correctly identifying that there has not been equal access to things like courts, and justice from police in our nation's history does not validate the conclusion that we shall change who has unequal access going forward. And that that will make things right, it does not.

**Bret** 28:25

Yep. And I would say that if one is going to evaluate whether or not the protest mode in the street is about redress of grievances, then you need to think about things. I don't know if the McCloskey is are are descended from pilgrims. But that doesn't sound like a pilgrim name. So the question is, in some sense, if these people are having their right to, to be protected by the police eliminated on the basis that they somehow are descended, or they are as guilty of slavery as those who held slaves themselves slaves themselves or something, then there's a question about well, are we going to sort out whose guild goes to what depth that's preposterous it can't happen. And so you know, is the solutions are simply incoherent.

**Heather** 29:16

Well, let me let me do a strange thing. Let me steal man, perhaps the most outrageous point that Robyn D'Angelo makes in her book one that we are all being being exposed to too much. And this is that all white people are racist. We've all heard this now. And I don't know for sure that it originates with her, but but her book is currently the one that is spreading most widely. And you know, we've talked about it before on on the show. So the point is absurd on its face, for sure. all white people are racist, really. But the trick here is that she has redefined what racist means. And so that's legitimate. And I think we've mentioned before that Merriam Webster's is the dictionary is now falling in line with this redefinition of racism. And that's a kind of doublespeak. That's the second form of new language that Orwell writes about not Newspeak, but doublespeak turning, turning extent terms into something that means something so different, that when people use them, no one is quite sure which meaning they intend to be using. So if we sidestep sidestep that linguistic trap, though that she's laid for us, and say, Well, certainly I know I'm not racist, what the hell is she talking about? What what she means. And I really don't know that she has anything good faith about her at all. But what she and the movement means when they are talking truth is that it's true that people with white skin do continue to benefit from the privileges, especially historic, but also still contemporary, that having white skin Converse. That's just that has been true. And that's true, even though class and geography are often better predictors of outcomes than skin color. So we can all imagine, say, a poor white girl in Alabama, in rural Alabama, versus a middle class black girl in Chicago, and ask, you know, who is more likely to succeed in this world, and it's going to be the the black child in this case, even though it is also true that when those two people are making decisions about where to drive at what time of night, and what stories to go into, and what their reaction is, if they're driving, and they see police is going to be different by race. So all of those things can be true. And you know, it's it's insane, objectionable, reprehensible, all of this, to call that thing racism. That is that is that is actually deplorable, right? Yeah, I'd like to take that word back to, but it it does obscure, bizarrely, right? it obscures this kernel of truth at that the bottom, and now you have people pushing back so hard against this insane nonsense, that they are also pushing back against the thing that is true. And that's that is going to be where the divide actually sticks. I think, Oh,

**Bret** 32:09

it's going well, you know, I put out a video, I can't remember exactly when, but it's called Speak of the devil. And the idea was that they are going to call forth exactly the racist beast that they are claiming dominates the landscape right now, by forcing white people by backing them into the wall together, you're going to force them to see things in racial terms. And it's not a surprise, what's coming. It's perfectly predictable. And it's extremely dangerous. Yeah. So anyway, good job. Steele Manning. Obviously, the problem with the analysis is that we are forced to the last step. It's not that things are racially well distributed. It's not that they have ever gotten to zero, right? We never neutralize the effects of slavery, and Jim Crow. And so we don't even know what the experiment would do. I have a pretty good guess. But we don't know what the experiment would do. If you ever got everybody to the starting line at the same time, and I think it would be quite equal. But what we are told is that the very fact of disadvantage, that shows up in outcomes is evidence of racism, which is a cognitive process occurring inside of the minds of white people. We are also told, not only is it there and in need of immediate challenge, but it is incurable. Yeah, those two things don't go together. Yeah, there's

**Heather** 33:33

I mean, there's there's a bait and switch constantly. And, you know, we can look at this this book, this insane white fragility book, and we can, it's harder to pinpoint the claims of activists because they'll always say, I didn't mean it, then it was, you know, it's not what it seems. But the talking about the population level, the systemic, the actual systemic truth of of systems that have benefited people with white skin, conflating that with individual level racism is something that the movement claims to understand the distinction between, but it's very, very happy to do a constant bait and switch between. And of course, this this final point that you make the, the idea that not only are you born racist, but if you claim you're not, you're proven that you're racist, and if you come you are, well, then you're obviously racist. It's, it's, I think, the central rhetorical trap of a rhetorical Kafka trap of the entire book and the entire movement that any defense of yourself is taken as evidence that you are in fact guilty of the thing of which you are accused.

**Bret** 34:33

Now, there's no escape, and therefore, what is the conclusion of that? The conclusion is you have to do what we say. Anybody who understood that you are guilty of racism inherently because of the color of your skin. And who doesn't like that, because who likes racism? Anybody who agrees with those things? The next question is okay, well, then you're an ally, aren't you? Oh, yeah, I guess I'm an ally. Oh, well, then if you're an ally, what does that mean? It means you have to do what we say which means you have to take the risk on our behalf, which means you have to go on and punish other people. And so it is a contagious ideology.

**Heather** 35:04

Oh, it's and it's it's effective. It's adaptive. It's horrifying. But it's it's effective. So I wonder maybe you have someplace else you want to go first. But, you know, how do we bring the vast majority of us back to a place where we feel confident enough to speak up against this deeply divisive, deeply unpatriotic movement that has a few things at its core that it is correctly identifying, but that is overall so dangerous to, to our humanity, and to the country as well, that it really needs to be stopped?

**Bret** 35:38

Well, I want to do two things. And that is the second of them talking about exactly what the prescription might be because you and I have been challenged with the question, well, what what should we do if this comes for us? And it's been a very difficult question to answer, but it has caused us to put a lot of thought into what the answer might be, and well worth going there. So we will do that. But I want to tell a little story first, in reference to the point I made earlier about gaps between people based on differences demographic, and otherwise, I was out with my kids. Two nights ago, we hopped on these crazy things called electric unicycles, which it's a terrible name, but it's a very fun little device. And we went zipping up to a local park to see the sunset, it's a beautiful park on a peak. And people gathered there who noticed that the sun is shining and want to go see the sunset. So we went up there and we sat for a few minutes. And as we were getting up to leave, we hopped on our electric unicycles. And a black family came up the stairs into the park. And something that very frequently happens when you ride one of these crazy devices happen, which is they started to talk about what they were seeing. Because if you haven't seen one of these things before, it kind of challenges the mind and you think how does that work? And how do they stay on them and all of these things. So they had questions, and they were clearly talking about these,

**Heather** 36:55

but they had questions among themselves, you weren't close enough that they were talking to you couldn't hear

**Bret** 36:59

him, but we could watch them pointing and talking to their children. And all of this. Now, under normal circumstances, I love nothing more than to go talk to people who are curious about these devices and to satisfy their curiosity. And anyway, it results in camaraderie, which I like. And under normal circumstances, I would have done it. And in 2020, I am finding that even though I think I have excellent skills for crossing virtually any gap, and I've never had a problem crossing a racial gap, I couldn't figure out how to do because there is so much new garbage circulating about what's going on in somebody's head. Now these people were obviously not many gaps away from me, right? These were people who live in my city. These were people who looked at the sun setting and had the same thought I did about what to do to go to this park is people who brought their kids with them as I had, there's all sorts of reasons that I should have been easily able to cross this gap and say, Hey, I noticed you noticing these things, and we could have started the conversation and it would have been lovely. But in 2020, we are now losing the ability to do that the amount of suspicion that we have about other people based on these simple demographic markers is now becoming so onerous that we are losing track of who we are as Americans. And it is an unmitigated disaster in my opinion, the fact is, we knew we never accomplished it, we were headed there. And we knew where we were going, you know that the recipe was delivered to us by a founding father. And it's the founding father who showed up late it was Martin Luther King, Jr. and he gave us the recipe, which was that at some point in the future, we would achieve the ability to judge people based on the content of their character rather than the color of their skin. And I don't know that we will ever get a more eloquent formulation of the objective. He didn't think we were there, he was describing a dream that he felt would occur in the future if we, if we held true to our values. And I, I believe he was right. And I don't know how it is that we have now taken that concept and thrown it out. It's it's absurd. So in any case, I hope that we can think about the puzzle and we can say, look, we should be able to talk to each other even when there are many gaps, right? Even when there are many gaps. You can learn to jump them but not when a gap is a chasm, right? Nobody can shout across a chasm. It's not possible. So

**Heather** 39:39

this gap has been made increasingly difficult to bridge by others who seek division while claiming to seek unity. And I think this is this is exactly one of the things that you and I have enjoyed so much about traveling outside of our usual mill you You know, far outside of it, especially, you know, not in, in the Western world, but in Madagascar and in Latin America and various places. And, you know, meeting people there who are also middle class and with whom we therefore share a ton, actually, probably more than we do, say a homeless person on the streets in America. But once the class factories also changed, and and your your Look, you're interacting with people who have grown up in a different country with different expectations about what their lives would be indifferent promises made to them, by their families, and by their governments about how safe and secure they would they would be. And you see that actually, you can talk with almost anyone, you can talk and connect with almost anyone, no matter what the gaps are. And yet here we are, within our own country within our own neighborhoods, finding ourselves walking around with more suspicion than most of us ever had before. It is, it is reprehensible. But this is being done to us.

**Bret** 41:08

Yep, it's being done to us. And I want to make two more points before we get to solution making. There's been a lot of stuff about the tearing down of monuments and I made an ironic statement on Twitter yesterday and got piled on because people took it literally as if I was ready to go tear down monument. Do you have an emoji? I did, but it was a lightbulb emoji and I think people were thinking that I thought

**Heather** 41:32

to put it in your bio, if there's an emoji.

**Bret** 41:34

Oh, it's there. Oh, really? Yeah, no, it's there. It's in my bio. But anyway, I had suggested that maybe we could all team up on tearing down the monuments and leave each other standing which I thought was very clever because the whole idea of leaving each other standing is really the core of the thing and as much as I don't want to hand over the monuments, you know, if it kept Western civilization intact, I'd be up for discussion, right? But

**Heather** 41:57

But in any case, you know, that's not how any of this work I do.

**Bret** 42:00

No, that's not how any of this works, but I thought it was hilariously funny. Other people thought I was serious. And anyway, I want to talk about monuments a little bit. There are some monuments that are troubling, right some of the Confederate monuments are troubling. Maybe they all are. I also find Christopher Columbus stuff. troubling. And the reason I find Christopher Columbus stuff troubling is to Christopher Columbus is not a real thing. Okay, there was a guy his name was crystal ball Cologne, and we can talk about what he did and didn't do he sure as hell didn't discover a pair of continents with 50 to 100 million people living on them. That's not possible. Maybe I didn't know. I mean, that's like that's like me discovering light bulbs or something. But in any case, crystal ball cologne discovered. crystal ball, cologne discovered the Americas on behalf of Europeans. And that is, of course, a good thing, I guess if you're European, and it's a disaster if you happen to be descended from one of the 50 to 100 million people who were living here already. So the point is, look, those people are Americans too, or at least many of them are. They are entitled for us not to do national mythmaking around a figure that was a complete disaster. Right? national mythmaking has to include all of us history is complex, but national mythmaking really should be about all of us discovered America doesn't make any sense. So I'm not a fan of Christopher Columbus or mythologizing about him. But I was looking at some of this stuff about Mount Rushmore. And I was ready to have my same eye rolling reaction. Like I'm pissed off that they're pulling down statues of George Washington. Yes, I know that he held slaves. I know that he was a flawed person. I also know that he was a decent person, and that the fact that he held slaves doesn't say otherwise. Which is tragic. It should. But it doesn't. Now what I learned in studying about George Washington, and I don't put this up against the slaveholding. But I do say this was a complex, complicated character. He actually defended Jews in the colonies. I didn't even know there were Jews in the colonies. Right? So he was a defender of Jews in the colonies. That's an unusual fact about the man. He was also unusually decent. When it came to power. George Washington could have been King if he wanted to people were in the mindset that they needed a king and they would have been they would have made him king gladly, and he refused it multiple times. So this was a complex man, and we have to deal with them in his full complexity. But you know what? They're all complex. Martin Luther King, Jr. There's strong evidence of plagiarism. Right? He was also, I don't want to use the word philanderer. But he cheated on his wife, not an uncomplicated character. But obviously, if we're going to limit the conversation only to people who have nothing weird in their history, it's going to be a very quiet conversation, right? Your heroes by very by the very different Have the term are going to be people who traveled unusual paths. And those unusual paths are not going to be rosy all the way. So we have to tolerate the fact that history is a complex narrative. And we have to deal with the complexity. So

**Heather** 45:15

the dehumanization works both ways, I think. And by both ways, maybe it won't be clear when I mean, just yet, we see people dehumanizing their enemies, and imagine that they are just pure evil, and that if they have a view that seems out of step with what is currently acceptable, then they must also be, you know, Nazis, basically, right. But there's also a dehumanization, that happens in the other like valence in which, you know, maybe the most famous version of this that like the archetypal version of this is the noble Savage, right? We have this idea that whoever existed in advance of the colonial forces coming in, for instance, was living a true and virtuous life on the land in which they would never have used up all the resources because somehow the tragedy of the commons and all of game theory and the competitive part of evolution and the fact that tribes were meeting tribes, populations were coming up against populations and resources were scarce. And somehow none of that applied. We haven't we, there's this dehumanization, that imagines that some people lived a perfect utopia. And one also that imagines that some people are pure evil. And really, the first one is just not possible. Right? The as much as you know, we've talked about in a number of places, maybe mostly in the book that is still not out about the Mayan enlightenment, right, the just the extraordinary number of things that the Maya, long before the actual the European enlightenment happened in, in Europe, discovered, they had astronomers, they had scribes, they had the concept of zero, they had agriculture, they had, obviously, architecture, they had the written word, and they had libraries full of books. And their understanding of their universe was extraordinary and rich and deep and varied. And also throughout the Americas, there was slavery. This is before crystal ball Cologne, Christopher Columbus ever showed up, there was slavery, and there was war, and there was murder, and there was rape, and there was all of these things. Because every time you get humans together, this these things will end up happening. And you know, maybe maybe we are at a moment. Now finally, where we are seriously producing slavery, and genocide. But they're not over. They're not over rape. They're not right. And imagining that there was any time in the past, any population that was stable, that had the that didn't have, at least many of these things is delusional.

**Bret** 47:49

It is delusional. Now, I do think this is a deep conversation for another time, I do think there was something different about what was going on in the Americas than in the old world at the point that Kris kobach alone showed up. And I think it was different because the Americas had not yet become full. In other words, people become more brutal as the zero sum dynamic set in. And so I do think that there is ironically something about the native populations that in the same way that our prosperous nation has been capable of doing very good things because it was prosperous, because we weren't resource stressed. I do think that there was something to be gleaned from what the native populations were up to, and that even the slavery when you look at it, it looks less brutal, a lot less brutal. And so anyway, that's a conversation for another time.

**Heather** 48:37

Well, it's I mean, just to tag it, it's a zero sum versus nonzero sum and what kind of frontier or are they engaging in question?

**Bret** 48:43

Exactly, exactly. But actually, this brings us to this marvelous example. So I was looking at this series of articles about monuments being torn down and I was looking at, you know, the New York Times waded into the thing with Mount Rushmore, and I was just not feeling good about where we were headed. And I ran into an article in which a Lakota chief was saying that we need to tear down Mount Rushmore, and that he would do it with his own hands. Right. And I was not in a mood to entertain this argument. But I read the article and I was disturbed because although I do not for a second think that we should tear down Mount Rushmore. I was quite compelled by his argument. His argument was very robust. And so I don't think it really is an argument for tearing down Mount Rushmore. But I think the point is actually, there is a reckoning to be had over Mount Rushmore, right? If ever there was a place where there was a need for a an understanding that the land was stolen and then repurposed for a patriotic demonstration that negates a particular populations history, and that in fact, a current demonstration of American patriotism that includes fireworks. is actually putting the land in jeopardy, right? The land being flammable and these fireworks being not in keeping with good stewardship, I was compelled with actually this, this was a very strong argument. And that in fact, what I would like to see is us having that. In other words, we do need to be involved in a negotiation over the white the correct way to go forward from the history of this monument. Now, there was also you know, the New York Times was all about telling us that the sculptor was a white supremacist, which I don't know if he was a white supremacist, but he clearly had ties to white supremacists. He was also an anti Semite. And I thought, you know what, okay, I have standing in this conversation, he was an anti Semite, that does not for one second, make me want to tear down this monument. Right. So you know, we're in a complex landscape. But it is one in which there is another way that involves honestly reckoning with the past and figuring out how to bring everybody in on that reckoning. And the final thing I will say is that our good friend Dave, the sword maker, who made the knife behind us, pointed me towards an article in which the, there is a statue in Alaska, of Captain Cook. And the question came up, of course, as it would in this era, what to do about the legacy of Captain Cook, and his compromised moral standing. And the solution was to Hi, unfortunately, I don't have the article here. But basically, the village will ask its villages, not tribes, the village that is most prominently affected by the legacy of Captain Cook. That is to say that people who suffered the most, as a result of Captain Cook, were brought into a discussion about what to do with the monument, which seems to me exactly the right thing. It's the honorable thing. And it's the thing that will allow us to move forward as Americans together, rather than some of us tearing down monuments that mean things to other people, which is only going to result in US becoming foreigners to each other and allowing the world to collapse.

**Heather** 52:04

That seems an interesting approach. I hadn't hadn't heard it, it obviously wouldn't work in most cases, certainly in the lower 48. In general, it's much less clear what you know, who, who the most affected are by particular historical figures in Alaska with Captain Cook, it's an easier thing to pinpoint, I'm still, I'm still a little bit concerned about the sort of, you know, populist solution making there. But in that case, I see a place for it at least in in the approaches that might honorably, honorably be taken.

**Bret** 52:39

Well, you know, the first assignment I ever gave, when I came to evergreen and started teaching there, the first assignment was for my students taking evolution, all of them for the first time was to explain what an apology was. I wanted them to drill down and figure out if they could understand what an apology was. And I said of them, you know, an apology is a mystery. Because it has tremendous effect on the way people think about stuff that has happened to them, right? Why should an apology consists of one individual vibrating the air molecules between them and another individual, and then a little membrane in your head wobbles and proportion and you deduce some meaning that's coming. But if you've been harmed by somebody, why would a wobbling of membranes in your head in any way serve to compensate you such that it would change your sense about whether or not the thing was okay or not? Right? So, anyway, it's a tough assignment, try it.

**Heather** 53:40

But, well, you're stopping there. Let's put

**Bret** 53:42

it this way. For those of you who are ready to hear what I think the right analysis is, an apology is evidence of a debt. In other words, if I have harmed you, and I don't acknowledge it, then the debt is in dispute. But if I have harmed you, and I say, you know what, I harmed you. Let me tell you how much I harmed you. And what you hear says, actually, you do understand how much you harmed me, then you've got two things. One, you've got a debt that you can call in. And we know how we know the magnitude of it. And to you have my explicit description of what I did wrong. So if I do the same thing wrong, again, the crime is much bigger, because what I've done is I've said, here's what I understand about that crime. And to do it again, would mean I was conscious of the fact that I was doing it, which is a very different parameter, premeditated crime. So anyway, my point is, we need to engage in a discussion, a national discussion in which the various things in our history that are not comfortable and not honorable and not defensible, are placed in proper context. And we agree on what they are and we agree on what's wrong with them. And by doing that, we can actually all move on all of us, right? And that doesn't mean that there's no reckoning of any other Trying to happen. As I've said before, I'm really not a fan of monetary reparations because I think we can predict exactly why that policy would be a disaster. But the idea of investments in communities that are still suffering, the echoes of Jim Crow and other things seems a very good idea. So anyway, at some level informally, that's the proposal that a truth and reconciliation approach to the, the ugliest parts of our history is important. Even, you know, I feel like I have taken on American culture. I'm born of immigrants, as you are.

**Heather** 55:36

So not, you're not the children of immigrants immediately,

**Bret** 55:38

but I'm descended from immigrants. My my ancestors weren't here when there was slavery, right? And so, you know, in some sense, why am I even talking about it? Well, because I have taken on American culture. So in some sense, it's been imported into my software, the, you know, the downstream effects of that. But anyway, that's, that's, that's about all that needs to be said about that. Can we go to solution making?

**Heather** 56:02

Yeah, we have about five minutes? Five minutes. Yeah, so maybe we should mostly save this for next time, because it itself is a is a long conversation, but let's just get it started here.

**Bret** 56:13

Okay. In thinking about what we keep hearing from lots of people, which is, what do I do when it comes for me? Right? I think the answer can't be, it can't be an individual answer. It's not going to work. And what I've begun to observe that there are certain environments online, where you can't navigate this stuff. And then there are others where the structure of the environment itself allows you to. So on Reddit, for example, Reddit is now a disaster for many reasons. But inside of a subreddit, many people can talk about what's going on, and most of the users are anonymous, just by virtue of the way it works. And so my point would be, I think that people who understand that there's something wrong about the ideology that's marching through our, our national landscape and up ending structures on which we are depending that those people need to be able to find each other, and they need to be able to have a conversation that functions as a reality check at first. And that reality check is the key ingredient to be able to maintain your bearing, that is to say, when it comes for you, it's going to be very hard to resist the mob. And what it insists is true in terms of your defects, and it's going to be very hard not to say the things that it wants you to say, I would advise you not to say those things, but it's not going to be possible for everybody. And people have livelihoods. They have to maintain people have children they have to protect. But if you can find a community that is capable of barring that set of Kafka traps, and you can check in with it, and you can say, look, I had to go to this training in order to retain my job, and I can't afford to give up my job. But here's what was said at this training. And here's why I find it absurd. And somebody else can say, you know, I saw the very same thing. And here's what I've thought, that reality check that allows people who are trying to resist this to just simply not be each of us alone, but to find each other compare notes, and then eventually, to discover things that work. What can you say when somebody says one of these things that actually causes the script to change that diverts it for a moment that detains it that causes it to have to answer questions that it should have to answer, I believe in there is the seeds of a solution in which we stop playing defense, which isn't working, and we start playing offense, which will,

**Heather** 58:41

yeah, and, and you can start collecting people this way, right? People who are listening here, presumably, already already know most of this, and probably many of you are being forced to sit in on these trainings to participate, maybe even to identify your own internal racism, whatever. Maybe you're in a place where you can speak up, we would hope so. Find a place online where you can do exactly what Brad is talking about. And then go back to the next training, maybe a bit emboldened with an idea of how you can say something how you can just lodge an idea, lodge a criticism that even if it is not, even if it does not make clear to the people organizing the training or the or the true believers, that you're in fact lodging a complaint. Those other people, among your colleagues who also don't respect what is going on will hear it and probably at least one of them will come to you quietly, privately and say, Yeah, me too. At which point you invite them in to whatever online community you have and say, listen in on this then let us figure out if we can generate ideas and tools with which to find off this thing, this ideology, which is not about anti racism, and it's not about inclusivity. And it's not about diversity, it is quite the opposite. And then next time you go to a training again, maybe there are now two of you, one person stands up in a row of 30, you'll get shouted down as you did, right as you did bread. But two people, there's a better chance three people, what's the tipping point there will be some tipping point, there will be some tipping point and it's going to change, it's not going to be a flat percentage in a row of 30 versus row 300. It's not going to be 10% in both places. But there is some number of people in a room that says, You know what, no, me critiquing the work of someone is not racist, based on whether or not they have black skin or not. No, everyone gets to be critiqued, everyone gets to be congratulated. And focusing on the color of the skin of the person who I'm critiquing is actually the racist thing, not the other way around.

**Bret** 1:00:57

Absolutely. And as you pointed out, when we initially started exploring this as a solution, one of the things that is sure to happen if you check in with your online environment, which you may have to create a maybe a slack or discord or something, you create an environment where you can safely talk and you can establish the rules for people coming in, you know, good, honorable, ITW kind of rules. But once you do that, and you establish your reality check, and you figure out what you can say in a training that will advertise that maybe you're not quite fully on board, you will find people will come to you, and they will say thank you, thank you for doing that. Right. When you know who those people are, who hear what you're saying and wish that they were saying it to, you can invite them into these communities, and they can get their reality check. And what that means is that you will ultimately form a group of people who understands that something that isn't desirable is afoot. And you can start figuring out how to back each other up and you will become safer. So I think that really is the route to a solution.

**Heather** 1:01:57

Yeah, so you said something to me a week or more ago, that you haven't yet said on air. So I'm going to say it and see if you want to riff just just briefly before we we have a number of announcements, and then go to break before we come back for the q&a. We should all be pursuing the moment. When if we were in a movie, the hero music would be playing. Right? We all recognize it. When it happens in the movies. We know when that music is about to start playing. And we know what the character we want the character to do. We know we want to be we do? So how do we attain that in life?

**Bret** 1:02:31

Yeah, we all know the soundtrack. If they reverse the soundtrack of the villain and the hero, you'd be like, what the hell kind of movies? What is this? What is right? So we all know what it is that feels good. And we really all know, or most of us know what's right. And so to the extent that something that is very much not right, is afoot. The question is what, you know, what does the hero do? What is that, you know, the person gives the awful fascist speech in the, you know, the hero in the back row does that slow clap thing that reveals that he's just not buying it that thing? The question is, how do you get to that scene in the movie? What needs to be true in order for you to pull that off? It's so

**Heather** 1:03:07

inspiring. And Emma, we just saw this in in Peaky Blinders, which we just watched again with our children. We watched with our children. Yeah,

**Bret** 1:03:15

yeah. So I guess before we go, I would like to say,

**Heather** 1:03:22

several announcements. Yes,

**Bret** 1:03:23

we will get to the announcements in a second. But we are in an interesting place with the articles of unity and the Unity 2020 project, it is possible, but it really is going to take people willing to engage the small amount of risk and energy involved in signing up so that we can count you and counting you does not mean that you are signing up to engage this planet means you're listening to it. Hey, Zack, could

**Bret** 1:03:54

you put up the Oh, yeah, so we will have the page up in a second.

**Bret** 1:04:01

But what we need you to do is follow our Twitter account. If you're on Twitter comm check out the articles of unity, give us your email address, this really can happen You would be amazed at some of the behind the scenes conversations that we are having. But what we need is a groundswell of people who are willing to be just daring enough to say, you know what, I can envision a different possibility I can envision inaugurating someone other than Trump or Biden, come January, and I would feel much better if we did so. So if you're willing to go that far, we can get there. Please, please, please help us.

**Heather** 1:04:35

So this is the site. US is not the two of us. AWS is far bigger than that. Yeah. This is this does not go. You sign up here. You write an email here, if you're offering to help it goes to a team of people who are who are working on this. Yeah. And it, it just might work.

**Bret** 1:04:51

It just might work. Yeah. Oh, can I say one other thing I need to clean. That was one of the announcements. That's awesome. All right. We're taking care of Yeah. Checking stuff off. I want to go back just to, I want to make sure people don't misunderstand my story about the black family who showed up in the park, I got no sense that they would have had a problem with me approaching them. But the context of white people approaching black people in 2020 has grown far too complex. And I think it would have been fine, but it is getting harder and harder to that was my point. All right, what are other announcements?

**Heather** 1:05:29

Well, my, my trackpad is not working. So I don't have Yeah, I was trying to find that mic. I can't, I can't do it. Right. So let's just do the announcements here. We now have a clips channel for for this main channel, where Zach, where you're going to show the clip channel. And it's it's live as of I think today or yesterday, we've got someone very good working on making clips, he's got I think, clips from episodes 25 and 26. uphill start they'll do 27 and 28 shortly and then go back through at least 19. So there it is, we'll also put a link as we will to unity 2020 in the description of this video. If you we've we've made this announcement before, if you are interested in a private q&a with us once a month, once a month, become a Darkhorse member at my patreon at the $5 level or up. And that q&a is on the last Sunday of the month. But it's then up for anyone who's who's a patron to view that in a moment. And then actually apropos what you what we were just talking about with regard to finding community. In our first private q&a, one of the darcars members made a Discord server for us and it is now open at the moment. It just has people who were on live on that q&a. But we are also going to make that available to patrons at the $5 and up level for either of us. Right so either patrons of yours at $5 an hour or of mine will have access to that we don't have that set up yet, but we'll get that within the next 24 hours to get an invite. Yep. And and on there. There are some new Discord. I don't really know what's going on but but there are sub conversations around unity 2020 and presumably there, there will be ways to find each other if you want to do just what we were talking about. and discuss, for instance, strategies on how to respond to workplace trainings. Anything else?

**Bret** 1:07:43

Excellent. I think that's that's it. We will be back in about 15 minutes to engage your questions with our answers. Looking forward to it.