

John McWhorter on 2017-06-06 at 16.08

LOURY: How're you doing, man?

McWhorter:MCWHORTER: Hey, look at my house, Glenn. I'm in my new condo here.

LOURY: Ah, this is my first glimpse inside of your new condo. Looks good, looks good.

MCWHORTER: (inaudible) back there. This is Jackson Heights, Queens. I want people to know that it's a civilized place to live. Anyway...

LOURY: And you've moved there from Jersey City. Have you not?

MCWHORTER: Which was not. Yes. And you can see behind me the built-in shelves. I am very comfortable in my new -- actually co-op. So I just want...

Loury:LOURY: (response inaudible) And you're very, very proud. I want people to know, if they don't already, that you are the John McWhorter, professor at Columbia University. And I am your humble servant, Glenn Loury, professor at Brown University. And you and I are the Glenn and John Show at bloggingheads.tv, the black guys.

McWhorter:MCWHORTER: Let me cut in very quickly and say I lived in Jersey City for 11 years. I liked it very much. Just now I said it was uncivilized because I was going

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for a laugh line, which was tacky, because I know there are people from Jersey City listening to this, including Bill [Benzon?]. I think Jersey City's great. So anyway, let us continue. (laughs) Yes. So...

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~~Loury~~: I think that was a necessary addendum, John, if you wanted to maintain your relationships with your former co-residents of Jersey City. (laughs) (inaudible)

~~McWhorter~~: (laughs) Yes. So --

LOURY: And not everybody can take a joke or recognize when one is being spoken. I think we might even get to that later in the -- in this discussion.

MCWHORTER: We will, yes. (laughs)

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LOURY: Let me set the agenda, which we've agreed upon, which is we want to talk about the brouhaha at Evergreen State College out there on the West Coast. Pretty much everybody has heard about what's been going on. And we have some -- you have some thoughts to share with that that you've not had a chance to put into print, but that we can put out there on the -- you know, out there on the Twitter universe and whatnot of the -- our video blog. We want to talk about Bill Maher. This is the most recent of these incidents that come up every now and then, when a comic uses the wrong word or says the wrong thing and offends somebody. And Bill Maher apparently is in hot water for

his use of the N word on his program last Friday. I hear that Ice Cube is going to appear on this week's show, which is a few days from -- as we speak right now, to discuss the use of the N word and whatnot, and we're going to talk about that. And finally, our three race items for this conversation -- the third one is the race and IQ controversy, most recently reignited via the experience of Charles Murray, a co-author of *The Bell Curve*, an infamous book about intelligence in American social life, in his appearance at Middlebury College. We're going to address ourselves not to the college, but to the substance of the race and IQ debate. So that's our agenda. John, Evergreen State. What do you have to say?

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MCWHORTER: You know, can you imagine being one of the white students on that campus or ~~the~~ white professors who actually was going to go through with leaving the campus for a certain prescribed period of time with the idea that they were allowing that they themselves constituted, in some sense, a racist presence for the black students. And that they really felt that it was the good thing to do to absent themselves in line with the request of those students. Now, it's one thing to understand that structural racism exists. It's one thing to understand that micro-aggressions exist, but I am stunned by the idea

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of some human being, either 20 years old or 42 years old, actually thinking, I am going to absent myself from my place of schooling and/or work in line with this idea that my being here constitutes an affront to a safe space, even symbolically, and to the point that when one person stands up and says, "No, this is taking it too far." Well, I'm not sure how articulately Brent Weinstein said that -- but when one person says, one white person says, "No, I'm not leaving. I'm not leaving my office. I'm not going to leave campus out of a sense that I constitute a noxious presence to a black student or a Latino student," that that person is vilified, that that person is all but threatened with physical violence. That -- what's interesting about this is that this comes in the wake of all the things that people like you and me have been saying about these student uprisings. Notice, Glenn, they're just getting worse. Nothing that we say on ~~blogging heads~~ Blogging Heads, nothing that we write, changes that this has become a meme among students, and this took it to a new level. Do you see something a little ominous in the fact that that could happen at all on a campus?

~~Loury~~ LOURY: (response inaudible) Yeah. Let me, before I respond to that question, just tell people, if there is anyone out there who doesn't know, that there is a

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tradition at Evergreen State College, a notoriously liberal college, of having a day of absence in which the black students, and faculty members, and staff members, I presume, would, by choice, not come to campus on that particular day, as a way of underscoring the points that they want to underscore about their status within the community and emphasizing the value that they contributed to the community, which would be especially clear to an observer if they were to absent themselves. So there is that tradition, which this particular year, was flipped. And the idea was it wouldn't be the blacks who would absent themselves. Rather, they would stay on campus and it would be the whites who would not come that day. If you were white and an ally, you ask me to put myself in the position of a student or faculty member at the university, and have myself be white, and what would I do? Well, one line of thought is, I'm an ally; I've been asked to support the movement by absenting myself on this particular occasion. It's true that I benefit from white privilege. It's true that structural racism afflicts the students of color and faculty of color at my university. The least I can do is conform to the request to absent myself. And then along comes Brett Weinstein, a biology professor at Evergreen State, who is white -- Jewish, as a matter of fact -- and

offended by the suggestion that, because he's white, if he believes in justice, he ought not to show up on campus. And who ends up getting in a lot of hot water with the students, so much so that he's advised by campus security at one point to stay away from campus, out of a concern for his safety. And so that's what you're talking about. I just wanted to put that on the table. Do I think things are getting worse? Yeah, I do. And I -- you know, we've said this here before. People have heard me say it with other guests -- weary about the integrity of the enterprise that we're engaged in in higher education to the extent that it can be captured by, or put under the sway of, this kind of politicization that has the consequence of cutting off the possibility of people expressing themselves. This is the worst thing to me in an institution of higher education. I say this without regard to race, racism, struggling -- an institution of higher education, in the first instance, is meant to be a place where ideas can be explored. A person who disagrees with a policy -- oh, and by the way, there was also that case of the professor at the Duke University Divinity School who, when he issued a public rebuke or repudiation or disagreement with some diversity policy that was going on there, also ended up in very hot water, and in fact, ended up resigning. People

can look this up. There are articles about it in the
Chronicles of Higher Education and in other places. I
don't mean to give a complete description of the case.
It's complicated. But the bottom line was that guy, just
like Brett Weinstein at Evergreen State, merely disagreed
with the policy. He merely invited an argument in a
debate, just as the Christakises did at Yale some years
ago, in [finding?] argument and debate about a policy that
was being foisted on them in the interest of promoting
inclusion and diversity. Those things aren't supposed to
be debatable? You know, if the student activists decide
that [something is?] the thing you do, then you're -- if
you disagree you're just supposed to shut up? So, yeah, I
think that's bad, and I think it's getting worse,
especially with the violence and the threats of violence,
which -- and I'll stop -- are not all coming from the left.
Some of them are coming from forces that are acting in
reaction to what they perceive to be excessive political
correctness. And it's a situation that could easily get
out of hand very quickly. So it is of great concern to me.

~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ You know, there's a violence of
language that's occurring in a way that I think most people
wouldn't think of, not even the people who are perpetrating
it, and that is it's becoming a set phrase, "You said some

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stop thinking logically. Y, you must think of it this way, and this is worth doing. A—and this takes a little bit of a line from you last time ~~— violence?—~~ violence. So the idea is that Brett Weinstein cannot depend on the defense of the police, because he, quote, unquote, “said some racist shit,” which he didn’t. A, and in the same way, Europeans are walking around in danger of being mowed down by trucks—. It seems to me that they’re shades of a similar ideology which are flowering at this same time—. I wonder if there’s any reason for why these things are happening—. And very quickly, I’m not implying that these things are the same—. Of course, there’s a difference between what happened in London and what happened at Evergreen State—. But still, these things are happening simultaneously, and I’m beginning to wonder if there’s something going on worldwide.

~~Loury~~ LOURY: ~~(inaudible)~~ Well, this is a piece, isn’t it, with your argument that you’ve articulated here, and in other places, about the religious or quasi-religious character of much of the sort of politically correct activism that we see on campuses today. People finding a kind of spiritual fulfillment or completion in their affirmation of certain normative positions or moral principled views, they think, that are not up for argument. And people are righteous.

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They're self-righteous. They are justified in using language such as you just used because they're so certain that they're in the right. And moreover, they're on the hunt for heretics. They're looking for people who would -- you know, who are disagreeing, or who would dispute. And they want to purge them. They -- you're not legitimate if you don't affirm these nostrums that we are invested in, this kind of idea. But Islamic terrorism? I don't know. That's a bit of a stretch, not only in degree -- blowing yourself up in a room is a little bit different from shouting curse words in somebody's face.

MCWHORTER: Very. Very. (laughs)

LOURY: But also, I think, in kind, I'm not sure that -- and I don't know enough about this to have a really firm view, but I am not sure that jihadi Islam, you know, a devotion to the cause of the Islamic State, can be understood as similar to the fervency with which some student activists might affirm the --

~~McWhorter:~~MCWHORTER: I think you just described both of them perfectly in what you said one minute ago. It sounded like you nailed both of them. I thought that's what you were going to say.

~~Loury:~~LOURY: ~~(inaudible)~~ Well, it -- Islam has been around for a while and the Muslim Brotherhood have been around for a

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while. And again, I don't know a whole lot about this, but my sense is that these [e-moms?], who are the internet preachers of the jihadi gospel, are drawing on a tradition of radicalism within Islam. Again, and I want to say for the third time, I don't claim to be an expert on this -- that is fairly rich and deep and is influenced by global events, whether it's the conflict in the Middle East, or it's the Iraq War, or it's the Muslims in Chechnya are catching hell. You know Muslims in -- everywhere you look are catching hell, and they're underdogs, and so forth, and so on. I somehow don't see. But I don't want to spend our time debating this kind of fine point. I take your point. It is an ideology. It's a radical ideology. And it's, in some ways, quite destructive.

~~McWhorter:~~ **MCWHORTER:** I think what they might have in common is social media. Because, yeah, it's not Islam. it's [long?]. It's this particular strain of it, especially lately. A, and I think that social media tends to whip up bubbles like this. It's just like the tea party, another inappropriate analogy. But I think part of the reason we're seeing these things happening at the same time is because social media can whip up a sentiment that, in the past, would have stayed more diffuse in both cases. But it's funny, I see a kindred spirit in terms of the group-

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think that's involved and seeing fundamentally nice people being really mean, in the sense of what happened to Brett Weinstein, and even barbaric in the sense of what a person winds up being forced to do under this strain of Islamic sentiment. It just scares me, because neither of these things seems to be affected by people cluck-clucking on the sidelines. And I'm not sure either one of them can be stopped. That's another thing.

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~~Loury~~: LOURY: ~~(inaudible)~~ Well, here is another point that might be a point of similarity, which is reaction. So a lot of people worry about overreacting to Islamic terrorism in a punitive way that actually ends up backfiring because it encourages more terrorism. And I think we ought to be worried about right-wing reaction to left-wing activism on campus, especially as it gets violent. You know, the [anti-fa?] people storming around Berkeley, California, smashing windows and setting stuff on fire and whatnot, because there are -- and I occasionally take a look at some of this right-wing internet sites because I want to know what these people are talking about. A lot of people out there who are looking for a fight. They say, "OK, you guys are going to put on a mask and you're going to mashing stuff in the interest of fighting white supremacy. I tell you what. I like white supremacy and I'm prepared to fight

generation of students, and if anything, it only reinforces it. I think with somewhere like Evergreen State, to be honest, I think that if people stop sending their children to there in significant numbers for several years, then you might stop something like the president -- I forget what title he officially had -- but the person in charge who, at first, basically did a kind of at-gunpoint ISIS confession video where he pretended to agree with the students (inaudible). It was absolutely craven. You know?

~~Loury~~: LOURY: (inaudible) I saw it. It was stunning. And he acknowledged being proud of the students for taking on this battle. And he promised that as he forms committees and engages in various investigative enterprises to make the environment better, to put students on the committees and to pay them for their service. I mean, he, you know --

~~McWhorter~~: MCWHORTER: He should be repaid with a tiny student enrollment for the next five years. Frankly, that's what I would do. I've heard that [there are calls to?] their (inaudible) could defund that college. I seriously doubt if that's going to happen, but, ...yeah, this is bad. This is really frightening. And to me, I think, what is it about the times? It's the social media. It's a nasty byproduct of this technology that we have. It actually

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has me sometimes thinking would it better if we didn't have it, which is idle. But this is some nasty shit, I'll put it that way. (laughs) I'm really happy that it hasn't happened at Columbia. I'm still trying to figure out why it doesn't happen on my campus, but, you know, maybe it will. And what worries me, as it worries you, is this lack of reason in the name of enlightenment backed up by people who are over 21. It really scares me to read about these things and to see professors supporting it and calling people dirty names and walking away unscathed. Remember the Duke lacrosse case, where you had the 99 professors who signed a manifesto accusing what turned out to be four innocent boys of heinous crimes? I'm not aware that any of those people -- and some of them were relatively big names, and I'm not going to name them -- none of those people suffered for that letter that basically --

~~Loury~~ LOURY: (inaudible) Wait. Your unwillingness to name them is one of the reasons why they haven't suffered, John. I actually don't know their names. I do know the phenomenon that you said is correct. Of course, they shouldn't be penalized in terms of being fired or whatever for expressing an opinion for signing a letter. But they could certainly be ostracized and humiliated, and their

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reputations could -- should certainly be degraded in virtue of the fact that they took that particular stand. You were one of the ones who wanted to railroad these kids. And if it were -- if the racial shoe were on the other foot, as it were --

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~~McWhorter:~~MCWHORTER: We don't even need to wonder--.

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Exactly.

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~~Loury:~~LOURY: ~~(inaudible)~~We'd know that we would know all the names of those people and they'd never be able to find work anyplace.

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~~McWhorter:~~MCWHORTER: Oh, there'd be skywriting of their names--. Yes--. And they would not be able to get a job in the New York subway--. But when it comes to these other people -- yeah, it's not -- no, they shouldn't lose their jobs, but somebody should have written a really snarky editorial ~~(inaudible)~~in Slate, or something like that, basically saying here are the people who signed this, including the ones who wrote it and had their signatures up near the top, and they were really wrong, and they should apologize--. Those people should lodge a formal apology--. That was never seen as necessary--. And we're seeing a development of those politics, which is now elevated because everybody has the internet in their pocket.

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~~Loury~~:~~LOURY~~: I want to move onto the next subject but I want to just add one thing, if you don't mind, which is I think that the administrators are too quick to [cede?] the substantive questions --(inaudible)

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~~McWhorter~~:~~MCWHORTER~~: Glenn, I'm going to freeze you--. I'm still listening--. Because Blogging Heads has evolved, and we've done this a while, I think I can now leave the screen for a second and do something minor--. My lamp burned out--. So people, I'm still here--. Glenn, keep talking.

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~~Loury~~:~~LOURY~~: (inaudible)OK. I'm going to -- let me see if I can remember what I was going to say. Administrators and the people in charge too quick to cede the substantive questions to the students and to repair to a procedural argument. The procedural argument is let's maintain order and let's let everybody speak. The substantive arguments are things like, how do you police a big city? Is the idea that the cops want to stop somebody and find out whether they've got a gun in their pocket necessarily a bad way to prevent homicide in the city? Is it a price worth paying? Or the substantive questions are, you say that Halloween costume offended you? I say that being offended is not the worst thing in the world. I say that ridicule is not the worst thing in the world. People get to wear Halloween

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costume -- you say that you don't like cultural appropriations? I say the making of the modern world is one long sequence of cultural appropriations. We started by appropriating -- the Greeks appropriating from the North Africans, the Romans appropriating from the Greeks, blah, blah, blah, blah. If you go to a place like India or anyplace in Southeast Asia, you see the Buddhists and the Hindus side by side, and there's been all kinds of cross pollination between those great traditions going back a thousand years. What do you mean you're against cultural appropriations? I mean, that's -- you know, in other words, they won't engage the people on the substantive merits of the positions. They'll say things like, "I agree with you. White supremacy is awful and I'm checking my privilege at the door, but you should allow the person to speak," when they might've said, "What the hell are you talking about, you morally high-handed moron?" No, they wouldn't have said it quite that way. White supremacy explains every little inconvenience in your life? I'm not apologizing for being white. They might've said that. But they don't force the argument. They -- you know, so --

~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ I'll tell you, Glenn, I've been on Twitter -- I think I've actually been Tweeting for three years, and I don't dwell in it as aggressively as a lot of

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people, but I have noticed that you can get a lot of love on Twitter if you strike the right chord, and who wouldn't like it, or you can get a lot of hate, and I've been on both ends. Nothing has attracted for me more Twitter hate than the occasional piece I do making that argument that you made 30 seconds ago about cultural appropriation and how utterly incoherent this argument is. And something will come up in the news, and I'll write about it. Oh, does that get people spewing. And this includes the white and everything else fellow travelers of the black people who have been appropriated. There is no cutting through that one with any call for civility. It's as if you had, for example, said 'nigger' on national TV. You want to do a transition from there? (laughs)

~~Loury~~: LOURY: ~~(inaudible)~~ I did. I was just about to say, speaking of Twitter, my Twitter feed is full of people calling for Bill Maher's head. Right. Bill Maher, as he was interviewing Ben Sasse, if I get this correctly -- who is the Senator from Nebraska, who has a new book out about how kids are not becoming adults and how that's bad for the country -- was invited by Sasse to come out to Nebraska, or to visit a farm or something like that. And Bill says, "No, farm, that's not my thing. I'm a house nigger, not a field nigger." Something like that. But he used the N

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word. OK. I just used it, too, but I get an exemption because I'm black. And in context, it made sense for me to use the word. Anyway, he used the N word. Now, at first there was an argument -- and I'll stop, John, because I know you have a lot to say about this. At first, there was an argument about, "Well, he didn't say 'nigger.'" He said 'nigga.'" In other words, you didn't say N-I-G-G-E-R, with the "er," he said N-I-G-G-A. And that's all the difference in the world, man, because that's what the rappers say, because we know that the niggas are the homeboys, you know what I'm saying? And, I mean, you my nigga, man, and I'm down with the niggas, you know, like that. And that's OK. But then there were some on my Twitter feed anyway, saying, "No, no, no. He's white. He doesn't get an exemption for the A versus the E-R." And there was all this kind of angels on the head of a pin talk about whether not Bill Maher violated some, you know, moral boundary that should require him to be boycotted at HBO or, you know, put off the air, or whatnot, like that. And John, I'm -- you're a linguist, man. We talking words now. Tell me about how you see that. (laughs).

~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ Well, nigger versus nigga. --

LOURY: And do you use the A or the E-R. That's what I what to know. (laughs)

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MCWHORTER: ER and A -- I say that one of them is black English. Nigga, that's black English. Nigger is standard English. They do have different meanings, but then it's a fine line. What I find myself thinking is this, and I think 51 is just old enough for me to have memory of this kind. And we're forgetting this, because time passes. Thirty-one fucking years ago --

LOURY: Oh my God. The f-bomb, John. (laughter)

MCWHORTER: And (laughs) and I also mess up the time -- 20 fucking years ago, I remember when I was first starting to do media stuff. It was actually 22 fucking years ago. That was the first time I was ever on the radio. Local radio show, and I remember it was about this thing called the N word. This was Oakland, 1995, the internet kind of existed, and, you know, it was okay to use the whole word on the air, certainly for me, also for white people as long as they were using it in context. (inaudible), the white announcer did not say, "We are going to talk about the N word," they said, "We are going to talk about the word nigger." And nobody batted an eye in Oakland. It was normal. Now here we are in 2017, and supposedly even if a person -- it's not that the person is hurling the word, the person is referring to the word as a dictionary entry, or they're using a term that the word is in, such as

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to do that. He could have gone like this, and he could have said, "It is called," or something like that. There's this taboo now, which is all connected to this whole business of let's have new -- black people want to have a way of beating up white people, and white people play along because it's a way of showing that they're good people, such that you don't even want to utter the syllables, even when you're just referring to the word. Bill Moyers Maher should be left alone. I don't watch his show, frankly, so I didn't hear the music of it, and yes, I suppose he's something of a provocateur, but he's not Ann Coulter, even if he has her on the show a lot. He should be allowed to say it, because I'll be you could go back into files of *Politically Incorrect* and show him using the word nigger and nobody even wincing, or maybe it got bleeped out, and the guests were probably black themselves. This is newish, and I think it's stupid. No, a white person should not be able to call somebody a nigger. Yes, we're going to have conversations over whether Justin Bieber can use 'nigga' the way his black equivalent might. But for a person to be in trouble for saying the word nigger to refer to it or to use the term house nigger or to say niggeritis as long as the atmosphere

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is proper, this is piety, and I'm not going to [repeat myself?].

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~~Loury~~:~~LOURY~~: ~~(inaudible)~~Let me tell you a story. It relates back to the thing I was saying earlier about how I wish administrators would fight on the substantive ground and not only on the procedural ground. So Jeffery Stone is a law professor at the University of Chicago, former Dean of the University of Chicago Law School, and an eminent First Amendment scholar. He came to Brown to give a lecture. In the context of the lecture --

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~~McWhorter~~:~~MCWHORTER~~: When?

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~~Loury~~:~~LOURY~~: -- he related a story --

~~MCWHORTER~~: When?

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~~Loury~~:~~LOURY~~: ~~(inaudible)~~When was -- oh, that's a good question and that's important. Within the last year. It was in the fall semester, if I'm not mistaken. So in late 2016, because I was on leave 2015-16, so it was since I came back. In the context of the lecture, he wanted to relay this story about how an African American was insulted in a law school Socratic method class, where the professor used the N word. And so as he was relating the story, he said the word, OK?

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~~McWhorter~~:~~MCWHORTER~~: As he has to.

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~~Loury~~:~~LOURY~~: ~~(inaudible)~~Well, you might think so.

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~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ Well, he could not. ~~Oh, he could.~~

~~Right.~~

~~Loury:LOURY:~~ ~~(inaudible)~~ Otherwise, he could do some other gesture, OK, and avoid saying the word. But he said the word in the context of [relating?] the story. OK, so he completes this talk. There's a Q&A. An African American woman, a student, stands up and declares that she was offended by his use of the word. And you got this popping (snaps fingers) from some of the other students that were in the room. He turns on a dime at the podium and looks her straight in the face, and he says, "I used the word in context. It was appropriate. You don't get to tell me what words I can use. I did not intend to offend you, but if you're offended, that's on you." OK. And there were gasps.

~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ Now, is he alive? Is he alive today?

~~Loury:LOURY:~~ ~~(inaudible)~~ I could almost see people putting their hands over their mouths. But what I thought was that that was spot on, OK?

~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ He should be cloned. Yeah.

~~Loury:LOURY:~~ ~~(inaudible)~~ I mean, [as between?], "Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry; I didn't mean anything by it. I was just trying to tell a story." And, "You don't get to define how I use the language when my intentions here are very clear." I'm

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with the latter. And I think if more people said it, we might have a different evolution of this situation that we're finding ourselves in.

~~McWhorter~~:MCWHORTER: Now, I know from experience that what a lot of smart, especially kids -- I hear this especially from people 30 and under, so not kids, but -- the idea is not his intention, it's what a person's experience of it was, and so this ends up falling under the definition of micro-aggression. But I must say that that is where micro-aggression -- which is real. There didn't used to be a word for it, but I think we all know what a micro-aggression is. That's where the whole notion just spreads way too far. The idea that a person uses that word to refer to it -- often criticizing it, but uses the word to refer to it -- and everybody acts as if they actually leveled the word at somebody and pretends not to understand the difference. The idea that that's the way it should be because the black people in question experience it in a certain way has to be answered with, you have chosen to experience it that way and/or you have been told by contingencies of the moment that you are supposed to experience that way, and you need to stop it. I mean, what -- the reason I call a lot of this religious is because I'm referring to the aspect of religion that means

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that you reserve a part of your cognition for allowing logic not to work. You allow reason, you allow A-to-B reasoning to be suspended for a certain realm of events. And I'm sorry if that insults some people of religion for me to say it. It is how I'm defining religion. I'm sorry to say it, but I cannot take it back. It's religious in that the same people who will say I am insulted to hear you say, "He's the house nigger," will also say that they are strong black people, will also say that they can't be hurt. They will read James Weldon Johnson and Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King and talk about our strength, but the idea is that we are strong -- strong, black woman, strong, black man -- but there is this Achilles' heel. You utter a certain sequence of syllables that reminds us of Bo Conner, and we will fall to pieces. That's not complicated. It's not complicated at all. It makes no sense.

~~Loury~~ LOURY: (inaudible) Let me say a couple things, John.

Excuse me for interrupting you, but we want to get to our third topic and time is short. I just want to say a couple things. One of them is about religion because you and I, in a way, I think, disagree about this. I think there are aspects of religious zealotry that are parallel to the kind of thing that we're saying. But to say -- you know, when

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you say it's like religion, it's like you're painting all of religion with the same brush. It's like what defines religion for you is a mindless devotion to a certain, you know, errant set of principles that are immune to any critical examination. And religion is a lot more than that, John. It's the -- you know --

~~McWhorter~~+MCWHORTER: No, no--. I'm saying that religions have in common a particular element, which is -- and the issue's not mindless, because you can apply all sorts of highly mindful and intellectual reasoning to these topics-- . Not mindless, it's not errant, depending on what you mean, but if you believe that Jesus Christ is somewhere, and that if you subscribe to his teachings you will live forever in his grace, and there's no evidence for that of the kind that we know in the life that we're leading. It means that you have reserved a certain part of your brain for something where reason and logic as we know it don't apply, and instead you're relying on faith-- . Now, I'm not calling ~~that it~~ stupid.

~~Loury~~+LOURY: ~~(inaudible)~~ John, there are theological treatises out there, an endless number of them, that address this question of whether or not faith is inconsistent with reason. And my reading, my sampling of that literature is that the answer is, no, faith is not inconsistent with

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reason. It's not inconsistent with science. There are two different realms, and so forth, and so on. But that's a subject for us to have another debate. I wanted to make one more point, if I may, and that's about Bill Maher, because if you go back and look at the videotape, at some of the stuff that he had to say about Sarah Palin and some of the stuff he said about people who are from Arkansas or who came up in trailer parks or whatever, and some of the stuff that he's had to say about Donald Trump, and Melania Trump, and Barron Trump, and all the rest of them, you will find him doing much more -- you know, making much more vicious and hurtful and insulting commentary. And some of it is about, quote, "white people," or about poor, white people, or about Southern white people, white people from Mississippi and Alabama, where he paints with a very broad brush. And I am unaware of anybody at theroot.com or anyplace else going around saying that he has to go because he said this. Or, you know, somebody at Fox News might've said it, but nobody was listening to them. So he's been getting away with a freewheeling -- the use of the insult for quite a while. In fact, it's part of his stock and trade, suggesting, for example, that John McCain and Lindsay Graham have a homosexual affair going on. OK. This is a stock and trade of Bill Maher's commentary. I do

watch it from time to time. And again, I don't remember anybody from, you know, the gay rights group writing in to complain about any of that. So, you know --

~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ Well, race is the third rail, or as some friends of mine like to say, America is all about it, so race is... --

~~Loury:LOURY:~~ Let's talk about race and IQ. You wanted to talk about that, and you're talking about the third rail, man. You're going to get electrocuted if you touch that one. (inaudible)

~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ No, I think... -- this is it--. Because I've written a piece about this--. I've noticed that in our business, you're not usually supposed to talk about pieces that you've written until you've placed them--. People are very wary about that--. I guess I came into the game too late to understand why--. So I'm writing a place about race and IQ--. I don't know if it's going to get published, because all over the political spectrum people are afraid to touch it--this, and so --

LOURY: What do you say?

MCWHORTER:- --So in case it never gets published, I'm going to say here what the piece is saying is that -- let's say... -

- well, Vox published a piece in response especially to a

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speech argument. Why can't we talk about race and IQ?
Why isn't everything up for grabs? And my point is I think
there should be an exception with that, because -- and I've
thought about this hard -- I can't see what the benefit
would be to discussing it. What would we point to that
would have any chance of happening and would we want any of
it to happen? What, are we going to have a mirrortocracy
meritocracy where the people with lesser IQs got less help?
Or one other thing. Are we going to have an arrangement
where we allow that black people have these lower IQs and
therefore give extra help to black people with the
presupposition that, on the average, black people aren't as
bright? I don't see that happening, either. I think
that the black race would take that as a grievous insult.
I certainly would. And then I go over some other things.
I don't understand what possible benefit there could be
from discussing this particular issue. I think it should
stay in the journals, myself. That is the point that I
am trying to make in this piece.

~~Loury~~ LOURY: (inaudible) That's interesting, and I want to say
a couple of things in response. One of them is about the
Vox piece, itself. I wish I could remember these guys'
names.

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~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ James Nesbitt, Rebecca Turkheimer, and somebody else--. Yeah.

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~~Loury:LOURY:~~ Nesbitt has been around for a long time and has been writing in this area all way back to the 1980s or '70s. It's a very strong piece on summarizing the state of psychometric research on intelligence in human populations. I don't think they come close to establishing the claim that racial differences in the United States and IQ can be accounted for fully by environmental factors. However, I think they do very effectively rebut the claim that the evidence supports the conclusion that such racial differences, as we observe, are caused by genetic inheritance that's different between races.

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~~(inaudible)~~

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~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ Only--. Only.

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~~Loury:LOURY:~~ ~~(inaudible)~~Yeah. They [are total?] -- or mostly, or largely the consequence of genetic [predisposition?]. They acknowledge that IQ can be measured and that it varies in human populations. They acknowledge that, on the average, when you measure it today, you see racial differences. They acknowledge that there is evidence, strong evidence, that IQ is a trait that is heritable, to some degree, within families, using the twin studies, and such like that. But they say there's also plenty of

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evidence that environmental factors affect IQ in populations over a period of time, and they say that the evidence doesn't support the idea that the magnitude of the racial differences that we observe is accounted for by the IQ transferred between families. So it's not as if, like, people are genetically inferior. We don't know that -- [it, considerably is?] possible that that could be true. But they're saying there's no reason to believe that that's true.

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~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ To some degree.

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~~Loury:LOURY:~~ ~~(inaudible)~~

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~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ Specifically because if you take a poor black person and put them in more affluent circumstances, their IQ raises to a considerable degree, which suggests --

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~~Loury:LOURY:~~ ~~(inaudible)~~ Yeah, and moreover, if you look at countries over long periods of time, over decades, as they have become more prosperous, the IQs of their populations have increased, and the --

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~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ ~~It has a (inaudible) effect, too.~~ And the Flynn effect.

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~~Loury:LOURY:~~ ~~(inaudible)~~ The Flynn effect, and the environmental shifts that we're seeing between 1930 and 1990, for example, within the United States are probably not any -- much bigger than the environmental differences

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than we see between middle class white populations and lower class populations [from the date and point in?] time.

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~~McWhorter:~~ **MCWHORTER:** An underserved neighborhood. Right.

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~~Loury:~~ **LOURY:** ~~(inaudible)~~ So that was one thing. I have now forgotten what my second point was, John. (laughter) Oh, no. I remember. My point was about why do we talk about this. So one answer is, science doesn't need, you know, practical application in order to want to get at the truth. So we can ask a question to which we don't know the answer, even if finding the answer doesn't have an immediate application. We don't know. It's called basic science, John. You do it so -- because you understand the world better.

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~~McWhorter:~~ **MCWHORTER:** Do we need to discuss it? But do we need to have forums about it at universities and write about it in Time Magazine?

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LOURY: All right. So that's a judgment.

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MCWHORTER: Do we need to talk about it? Are we going to teach it to undergrads? ~~I don't see why.~~ You know, I don't get the -- I don't see why.

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~~Loury:~~ **LOURY:** ~~(inaudible)~~ OK. So there will be judgments to make in these different areas, but if I'm at the National Science Foundation and somebody submits a proposal, and they have what looks like a credible research program on

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this question, there are other questions. There are many questions. It might not be at the top of my list, but I wouldn't dismiss it out of hand because I see no practical application of the information.

~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ No. Oh, nNo, no, no. That's not what I mean. I mean this [business of?] (inaudible) of discussion. And so why can't we talk about it in public forums, spread it around to laymen? why Why can't we be very John Stuart Mill about it and get this out there so that all of America understands that on the average -- on the average, of course -- a person of African descent is several IQ points lower in terms of their inherited material than, frankly, anybody else. Let's discuss it. I don't know what there is to discuss. You know, certainly the findings should be available, but why are we going to have a forum about that in Intelligence Squared?

~~Loury:LOURY:~~ ~~(inaudible)~~OK. Let me ask you another question, which is related. Suppose I see large differences by race in the [incidents?] of violence. Suppose I believe that violence is, to some degree, under psychobiological control, depending on people's brains, and their glandular systems and whatnot work. Suppose I think that there are racial differences in those things that might go back many, many, many generations because of different populations,

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Europe and Africa, and so forth, and so on. And suppose I want to know how much of the racial difference in homicide rates today that I observe can be accounted for by what I take to be neurological, biological, endocrinological prosp-- you know, dynamics that are working in human populations and work differently in subpopulations that can be differentiated by race. Is that OK? Can I ask?

~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ Well, I don't know if it's ~~okay OK~~.

What are you going to do with it? Let's say you found --

~~Loury:LOURY:~~ ~~(inaudible)~~ What I'm going to do is devise

interventions that can be implemented early in life -- and some of them might be biochemical -- in the interest of forestalling violence, the beneficiaries from which would be disproportionately members of populations that are -- if my research were to be born out -- this is all hypothetical -- predisposed to violent behavior. I'm going to hand it off at the pass because I'm going to find out that if you do X, or Y, or Z, when the kid is 10, or 8, or 12 years old, by the time he's 17, his brain is working differently and he's not as inclined to pick up a pistol and blow somebody's brains out. That's what I'm going to do with it.

~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ And so you're going to find that an IQ below a certain point makes you more likely to go pick up a

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pistol. Now, you might find that that's true, and so I guess the idea would be to look for a population where low IQ was relatively concentrated, and let's say that you now knew that you could go north Philadelphia or Bushwick in Brooklyn. Wouldn't it be just as easy to say that there are conditions there that would make it obvious that you needed to intervene against the use of pistols without thinking about IQ?

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~~Loury~~ LOURY: ~~(inaudible)~~ Well, by the way, I'm not just saying IQ. I'm saying natural differences, which might not just be intelligence, but might be the way the brain is wired, or the way the glandular systems work. And I don't know that this is true at all. I'm not saying it's true. I'm saying hypothetically, --

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MCWHORTER: No, [if it were about glands?] --

LOURY: -- it would be legitimate for us to try to find out if it were true. And I'm not -- and the interventions might not be directed specifically at black populations. They might be directed universally at everybody in the country, but the beneficiaries of it would be disproportionately African American. And using, hypothetically, the differences between racial populations and the incidents of violence might be an important empirical point at which to enter into the general exploration of what are the

underlying determinants of violence in human populations.
I'm just saying to foreclose that entire line of research
because it involves looking at racial differences, could
you impoverish us, in terms of our understanding of
questions that are really important?

~~McWhorter~~:MCWHORTER: Oh, yeah. The idea of pretending
that there's no such thing as races, even though there are
fuzzy lines, and not wanting to look at racial differences,
that's a college town conceit. No, it's intelligence in
particular. For example, there's some people who say
that with IQ, maybe we need to accept that that's just one
way of being a valuable person, and just because IQ isn't
concentrated as much on one race doesn't mean that we can't
look to other things, such as music-making and athletics
and empathy as good points to being a person. I think
when it comes to intelligence in particular, we could never
let go of that sense of insult. Glands is one thing.
But the idea that you guys aren't as bright -- I don't see
how a society composed of post-Enlightenment human beings
could ever accept that except under nasty conditions of
injury (inaudible).

~~Loury~~:LOURY: ~~(inaudible)~~ I actually agree with you, John. And
I want to tell another story. So you know this. Andrew
Sullivan -- you know Andrew Sullivan. He used to be the

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editor at the *New Republic*, where you used to write and I used to write. And when *The Bell Curve* came out in 1994, the *New Republic* ran a special -- or '94, '95 -- it ran a special edition that was devoted to Charles Murray with a long essay, and then a bunch of commentaries, amongst which mine was one.

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McWhorter:MCWHORTER: I've read it.

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Loury:LOURY: (inaudible)

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McWhorter:MCWHORTER: I remember it well.

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Loury:LOURY: (inaudible) So in the essay, Murray says what he says about IQ, about race, and so forth. And then he has this thing about every-- it's just what you got through saying a moment ago. Musical talent, empathy, everyone can find a valued place. We don't all have to be rocket scientists. What we have to do is make sure that everybody has a valued place in society, OK? So the black people can be the musicians, or the court jesters, or the whatever. They don't have to be the rocket scientists and the --

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McWhorter:MCWHORTER: Empathetic, too. Yeah.

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Loury:LOURY: (inaudible) And in my commentary -- and Murray has -- he takes the posture that we must discuss this. It's like the -- you know, it's the elephant in the room, and nobody wants to talk about it, and I'm going to be brave and I'm going to talk about it. And what I say in my

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commentary -- you can look it up; anybody can look it up --
is, oh, really? We really need to talk about this? How --
just how urgent is it that we have this kind of
conversation of apologia, in which you tell me that my
people are stupid, but you tell me that it's OK because
we're good athletes, and we're good musicians, and
everybody has a valued place? Really? That's a
conversation we have to have? Charles, you're not helping
me, man. That was in my neoconservative days, when I was
trying to get black people to reorient their -- you're not
helping, Charles. This is not helpful. (laughs).

~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ I'm going to remember now that I must
be ripping this off from you—. Because I read that, and
now here I am—. See, you have had an effect, Glenn,
because I'm sitting here thinking the same thing 27 years
later—. Yeah? I thought that was '92—. Do I have it
too far back?

~~Loury:LOURY:~~ ~~(inaudible)~~ It was later. No, Bell Curve is '94.

~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ Okay, yeah—. So practically a quarter
of a century later.

~~Loury:LOURY:~~ ~~(inaudible)~~ I know this because I was in India,
giving some lectures, and I got dysentery, and all I had to
read was *The Bell Curve*. (laughs) And I couldn't go too
far from my room, if you know what I mean. (laughs).

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~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ You've had to actually read it?

(laughs)

~~Loury:LOURY:~~ ~~Inaudible~~ And that was December of 1994, and no, people, I did not use the pages as toilet paper.

(laughter) But John, speaking of race and IQ, nobody is going to question your IQ. I don't know about mine, given that last comment, but nobody's questioning your IQ.

~~McWhorter:MCWHORTER:~~ Nobody's going to be questioning yours,

either, but it bothers me to see that of others questioned.

. And I don't know if this piece will run anywhere. But

I wanted to have it out there that that is my opinion about

race and IQ. I am baffled, as you were back then, as to

what the point of the discussion would be, especially given

outcomes such as the one the one that you mentioned. And

you know something? I think this is what you mean and

don't mean, too. I don't mean this as the only reason

anybody would want to discuss it is that they're a racist.

. I am not ~~[coatedly-codedly?]~~ saying, "You must be a

bigot to want to talk about this." I think that a lot of

these people are, one, either just geeks -- and so are you

and me -- or I think that they are angry at the left in

general, and so they want to thumb their noses at the left.

. I completely understand that. Or they're just being

too damned logical. They're not thinking about the fact

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that we live in a society with a history.—. But still, I really would like to throw the challenge out to them, why do we have to talk about this beyond the halls of Ivy, and even in the halls of Ivy, in the basement.—. And I would be interested to see what the responses will be, because there might be some that I have missed.—. But that is my feeling about race and IQ.

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LOURY: ~~(inaudible)~~Very good, John. I think we can call it a day. Audience, you've heard the challenge. We need to hear from you.

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MCWHORTER: Yeah, let's hear it.

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LOURY: ~~(inaudible)~~Thanks. I might even read the comments section on this one.

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MCWHORTER: Oh, I'm going to read it on this one.—.

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That's right, and I know I'm going to get various new holes ripped.—. But I would like to know what people's opinions of actually all three of these things are.—. So, yeah, let's get to it.—.

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LOURY: All right, John. It's been a good one. Thanks a lot.

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MCWHORTER: Glenn, this was a good one.—. Talk to you very soon.

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LOURY: OK.

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