

BHTV-2013-10 30 Loury-McWhorter

LOURY: I said -- Hey, there! John McWhorter, how are you doing?

MCWHORTER: Hey, Glenn. How are you?

LOURY: I'm doing well. I'm Glenn Loury here, at Brown University. And The Glenn show -- at bloggingheads.TV, and happy to welcome John McWhorter of Columbia University, theroot.com, and --

MCWHORTER: No more Root.

LOURY: Oh, no more Root! You're rootless!

MCWHORTER: No. No, that had -- that had to end, unfortunately. So, nowadays, it's *Time*, actually, that I write more for. *Time* -- *Time* Ideas.

LOURY: All right, then. There's John McWhorter. And we are talking about intolerance on college campuses for this particular edition of The Glenn Show.

MCWHORTER: And I think you have an example in mind?

LOURY: Well, I have the incident that occurred just last night at Brown University, where I teach. When the Commissioner of police in New York City, Ray Kelly had been invited to come here and give a lecture, and he was prevented from speaking by student and community-based protestors who basically shouted him down, and also shouted

down several university administrators who attempted to engage them in, you know, basically persuasion, to try to get them to allow the event to go forward. Kelly is the architect and chief administrator of what he calls proactive policing, and what some of us refer to as "stop and frisk" policing, which is aggressively encountering people on the streets, and attempting to ascertain whether or not they're engaged in criminal activity, or carrying contraband or weapons as a means of reducing the incidence of crime and violent crime in the city of New York, but which has been held by a federal judge to be racially discriminatory because the practice of the stopping disproportionately targets people of color, it would appear, on the evidence. Kelly was there to defend this policy. The policy, of course, is fiercely controversial. It has been around New York City. It has been a matter of political discussion in the mayoral primary contest that went on, and it has come to the attention of the federal courts, and it has been held by a federal judge sitting in New York City to violate the fourth and 14th amendment rights of the citizens of New York City. So, it's a controversial policy, but the point is, he wasn't permitted to speak because people felt he ought not to have been invited in the first place, and they felt that the policies

that he would have defended in his speech are so obviously reprehensible, racist, and wrong that they don't warrant to be debated in an open forum. And so that's my little --

MCWHORTER: Is that what they said?

LOURY: Well, yeah. In effect. I mean, there are letters in the *Brown Daily Herald* this morning from students who were sympathetic to the protestors. There were comments made from the floor during the 30 minutes that Kelly was intermittently attempting to begin his address, and the administrators were unsuccessfully attempting to reason with the audience. People stood up and they said things like, "We don't have a voice." They said, "We're fearful because of who we are and the way that we dress. And we can't go into the streets without fear." They said, "This is racism. No more racist policing. No justice. No peace." They said that Brown University should be ashamed of itself for extending a forum to a person like this. They said that their voices couldn't be heard, that they were weak and powerless, and so forth and so on. And they complained not only about the policy, but also about the privileged, elite, removed, aloof, safe, wealthy, comfortable, upper-middle class, wealthy institution that sits up on a hill in Providence, Rhode Island where we're prepared to sit around and have a coffee klatsch kind of

conversation with a racist while they're suffering the degradations of brutal, almost fascist-like state power being deployed against them on the streets of cities like Providence or New York City. That's what was said. That all got said. OK? That got heard. What Ray Kelly might have said, or what someone like me -- who fiercely opposes the "stop and frisk" policing policies, who's African American, who grew up in a ghetto on the south side of Chicago, who has had many unpleasant encounters with police, who has written books about why all of this is wrong -- didn't get a chance to refute, confront, and debate with Commissioner Kelly on the evidence, and on the fact, and on the arguments in order to show how, without intellectual justification his policies are. None of that learning and interchange of ideas in our community took place because -- and I'm going to say this, John, and forgive me for going on a rant here -- thuggery prevailed. That is, a group of people used coercion. They used force. They shouted people down. They took control of the room. They dared the authorities to escort them out because they were trespassing and violating the norms of the institution, which, the institution would have been within its right to do, but it would have been a fiasco if they had tried to clear that room of the people who were

pervading the speech from taking place. They engaged in intellectual thuggery. They coerced us in that room. A few people took control of a conversation about a really important question, where the person who is without any doubt powerful and influential in the decision-making process, and who deserves to answer for what it is that he does -- they took that forum, and they converted it into their opportunity to give a speech, robbing the rest of us of our opportunity in a university. All right? I find that reprehensible in the extreme. Frankly, I believe that the student members of our community who participated in that affair should be disciplined for doing so because they acted in flagrant violation of the norms of civil behavior that define and make possible what we do at universities like this. So, all right. I've had my air time. Thank you very much, John, for letting me vent. But that was intolerance in my opinion, and I don't like "stop and frisk" policing, and it has no place in the university environment. It reminded me so much of the 1960s and early 1970s when I, myself, in my youthful zeal, have been on the barricades. But I would have been wrong to shout somebody down, and not argue with them, I think. All right.

MCHWORTER: I think you're too hard on the students. I am as revolted as you are at the thought of that scene. And I

mean revolted. I mean, really, I get a feeling in my stomach. It reminds me of the way students were treating people like Ward Connerly, the black University of California Regent who spearheaded the end of Affirmative Action in the UC system in the '90s. It was the same thing, with the same kinds of people, with the same kind of gestures, and the same kinds of phraseology, and the same facial expressions thinking of themselves as on the side of the angels by shouting somebody down rather than listening. But, you know, Glenn, it's not their fault. I wouldn't use the word, "thuggery." I mean, watching a person doing this, I find the smugness and the melodrama of it absolutely revolting in the sense of, I would not want to break bread with that person that night. But they can't help it because they actually believe that this issue means that issues of civility, and keeping your little finger up while you drink your tea, and having a discussion is somehow beside the point. Stanley Fish had a very nice piece about this kind of thing in the *Times*, yesterday, when it comes to the fashion among leftists in the academy to not do business with Israeli academics, even if they don't have anything to do with oppressing Palestinians out of the idea that academic freedom of those Israelis is less important in this context than the larger justice of

fighting for the Palestinians. And these kids think that there's a larger issue, and that their job is to make sure that Ray Kelly doesn't speak because the issue is racism, which is, of course, an issue of crowning justice. And Glenn, this is the problem, and I'm going to tell you who's at fault here. I can imagine those students. I know just who they are. It's Brown's fault. And I'm not putting this on you, personally, but if any of those students have been on that campus for longer than 10 minutes, and they are really so unfamiliar with the idea that even when an issue is revolting to them, even when it's about them, that everybody deserves a hearing because you can't make an effective argument against, especially, a power structure, so you've heard out what they think. If they don't understand that people who disagreed with them about matters of race are not crazy, if they really think that any Ray Kelly that they see in the news is a modern day stand-in for Bull Connor, then, you know something, Glenn? They have learned this, or they have not been taught out of it by their professors in certain kinds of classes at that school. They didn't pick it up in high school. They picked that shit up in college. And so, I wonder what sort of teachers are telling them, or even implying that it's OK to shout down Ray Kelly, and to indulge in that self-

satisfying, medicational kind of performance for the cameras and for the blogs rather than to hear the enemy out so that you can more effectively argue against that person in whatever medium you choose. They didn't learn something from their teachers, and it's the teachers who are at fault, not these poor 19 year-olds and 20 year-olds. Their eyes have not been opened. Would you agree?

LOURY: No, John. I wouldn't. Although, I grant you that there will be some teachers who run afoul of the line that you just drew. And I think there are arguments on the other side of the rant that I gave at the beginning that we might want to come back to. I just didn't hear any of those arguments from the protestors, arguments more in keeping with the kind of post-modernist critique of liberal, rational, deliberation that a guy like Stanley Fish has championed over many years. There are arguments. And so, we could come back to that. But no. I think Brown's not a one-dimensional place, and I fear that part of the damage done by the fiasco of last night is that it will reinforce the attitude that you displayed in your comment, which is that, you know, Brown, and places like Brown, are kind of homogenous, liberal vestiges of political correctness and fashionable, you know, left-wing thought about race, class, homosexuality, and so forth and

so on -- gender issues -- when, in fact, this is a very heterogeneous community with many different kinds of professors. I know that my students -- I'm talking about me, Glenn Loury, personally. I teach a class called Race and Inequality in America. And in that class, I teach about issues like "stop and frisk" policing and racial discrimination and profiling --

MCWHORTER: As you should.

LOURY: -- as well, I should. And I give, as it were, both sides, or all sides, and I encourage. And I have a whole day about, "Can we talk?" In my class, I begin the controversial sections with a discourse about, you know, there are real issues with respect to who's in control of the microphone, which voices are privileged, what kind of tacit assumptions the very act of having a conversation makes about equality between the partners, about the legitimacy of the background conditions within which the conversation is taking, and so forth, and so on. And there are also communal pressures, that one wants not to be seen to be on the wrong side of history. One may be careful, and cautious, and censoring in what one says about controversial matters, simply because one wants not to offend some sensibility. And the result of that could be an impoverishment of the discourse. I talk about things

like, there are people out there who want to do research on the link between race and IQ, and whether there's some genetic entailment in that, right? Should such research be permitted to be conducted? OK? And, in that particular example, I say, "Yes. That certain research should be permitted to be conducted because to suppress the conduct of the research doesn't get rid of the racist prejudice. It only leaves it free of any factual refutation in order to grow in its own way. I mean, we can't be afraid of the evidence. We can't be afraid to ask a question of fact, and then look at what evidence is available to resolve the question of fact. To do that is to abandon any hope to reasonable discourse. So, there's the Political Theory Project, which is an enterprise here at Brown University run by my colleague in political science, John Tomasi, which is completely organized around the idea that however controversial the issue may be, a university is a place where people will argue on the basis of evidence, and reason about those matters, not attempt to compel agreement by force. And that's why I used the word, "thuggery." I know that's a very harsh word. But I was in that auditorium, OK? I saw a student -- a meek student -- stand up and say to the people he disagreed with what Kelly had been doing. He had a list of questions that he wanted to

ask Kelly. "Please. Could we calm down, let the man speak for 15 to 20 minutes --"

MCWHORTER: Oh, no. No.

LOURY: "-- 20 minutes --"

MCWHORTER: Not dramatic enough.

LOURY: Yeah. But listen, what I want to tell you about this meek student, I mean, he had a very soft voice. He stood up. It took bravery for him to do so because all the crowd was in the other direction. He was shouted down by people who said at him, "Shut up and go write an essay." That was their refutation to the student -- who agreed with them -- saying that he wanted to have the opportunity to confront Kelly with questions that he felt Kelly couldn't answer. Their response to him was to contemptuous, anti-intellectual, "Go write an essay!"

MCWHORTER: And I'm sorry that had to be here.

LOURY: It did. And this is in a university, OK?

MCWHORTER: An Ivy League university.

LOURY: So what I'm saying is, I don't believe you can fault the general left of center ethos that is characteristic of this academic community for that kind of behavior because there are many of us who share that ethos -- one of them is looking at you right now -- but who, in our conduct of our teaching, and our writing, and what we do here, in no way

give a quarter to the coercive and smug adolescent, you know, "I can shout louder than you can shout. And therefore, I'm not going to let you talk," behavior that we saw last night.

MCWHORTER: No.

LOURY: That was horrible. And, again, in my opinion.

MCWHORTER: No, Glenn. I'm sorry. No. You are you. You're different, and you know it, and I respect John Tomasi. And this is important. I'm not doing the old, stupid, '80s, '90s argument that university campuses are these hot beds of unreflective leftism indoctrinating students in becoming culture warriors from the left. I mean, that never made any sense. And, you know, unlike in our earlier discussions, I'm not sitting in my living room as a think tank employee, and you're the one who's at a school. Now, I'm at a school. I'm at a school right now. I'm very much immersed in the exact same Ivy League environment. I teach students of all different colors, and I'm well aware this is no hot bed of the left. Most professors are temperate, *Atlantic Monthly*-reading liberals who are not trying to get anybody running around out in the streets. You don't have to be in order to unwittingly sanction what happened at Brown last night. And this is what I mean: It's one thing to mouth -- and I don't mean this of you, and I don't mean

this of anybody I'm imagining -- well, I am imagining two or three people, but this is not supposed to be ad hominem. One may mouth, "I'm interested in listening to all sides." Everybody says that, especially anybody with a PhD. "I'm interested in listening to all sides." But as we both know, there's a difference between what you say, officially, and what you really feel. And you can be unaware of the difference between that, let's face it. But that doesn't mean that I'm not on to something about human nature, and it includes people who are self-monitoring academics. And let's try this. Let's say that somebody other than you is at Brown, and teaching students about race issues. Let's say they're doing, say, the police. Now, after those students are assigned a couple of chapters of Michelle Alexander's *The Real Jim Crow* (sic), Glenn, let's face it, are they going to have a couple of chapters of Heather MacDonald of the Manhattan Institute who, even though she doesn't write in a way that is supposed to assuage the young black person -- she's not into making anybody feel good, and she does write to right-wing, conservative audience. Nevertheless, Heather -- yes, I know her -- has valid things to say about what policing in New York City entails in minority neighborhoods. And I agree with you, that "stop and frisk" in this city has

gotten absolutely ridiculous and something needs to be done. But still, how many of those students are asked to genuinely read the other side, and not four readings of the right-thinking people, like Michelle Alexander, and William Julius Wilson, and then one reading for contrast. And often, it will be somebody like me, who am thought of as quote unquote conservative, but halfway makes sense. How about somebody who is truly conservative, and truly intelligent, and engaged 50% -- let's face it, Glenn. It's almost impossible. And that doesn't mean --

LOURY: OK --

MCWHORTER: -- and -- wait a minute. That doesn't mean that a campus is a hot bed of leftism.

LOURY: I got it. I got what you're saying --

MCWHORTER: But those students haven't been taught.

LOURY: -- John. I don't disagree with the description that you're giving of the modal, typical --

MCWHORTER: Good word.

LOURY: -- most frequently encountered teaching pedagogy. I could give exceptions. My own case would be, one, they don't read Heather MacDonald because I go right to James Q. Wilson.

MCWHORTER: There you go.

LOURY: Do you know what I mean? I just, as it were, go to the source. I mean, the late James Q. Wilson, political scientist extraordinaire was, for many years, kind of the Dean of American Government Studies and a fierce advocate of aggressive policing, and imprisonment, and anti-crime strategies, and so on. James Q. Wilson, who, I'm sure, had a big influence on Heather MacDonald -- I've read those pieces of Heather's, and I want to come back to this question of there being another side to the argument about racial profiling. I -- in my class, will assign some of those. It's an empirical question. We can get the syllabi. I'm sure you're right that the frequency distribution of the kinds of articles --

MCWHORTER: Is skewed.

LOURY: -- that the students read will be skewed. I'm sure that that's probably a correct statement.

MCWHORTER: And so, Glenn -- just to cut in very quickly -- that would not only be true about profiling, but about any race issue that intersects with politics. Continue.

LOURY: Yeah. As a description of the frequency with which various kinds of things get said in various classrooms, that's probably correct about a place like Brown, and many other place. Whether that accounts for the behavior we held last night, you and I might agree to disagree about

that. But, certainly, it didn't -- it doesn't help to foster an environment that's open when what's being modeled as you're arguing is what you said. So, let me not even try to argue with out about that. I'll let the point stand. But I do want to say something about the fact that Heather MacDonald does deserve to be read -- people like her -- and argued with because the thing that I didn't hear -- I mean, this was so disturbing to me. Ray Kelly's first sentence -- I knew that much because he got it out before he was shot down --

MCWHORTER: He got one out? Yeah.

LOURY: -- yeah -- was going to be, "I just met with some victims of crime." And I'm pretty sure what he was going to say was, "They thank me, and support the policy because they see that it has made a difference in their lives." OK? Now, here's the issue that I'm raising. Of course, there are victims of crime. Crime is down in New York City. Is it down because of profiling? We could argue about that. You see? That would be actually arguing about the evidence, you know?

MCWHORTER: There's a lot of evidence on both sides. Yep.

LOURY: I don't think it can be demonstrated that it's due to racial profiling because crime is down across the board in many cities whose policing practices differ dramatically

from New York City's. So, it's unclear in the evidence that he can even make that claim.

MCWHORTER: It's unclear how much of a role it plays --

LOURY: That's what I'm saying.

MCWHORTER: -- not that it played a role. Yeah.

LOURY: Of course it played a role, but it may have played only a minor role, and not enough to justify it. Because these are questions of when the benefits outweigh cost, and who's getting the benefits, and who bears the cost? OK? So, one question is, does it work as a manner of suppressing crime? Because there is such a thing as crime, OK? Now, another question is, the crime is disproportionately coming from certain neighborhoods, and committed by people who belong to certain demographics -- male, black, Latino, youthful, South Bronx, East New York, Brooklyn, blah, blah. OK? These are just facts. All right. Now, what should be done in the face of those facts is something about which one can have a discussion. Ray Kelly is saying, "OK. We're going to round up every third person that falls into the demographic category and check their pockets." Some of us are saying, "Un-uh! That's me, that's my son, and that's my cousin. And we didn't do anything wrong." And by the way, some of us are saying -- Commissioner Kelly and Mayor Bloomberg -- "When you point

to the racial disparity in violent criminal offending, and say that blacks are disproportionately found amongst the offenders, and then compare that to the disproportionate rate at which blacks are stopped, you overlook the fact that only one in 10, or one in 30 are offending." You're stopping one out of three of everybody in those neighborhoods. So, your whole empirical argument, Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Kelly, is rooted on a fallacy that it's legitimate to compare the racial disparity and offending rates, since offending is a practice undertaken by only a minority -- indeed, a small minority of these communities -- and the racial disparity in stopping, which is a universal policy that you're applying to every Tom, Dick, and Harry walking down the street. That's a bogus comparison. So, in other words, there is crime. There is a need for a response. You're not going to disband the police department. The only question is how they're going to proceed. If you change these procedures, there will be consequences. Those consequences need to be weighed in the balance. Some of the people who are going to be benefitted by whatever crime-reducing consequences flow from these policies are your relatives, friends, and neighbors. They are disadvantaged people. Part of their disadvantage is reflected in the fact that they can't move away from the

criminal offending that goes on around them. The police are there to mitigate the effects of that offending. This is a complicated matter, in other words --

MCWHORTER: Also --

LOURY: -- and this black and white, you know, R-A-Y dash C-I-S-T Kelly -- was one of the posters outside.

MCWHORTER: How clever. Right.

LOURY: Yeah. I mean, really profound. Do you know what I mean?

MCWHORTER: Yeah. It's worthy of contact. Yeah.

LOURY: And people standing up said, "I have been victimized by profiling. I've been victimized by profiling. I'm afraid to go out of my house." But there's no mention of the victimization of people who were bludgeoned, who were raped, who were deprived of their property, who were shot in the head. You know, I mean, it's --

MCWHORTER: You know something else I would add to this? The students missed an opportunity because a lot of what it also comes down to is, let's say we can quibble about how much of an effect these new, since 2004, policies on profiling have. The question is, what degree of alienation in the community do you wish to create with these sorts of policies? Let's say that you pull back a little bit and do an experiment, and let's say there's a certain risk that

maybe crime might tick upward a little bit, this being crime mostly against people of color. Nevertheless, given that you're creating a generation of alienated black men, and a whole neighborhood full of people who hate the cops, do you care about that, Ray Kelly? If I had him in a room, I would ask him that. And I would hope there were a lot of people watching because, the truth is, I'm not sure that Kelly, or even Bloomberg, think much about that. And I frankly suspect they don't care. Their answer is, "We don't care how those people feel. They need to really just get themselves fixed up, put their houses in order, start reining their kids in. We don't care how. We don't think about whether or not that's possible. Until they do that, this is the way it has to be." If that's how they feel, I would like to see them have to say it openly because then we could have a whole different kind of discussion. And then we could maybe even talking about Ray-cism as having actually been expressed. But if you don't ask them about it, and if nobody sees it -- in these days, it would be so easy to ask somebody like Ray Kelly about that, and have it recorded, and blogged -- it would be all over peoples' phones. If you don't do, then, instead, you've done a beautiful hip-hop performance of the kind that you're talking about. And nothing really happens. I'm sure all

those people felt really good about what they did, but people are still getting beat up and shot in the streets, and people are still being, more importantly, profiled. Ray Kelly didn't learn anything different. And so, yes. I agree with your revulsion at how crude all of this was. Nevertheless, I think that almost in a religious sense, a lot of those kids really thought that they were doing the right thing by performing in a certain way, which they've been taught is how people were heroic, and help make their lives possible 40 years ago. You know?

LOURY: Yeah. I think you're --

MCWHORTER: I don't think that it's explicit, but they're modeling themselves on what they see in the pictures. They get to be Martin Luther King. And they don't understand that times have changed because they're 19, and I wish that more grown-ups would explain that to them.

LOURY: It's not just that times have changed. It's also that those issues aren't anything like the same.

MCWHORTER: That's what I mean.

LOURY: I mean, Pettus Bridge, the Voting Rights March, and all of that, registering voters in Mississippi and Louisiana and Alabama and doing do, fearful of your life, fighting to get rid of separate toilets and separate lunch counters and separate waiting rooms in a bus station,

getting access to the ballot for African Americans so they could participate in a democracy -- these were all, you know, without any doubt correct and necessary policies that enhanced our democracy. The issue of how do you police a city like New York is not black and white in the same way. Not at all, that's what I've been trying to say. I think that's what you're saying, as well. As far as the alienation point is concerned, you're spot-on: it is a weak point in the whole pro-profiling argument. By the way, there's plenty of accumulating evidence, that there's a project that the Institute for Social Policy Studies at Yale called "Detaining Democracy" that two political scientists at Yale whose names escape me now -- Weaver is one of them -- have mounted, where they've been gathering survey and other evidence from neighborhoods in New York precisely about people's trust in government, respect for institutions, willingness to cooperate with police, participation in electoral process. Insist that the institutions of civil authority are there for their benefit, and I think very persuasively suggesting that the heavy increase in the kinds of unjustified stops of people on the streets of the city are negative factors in sustaining people's engagement with democratic process in a bad, in that sense --

MCWHORTER: I'm glad that's being measured.

LOURY: Yeah, it is, it is, it is. New York City's got a mayoral election coming; I understand that the candidate likely to win, the liberal Democrat Bill de Blasio, opposes racial profiling.

MCWHORTER: He does.

LOURY: Yeah, so in other words, who knows if Ray Kelly will even be the Commissioner of Police a year from now? Who knows whether or not these policies won't be responsive to the very concerns that people are expressing? Which suggests to me that we're not dealing with an implacable force of racism that can't be reasoned with and simply must be opposed no matter what -- we're dealing with policies that are in fact in play, being argued with, and the inability of the Commissioner to effectively answer questions like the one that you would want to ask him would be nothing but a furtherance of our political objectives of getting rid of these policies, or at least scaling them back.

MCWHORTER: Yeah, isn't it interesting how this sort of mood often happens just when change is beginning? I mean, another reason you can only be so angry at these students is that all students have venues for performance at a certain age. It's called being a teenager, and nowadays,

it extends into one's early 20s. For students of color, one way of performing in that way -- and I know that it sounds dismissive for me to say that their feelings, which are based in really grievances, are performance but I believe that the tenor of this is performative -- is race-based issues like this. It's certainly not every black or brown student on campus; it's a type. One thing I've noticed with these sorts of things is for every one of them who was up on a chair or was screaming, there are two others who are kind of rolling their eyes and thinking that those people are a bit much. It's a certain kind of minority student, but it reminds me actually of Stanford. I was a grad student there in 1989 and there was a huge takeover of the President's office led by students of color and white fellow travelers, and what was interesting is that the issue was a couple of hires that hadn't been made. Something about an assistant dean, something about one professor who hadn't gotten tenure, and the fact was, this was 1989. By this time, diversity, affirmative action, is in full flower, there's a black studies department -- it was a program at the time, but it was up and running -- there are various black professors, there's black clubs, black dorm, and yet even in this situation, there were people who were spending the night in the President's

office and being carted off down to the station house because of these rather minor administrative issues. They were performing. They enjoyed it. I talked to some of them because I was young enough to know many undergraduates socially. I could tell that a lot of even the very smartest ones, the ones writing editorials in the paper, there was an extent to which they were enjoying it. Whereas nobody on Pettus Bridge was having a good time, these students were enjoying it. That's what these students are doing as well, to an extent. I think you're a little hard on them, although I would have been angry, sitting in the room. You were in the room, right?

LOURY: I was definitely in the room, and you're so right about the performative dimension. I mean, the scene after the lecture was canceled of people cheering because they achieved their objective, and then there were these pockets of conversation around the auditorium. I lingered for a long time, and there was weeping. There was a young woman I remember in particular. She looked to be in her early 30s, I don't know how old she was, she spoke of her daughter having been profiled. She was screaming, "My daughter was profiled, my daughter was profiled!" She was in tears, John. I mean, you couldn't help but be moved by the performance, but it was a performance!

MCWHORTER: Yeah, it was.

LOURY: I mean, there was no doubt about it. There were, you know, 50-something and 60-something types who were in there, and they were throwing around statistics in Kelly's face about, you know, "The evidence proves that it doesn't work," and you know, they were incoherent and absurd to some degree about the factual matters that they were raising. They were not well-informed and they were not at all persuasive, but they were shouting, and they were shouting it as if they were at the, you know, as you say, nobody was having a good time on the Pettus Bridge; I think they were having a good time last night. I think that's a good way of putting it.

MCWHORTER: Yeah, and it's crucial.

LOURY: There is also the issue of university governance because the students had tried to get the lecture canceled. Some of our students at Brown, upon hearing the announcement of the lecture said, "This is an inappropriate person to bring to the university, you should cancel the lecture." The administrators responsible for the program did not concede to the student demands to cancel the lecture, and so, one student is quoted in our newspaper this morning saying, "They wouldn't cancel it? Well, we canceled it for them." OK?

MCWHORTER: Ah, good.

LOURY: So, who's running the show around here? Was there sufficient student participation in the choice of the lecture and the design of the format? Some would say they defend this action of thuggery -- I'm going to stick with that -- coercion, it was coercion, they took control of the room and they, by force, prevented the thing from going forward and invited counterforce. Invited, in other words, an enforcement of the kind of titular authority -- private property, if you're not going to conform with our rules, we're not going to allow you to be here, please leave through the nearest exit, oh you won't go, we've asked you to leave our property, the sergeant-of-arms will escort you out -- at which point they go limp in the aisle and flail around, and then you've got a fiasco that the university certainly wanted to avoid. Knowing that the university wouldn't enforce its rights to determine whether or not a conversation will take place on its property, they forced the conversation not to happen. And in so doing, deprived people like me, who crowded ourselves into that room, from being able to do something that we have every right to expect to be able to do in the university environment. So, it was coercion, but they felt that they had no recourse because they couldn't get their demand that the lecture not

be held in the first place respected by the administration. Oh, by the way, I should mention, one of the students told me afterwards that this was the last straw for them because the Board of Trustees and President of the University, in our recent overseers' meeting, had decided not to divest the university's investment holdings from companies that are involved in the coal business.

MCWHORTER: Oh, OK. Right, right.

LOURY: Coal: for global warming and environmental purposes, we were supposed to be making a statement with our portfolio management by saying we won't have anything to do with coal. The trustees and the President decided, after considering the request, that that was not the way the university wanted to run its investment portfolio. People were annoyed at that, so now, we can't get them to divest from coal and we can't get them to cancel a lecture that we don't think should take place -- they think they're going to decide who will come to the university and speak. We'll show them.

MCWHORTER: You know what this reminds me of? We should close up since you have to go teach.

LOURY: Yeah, we should conclude, I agree.

MCWHORTER: This reminds me of, and this is not just Brown but it just happens to be, about nine years ago, I spoke at

Brown back when there was the effort to craft apologies for Brown's role in slavery. I was one of the people brought up to talk about reparations for slavery, which was a hotter issue back then. I remember I made back then what was my case against reparations, which was that reparations already happened in various ways after the Civil Rights movement, and that therefore, to ask for a special kind wouldn't work. I had a whole argument worked out, and I gave it to a room full of people that was probably of similar composition to the one that shouted down Ray Kelly, and nothing like that happened to me. But as soon as I finished, the hands went-- zoom! -- up. It was clear that a certain crowd, not everybody in the room, but a good 10 of them, had come in order to fight with me. That in itself was fine. I mean, as long as they let me talk, and they did, but what I found interesting was that a lot of them were disappointed that I turned out not to be a dragon. You know, a lot of them said, "Oh, well, we were waiting for you to be, you know, somebody who was just dismissive," and what they really meant was had limp, stupid arguments that they could then just shout down. They didn't like the fact that I actually gave them something that they would have to chew on, and you know what that is, frankly? These were smart, engaged people,

but we are encouraged on race to be lazy: these people were waiting to be Jesus instead of to actually have to think about something. That was the impression that I came away with. I thought they shouldn't have been disappointed that I'm capable of making sense. That's what they should have enjoyed, but instead, they were waiting for me to be some sort of demagogue who would be easy to knock down. That's the hardest thing about race, especially today, because frankly, it's harder now than it was in 1963.

LOURY: Much harder.

MCWHORTER: The new issues are subtler, and these people are waiting for it to just be an easy score on TV like it was, after a whole lot of hard work, in 1963. It's never going to be like that again. It disappoints me massively that people are waiting for it to be easy.

LOURY: That's a very good note on which we can end, John. I think you've got it right on the head, there.

MCWHORTER: Certainly.

LOURY: It's harder now. It's harder now. All the more reason why we should be disturbed at the inability to carry forward this kind of debate.

MCWHORTER: That was a tragic evening indeed, and I'm glad I was down here. Wow.

LOURY: John, we didn't even get a chance to hear your complaint about lack of tolerance in the cabinet.

MCWHORTER: Oh, we're doing that. Our next one is going to be about this issue of world curriculum because I'm becoming very interested in it. So, yeah, that's our next talk.

LOURY: OK, take care, now. Thanks for coming on.

MCWHORTER: Glenn, I'll talk to you soon. Bye.

LOURY: Bye.

END OF AUDIO FILE