

John McWhorter on 2016-11-14 at 12.04

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AUTO: You're listening to a podcast from Bloggingheads.tv.

GLENN LOURY: Hello John McWhorter.

JOHN MCWHORTER: Hi Glenn Loury.

GLENN LOURY: Yes, we are John McWhorter and Glenn Loury here at *The Glenn Show* at Bloggingheads.tv. McWhorter of Columbia University, yours truly, Glenn Loury, of Brown University. And we are doing our first post-election conversation, John. How are you doing? How are you holding up?

JOHN MCWHORTER: (laughter).

GLENN LOURY: Donald Trump is president, man.

JOHN MCWHORTER: (inaudible). Holding up fine. I am appalled that that man was elected. Because I consider him incompetent. I am not as interested in the fact, no, let me not say that.

GLENN LOURY: (laughter) I'm very curious about what that was going to be, but OK.

JOHN MCWHORTER: You know, let's keep it, let's keep it. The fact that he, and you and I disagree even on this, the fact that he's a bigot, I think of him as Archie Bunker. He's just like Archie Bunker, does not move me in itself, as

much as it moves a lot of people. I don't care how he feels about me, or anybody else. But, I have been chilled to see the extent to which his election seems to have given a certain sense of release and permission to a certain kind of hooligan. And yes, it's going to turn out that some of these reports were made up, but it seems to me there have been so many reports of, especially college students who are not white being hurt or insulted, or being subject to japeries of various sorts, in the wake of this, all of this could not be made up. And there are people who are taking advantage of the air of Trump. Air, A-I-R, in order to do these things. Maybe that'll just be this week, and then it'll die down. Maybe that's the new normal; I don't think we can know at this point. I think that that's a damn shame. However, and here's where we're probably going to agree, I think that the blue America notion that what got Trump elected was something we could call bigotry, that we have now seen that a vast swath of the United States is more bigoted than we would ever have suspected since 1975, I am not convinced by that. It depends on what you call bigotry, and what you call racism. But that verdict doesn't work for me.

GLENN LOURY: OK.

JOHN MCWHORTER: And quick summary. One, I don't care whether Trump is a mean man. I don't like him; I certainly didn't vote for him, I don't like him. But him alone, I don't care. Two, I am worried about the model that he's setting. Three, I do not think that everybody who voted for Trump is a racist. There.

GLENN LOURY: OK. I just left a video on YouTube depicting a white man who had a minor, you know, fender bender on the west side of Chicago, got out of his car to talk to the driver of the other car who happened to be an African-American woman, about did she have insurance, was set upon by a mob of black people who bludgeoned, beat, kicked him, got in his car, and drove the car away from the scene with the man holding onto the side door trying to keep his car in his possession. He eventually let go when the driver, who had stolen his vehicle, slowed down below 40 miles an hour. This is a white man, and the dozens of people standing at bus stops and on the streets of the west side of Chicago, in a black neighborhood, cheered on this bludgeoning and beating by a mob of this innocent man. With shouts, "He's a Trump voter, he voted Trump, he voted Trump!" OK? Now that was actually, that actually happened. Dozens of people stood by and watched. They were all black, John. A white man getting beaten about the

head and dragged through the streets, cheering on the assault, with the chant, "Get him, he voted Trump." OK? You are here talking with respect John, about some college fraternity brothers waving a banner that says, "We won, we won" or some good old boy hanging a Confederate flag off the back of his car saying, "We won, we won." I'm talking about actual mob violence, racially motivated, in the context of the outcome of this election. What am I trying to say? I'm trying to say that some of this stuff is made up. Some of it is wildly exaggerated. Some of it is the natural endpoint of a certain narrative about this election, which people who inhabit the precincts that you and I live in, like Brown University and Columbia University, or the University of Pennsylvania, or the University of New Hampshire, the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, or whatever, are quite used to a narrative that says the country is a racist country, the people who voted for Trump are racist people, and Trump's elevation to president-elect incites violence. But I'm talking about an actual mob that dragged a man out of a car and beat him. Now, how come that's not running in a constant loop on cable television right now, to depict the actual threat to civil order? I'm talking about a real

threat, OK? I'm talking about something trending on Twitter, "Rape Melania." Have you heard about that?

JOHN MCWHORTER: No.

GLENN LOURY: Have you heard about the hashtag, "Rape Melania," was a trendsetting item on Twitter until I think they finally took it down. But this was going on over the last 36 or 48 hours. Assassination threats against Trump are to be found on Twitter. How come that's not the centerpiece of our discussion about civil disorder in the aftermath of this election, and not some speculation, hypothetically, about how racism is going to be let loose in the country because this man won the election? I'm just asking.

JOHN MCWHORTER: And actually, I was at a dinner party on Friday night, and I heard from not one but two white teachers that black students were hurling in their faces that they were Trump voters when there was some sort of tension in the classroom. And, you know, both of these women were quite the antithesis of the Trump voter, but apparently Trump is now standing in for whiteness. Now, I --

GLENN LOURY: Yeah, I put you on the spot, you might not know about these things. And there's no reason that you would be sympathetic with any of this crazy --

JOHN MCWHORTER: Oh no, no, those things are predictable; I would be surprised if those things had not happened. I just had not happened to catch them. No, those things are inexcusable, and that's such a weak word. Those things are absolutely revolting. Now, "Rape Melania" was that part of Black Twitter, so to speak? Or was this just (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

GLENN LOURY: I don't know that, and I'm not alleging that. I just read --

JOHN MCWHORTER: I'm going to guess that that --

GLENN LOURY: -- that it was trending item on Twitter.

JOHN MCWHORTER: You're making a more general, yeah.

GLENN LOURY: You mean there is a Black Twitter? I'm sorry to reveal my ignorance. There's such a thing as Black Twitter? That's not just a euphemism?

JOHN MCWHORTER: Well it's a hazy, it's a hazy category. But there is a realm of Twitter that is lead by black people that's known for having a certain sense of humor and a certain politics, I need not tell you what the politics are, but it's a whole world of Twitter that is often admired by people from the outside. Anyway.

GLENN LOURY: Got it.

JOHN MCWHORTER: I agree with you Glenn that the fact that we've been concentrating so much in the mainstream media,

or that the mainstream media has concentrated so much on the racism angle is not fair. There's an idea that if some, you know, housewife or house husband in central Pennsylvania voted for Trump then, you know, even if their uncle is married to a black woman and they've got plenty of Latino people in their family, and even if they don't think Trump is a great guy but they voted for him for other reasons, that that person, because they don't prioritize racism and sexism, therefore qualifies as a moral troglodyte, the idea that we're being taught to think that way, and that the nastiness of a lot of the anti-Trump movement. You know, it's not just people peacefully congregating in parking lots and in college classes. And then also, incidents like what you just described which let's face it, unless they're really extreme, are not going to make it to the front pages of the mainstream media for any length of time.

GLENN LOURY: Can I interrupt just for a moment John?

JOHN MCWHORTER: Yeah.

GLENN LOURY: It was barbarism, John. You have to see the video. It was a collapse of civil order, it was the worst thing. OK? It was a racist assault, being celebrated by dozens of people. Based upon a presumption about somebody's political behavior, derived from their skin

color. It was absolutely despicable. OK? That's what I should be hearing in the mainstream media right now, a racial attack, I'm sorry, OK, I'll stop. I'll stop. But I'm very much disturbed by the double standard that people feel smugly self-satisfied in acting on, based upon the fact that scores of millions of their fellow citizens don't share their particular view about things. Man, there's no justification for this. It should be denounced by everybody, did you hear -- I'm sorry, I'm sorry John, what Harry Reid said about the president-elect? This is the outgoing Minority Leader of the Senate. Who said that we just elected a bigot and a sexual predator. I'm not quoting him, but those characterizations are in his official statement.

JOHN MCWHORTER: But he's right! But it's true. That's true.

GLENN LOURY: Oh come now. Come on!

JOHN MCWHORTER: Whether or not (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

GLENN LOURY: A sexual predator? I think I know what a sexual predator is.

JOHN MCWHORTER: He is! He is. Now let's make it clear. A sexual predator, to many people, means a certain kind of person.

(pause)

GLENN LOURY: John? John, I've lost you. OK, you're back.

There was an interruption in our transmission. You were just explaining what a sexual predator means. A certain kind of person.

JOHN MCWHORTER: A sexual predator, I think maybe an older definition of sexual predator is somebody who jumps out from behind the bushes, but I think that you and I can understand that since the early '90s in particular, that word has extended, and I think in this case, in a way that is healthy rather than the extension of race and racism, which I think is not, but sexual predator means a kind of behavior that's frankly rather typical of a great many men, but this man exemplifies it, and to an extreme, and in ways that many women have talked about, that's all. He is not -
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GLENN LOURY: Oh please.

JOHN MCWHORTER: -- he's somebody who has that on his hands.

GLENN LOURY: OK, we have to agree to disagree about that.

What I saw was a campaign in which a lot of things were said back and forth. I saw the *Access Hollywood* tape, just like everybody else. I realized that women came forward, and I realized that Donald Trump denied that he had done anything wrong. As far as --

JOHN MCWHORTER: He lied!

GLENN LOURY: As far as I know, you don't know that!

JOHN MCWHORTER: Oh, but we more or less know.

GLENN LOURY: These things have not been (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). Look, let me get out of the position of defending Trump. I don't want to defend Trump about the behavior that you're alleging him. I simply want to say this is no way to conduct our public affairs. The election is over, the man is the president-elect of the United States. And all the epithets, all of the ugly innuendo, all of the smearing, he's also Putin's sock puppet, right? Right? He's also a person who's in league with a foreign power to try to undermine American institutions, right? Right? You didn't see his tax returns, he must be a thief, right? He took a \$900 million loss, he must therefore be somebody who doesn't want, whatever, whatever, right? There was a retweet of a symbol that looked like a Star of David that people interpreted to be anti-Semitic, so I suppose that he's also an anti-Semite too. Hitler is on the doorstep about to take charge of American institutions, is that so? I mean, what I have to say to those people, and if you're in that group I'm sorry my friend, grow up! OK? That's why you lost the election. Because you thought

name calling was a substitute for making political arguments.

JOHN MCWHORTER: OK. I agree with you on your last statement. I think that certainly part of the reason this, I keep calling it a central Pennsylvania person, because I just happen to have been there last week. Part of the reason that person voted for someone like Trump is because they're tired of being made fun of by readers of the *New Yorker* and listeners to NPR, as the people, quote unquote, "Who are out there, and we don't know how racist they are." A lot of the people bristle at that, and they should. However, Glenn, we -- a lot of the things that you said are exaggerated, of course. There's been a certain amount of rhetoric about Trump that is over the top. However, we have, I do think that he has prejudiced feelings against black people, because he said, for example, that black accountants are lazy. Not to mention this. Now, are we inside of his head? No. But we never require that standard of argument. His father supported good old fashioned segregationist policies, and he's old enough to have been raised to support them for a while himself, and let's face it, Glenn, what sorts of things must his father and his father's, you know, contemporaries, have said around little Donald Trump when he was little? Yes, he's a

bigot. And not -- more to the point, he doesn't have the decency, which many people of his age and station today would have, to hide it. And it's not only against black people, we know the drill. Muslims, Latinos, he is. And he is a sexual predator, in that way Glenn.

GLENN LOURY: What about Muslims, and what about -- I mean you're just throwing these charges around. What about Muslims and what about Latinos?

JOHN MCWHORTER: The idea that he would say that for example, the Latino immigrants, the Mexican immigrants that came here. He didn't say about all Mexicans, Mexican immigrants who come here, quote unquote, "Are rapists." And he's saying that without any kind of statistics. Notice, I don't think that he said it about all Latinos.

GLENN LOURY: That's not what he said actually, and again, I hate to be in this position. He said Mexico's not sending us their best. They're sending murderers, they're sending rapists, and some I assume are good people. That's not what I would have said. But he didn't say that all the Mexican immigrants were rapists. He said they're sending us rapists and murderers. He said --

JOHN MCWHORTER: But that implies that most of the people in that group, or some unpleasantly large number, are rapists and murderers, (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

GLENN LOURY: Yeah, the number is too large to be acceptable.

It otherwise has no particular quantitative connotation.

But again --

JOHN MCWHORTER: And where did that come from?

GLENN LOURY: Please let me get out of this, because the campaign is over! These are shot -- well, never mind.

JOHN MCWHORTER: And (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

GLENN LOURY: Let's move on, let's move on.

JOHN MCWHORTER: -- a sexual predator, yeah, he's like something out of *Mad Men*, and more to the point, stood up and lied about it when obviously he did do those things. And that's our president. Now frankly, when he was just going to be somebody who ran for president, I didn't think it was important, as everybody else did. But this is somebody who has groped and, you know, kissed, and pushed around all (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

GLENN LOURY: We're living in the post-Bill Clinton dispensation. OK? I think I'll just stop there. I was around in 1992, I remember when Bill Clinton got elected, and when conservative magazines were combing all over Arkansas, finding people who lived in trailer parks, and having them testify, finding state troopers who were the palace guard for Bill Clinton, and having them testify about how he conducted himself. I won't even go there, OK?

The man has been elected, it's Donald Trump. He's your president, he's your president in waiting, John. And I think we need to elevate the discourse above the, you know, hurling around of invectives, suitable for a bitter campaign, and figure out how it is that we're going to go forward. We're being lead, we're going to be lead for the next four years, he's going to be appointing people to the Supreme Court. He's going to stand up a government. He's going to represent you, me, and everybody else. And unless you've got a better case to make than the case that I think could actually objectively have been made about Bill Clinton when he was taking office, I think it's time to move on.

JOHN MCWHORTER: Glenn, I think that the case against Donald Trump and his behavior with women is pretty much airtight. It's clear what he did. And more to the point, I mean think about all the things various presidents had done to women. That's not the issue. It's that when confronted with the kind of obvious and near-concrete evidence that is possible with today's technology, not to mention climate, he lied. I mean, Glenn, this is without --

GLENN LOURY: I thought we were going to move on. I'm prepared to move on.

JOHN MCWHORTER: Wait, wait, Glenn. One more, come on. This is the merest person, the merest person, who has been elected president in roughly 125 years. And you think that everybody should just shut up about it because he got elected?

GLENN LOURY: No, what I said was the innuendo, the invective, and the ill-founded charges that are just being bandied about, can be put away for the next campaign, and we can get down to serious business talking about which direction the country is going to go in. What I said was, the reason that Donald Trump, in my opinion, won this election is because the Clinton campaign decided to do exactly what you're doing, which is to make this a characterological debate. How bad is he, how bad is he, how bad is he? And never effectively rebut the substantive content of the challenge that he made to the political establishment about trade policy and about jobs. About putting America first, about having a border that mattered. About not lapsing into amnesty, and so on. About reordering our trade relations, and so on. About standing up again our military. About taking the side of the cops, and not Black Lives Matter. Those are things worth actually debating, and whether or not this man is a sexual predator? Come on. That's hyperbolic language that I think, as I've said, and

I'll stop, was not even well suited for the campaign. It lost Hillary Clinton the campaign. People decided they weren't going to be lead around by the nose by a bunch of a moralizing hypocrites who sneer and throw labels around. They decided they were going to vote for what they took to be their interests. Their interest. Economic interest, political interest. If you were going to tell me the man said make America first, and that's the most horrible motto I ever heard, how dare he elevate American nationality above the well being of humanity? Climate change threatens the globe. He wants to keep a few jobs for a few coal miners in eastern Kentucky at the expense of taking all of us down the drain in 100, or 150 years? If you had said that, if you had said building a wall on that border, it's not a racist, anti-Mexican act. It is a shooting our own selves in the foot, because it poses us vis-à-vis the rest of the world, the way, I don't know, the Hungarians who want to put a fence on their border with Slovakia or something, are showing themselves to be. America is supposed to be a global leader, and we're supposed to be a leader in this hemisphere. We have deep and long-term interests in not building walls and drawing -- pulling up drawbridges, but rather in opening our doors to our neighbors to the south, so it's the kind of thing that

Hillary Clinton actually said to some bankers in Brazil, when she was talking about US Latin American relations. If you had said that, and you had said that our candidate who's been elected, Donald Trump, is bad because he thinks the wrong things about that, you'd have my attention. If you had said he wants to reboot the military, our military is already way too -- footprint is already way too overextended in this world, and it's time for us to back away from the bellicose militaristic posture, drone strikes everywhere, etc., etc., you would have my attention. But instead, to tell me that something about his father, and what kind of conversations he heard growing up, and so forth, it just, I can't take it seriously, John. I don't take it seriously.

JOHN MCWHORTER: Well apparently you lack a certain desire to feel a certain sense of authority and gravitas in the president of your nation, but we're arguing about something that's becoming a little bit trivial. Glenn, it sounds to me, if I may, that you just wish that you had been the one to (laughter) say all these things. Because it sounds like you didn't watch the three debates. Hillary didn't just stand there saying he's a racist, he's a sexist. If anything, she was rather restrained, she said these things, let's face it, it was that Trump has a way of talking and a

way of being that attracted a lot of people, to the point that they weren't going to listen to rational argument, because that's what human beings are like. And so, he said America first, he seemed to feel the pain of that person in eastern Kentucky, and it got to the point where Hillary Clinton saying the clinical things that she was saying about how she was going to try to bring back some manufacturing and in the meantime, make sure that people like that could be retrained to do other kinds of jobs, let's face it, that doesn't sound as interesting to somebody (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

GLENN LOURY: I'm sorry John, a basket of deplorables, I'm sorry? Did I misremember that?

JOHN MCWHORTER: She slipped once, but that was the only (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

GLENN LOURY: She slipped? That wasn't -- that wasn't a real genuine reflection of what she thought about those people?

JOHN MCWHORTER: She didn't say it over and over again, although it is what she felt. I think she lost because she didn't speak directly enough to that kind of person. She didn't understand that she needed slogans, and charisma, and really hitting that nail over and over. She thought she just had them, partly because Obama had them. She got

another surprise, unfortunately. But it's not as if she had no answers to (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

GLENN LOURY: Do you remember, she didn't spend enough time talking about the issues, and she spent too much time talking about this man's character. She decided that the way she was going to get to the White House was to persuade the voters that he was not to be trusted with the nuclear codes, and so did the president of the United States so decide, and they were wrong. They were wrong, because the voters didn't buy the snow job that you're trying to work on me right now. (laughter) They didn't buy it. They didn't buy the characterological argument. Maybe some of them thought hmm, the guy built a billion dollar company, he must not be too stupid. Maybe he's shrewd and tough. Maybe they thought hmm, the guy has no political experience and he bested 17 professionals in an intense contest in the Republican Party? Hmm. Maybe he actually knows what he's doing. They thought hmm, 30,000 people cramming into arenas suitable for 15 or 20,000, trying to hear him, and lined up for miles outside? Maybe there's a movement going on, while so many people thought, so many other people, so many misguided people thought oh, it's an epiphenomenon, it's not really serious, we don't have to take them seriously, and so forth, and so on. The man is not a fool.

The man is the president-elect of the United States. He came from nowhere and pulled off a political feat unmatched in our history. I think that's due a little bit of respect, as is the office, as is the office, John. The man is in the same position that Barack Hussein Obama was in in November and December of 2008, to usher him into the presidency on the catcalls of sexual predator, and calls to have his wife raped, is the same despicable debasement of our civility and our institutions as it would have been if you had seen some white supremacist doing the same thing in 2008. I ain't having it.

JOHN MCWHORTER: Now, he's dumb.

GLENN LOURY: (laughter) He's dumb. He's dumb?

JOHN MCWHORTER: I don't -- he's incurious. He bought his way into the presidency. He (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

GLENN LOURY: He bought his way? (laughter)

JOHN MCWHORTER: He didn't come from nowhere. This isn't some rags to riches story.

GLENN LOURY: I didn't say that.

JOHN MCWHORTER: He had a lot of money, and he's a TV star. And he would lose an argument with a cloud. And here this person is. (inaudible) things about Obama, they weren't

true. Whereas with this man, they are -- Glenn did you vote for that jackass?

GLENN LOURY: Of course not. (laughter)

JOHN MCWHORTER: Talk about (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

GLENN LOURY: Of course not, John. Of course I did not. Let me just say, no, because I know everybody is listening. I did not vote for Donald Trump. I did not; let me say it one more time, because my son, my girlfriend might be listening to this. I didn't vote for him. I've got a life man, I'm young. I've got a life ahead of me, OK?

JOHN MCWHORTER: (inaudible) you're giving him a hard time.

GLENN LOURY: No, no, no, I'm just annoyed, I'm tired, I've had it up to here. Identity politics is just crap, John.

JOHN MCWHORTER: You know what Glenn? I --

GLENN LOURY: We're a country of 320 million people.

Everything's got to be about race? When the Democrats were having their debate, there was a candidate in the race called James Webb. Used to be the senator from West Virginia, Democrat, a good man.

JOHN MCWHORTER: The military, yeah.

GLENN LOURY: I liked him, I liked him. He voted for the Affordable Care Act, OK? He, when he came into the Senate in 2007, made mass incarceration one of his issues, and had

hearings. I actually went and testified up on the Hill, at Jim Webb's invitation. We have to do something about mass incarceration. Good man. Happens to be a white man who appreciates that the Scots-Irish hillbilly ethnic group in, you know --

JOHN MCWHORTER: I read the book, by the way. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

GLENN LOURY: J.D. Vance's book? Good, good, good. It's worth your attention. This is Jim Webb. He happens to think that white people count, too. OK? And when the Democratic candidates were asked at their debate, Black Lives Matter, or All Lives Matter? The guy from Maryland, I forget his name now, said --

JOHN MCWHORTER: Martin O'Malley.

GLENN LOURY: Martin O'Malley said, "Black Lives Matter." Bernie Sanders said, "Black Lives Matter." Hillary Clinton said, "Black Lives Matter." Jim Webb said, "All Lives Matter." He was the only one up there who said all lives matter. John, that was the right answer.

JOHN MCWHORTER: Glenn, wasn't it Martin O'Malley who said that? I'm just doing a fact check here.

GLENN LOURY: OK, well you can look it up, I don't believe so.

JOHN MCWHORTER: I think he got in trouble for saying it. But anyway, the point is, somebody said that.

GLENN LOURY: Not in the debate, I think he had said it on some other occasion, and by the time the debate came around, he had revised his -- look, look, look. You give people, white people and black people, for that matter, especially the ones who have to live in tough neighborhoods, a choice, between the cops and the Black Lives Matter types, you give them a choice, you give them a choice between law and order, or what some people think is social justice. Which is being on Michael Brown's side in the dispute between Michael Brown and Darren Wilson, you give them a choice, and then you're going to be surprised that a majority of them, or enough of them, in enough places like Pennsylvania, and Ohio, and Michigan, and Wisconsin, and North Carolina, and Florida, side with the cops? And then, and then, not you personally, you're going to call them racist? OK? Black Lives Matter or all lives matter? There was only one correct answer to that question for anybody who wants to lead a country of 300 million people. OK? And it was that all lives matter. They were under the sway of a misguided, self-absorbed, morally superficial movement. Nobody had the courage to say that. That's one of the reasons that they lost this election. It would have been so easy to say it. OK? It would have been not all that hard. All you had to do was do what Bill Clinton

would have done, and in fact what Bill Clinton did do. When he was confronted by some of these nuts who think that they have a right to shout down anybody because we're not dotting every I and crossing every T the way they want to on their manifesto of demands, when Bill Clinton had the courage to confront them, he was pilloried by all of the usual suspects in the media, and on the left of the Democratic Party. But he was absolutely right. He had the right instinct about that. You know? So.

JOHN MCWHORTER: Glenn, you know what? Here's where we meet in the middle on this. This election was a referendum on PC. I think that the ideology, for example, that says that black people have no moral responsibility because of the past, and the imperfect present, the idea of the hypersensitivity to little fillips of language, the idea that a certain segment of society have the right to shut white people down because we've understood now certain truths that cannot be contravened without one being read out of moral society. This was a referendum on that. Because a great many people who are not holding up ugly signs, who no reasonable person could possibly call a bigot, voted for Trump, and they voted for Trump because for them, they may not have thought of him as a paragon of virtue, but those things weren't deal breakers. And I

think it's painfully clear that if after a good 40 years of a certain leftist idea of civility being pushed, particularly in the settings that you and I are used to, and the magazines that we read, that frankly, decent people with college degrees still don't get it, as many people would put it. They're not going to. I think that we've seen that a certain kind of intellectually led movement has wanted to push even good thinking, educated human beings, further than they could go. I think you would say that they were just pushing them in a wrong direction. I would say, I understand the utopian, the moral utopia that say, these social justice warriors are pushing for. I don't think that it's feasible. And I think that we've seen that in what happened with this election, when such a bad man, sorry, ends up being elected because people think of him as representing their concerns, even if he's a bad man. And so, I'm trying to get my footing, my sense of where we stand.

GLENN LOURY: OK.

JOHN MCWHORTER: Because this is a new America in that sense.

GLENN LOURY: It is, I mean I think that, we agree, I agree about what you just said about the kind of moral policing and the PC and people's rebellion against that. And I also agree that the tectonic plates have shifted, and we're in a

world unlike any that we had known before, and it's going to take us all a while to get our bearings. I agree with that. I wonder what you think about the demonstrations that are ongoing around the country, of hundreds or thousands of people coming into the streets. "Not my president," they're saying they surround Trump Tower, they jeer, they spit, I'm told, I wasn't -- I haven't been there. But, and so on. The resistance, the determined resistance, I mean I think I can say, and I'll stop, if Hillary Clinton had won the election, and if these were a bunch of good old boys with Confederate flags out there saying, "We want our country back, we're not going to let you take our country away from us," I think we all know what the headlines would be in the *New York Times* and at CNN, and perhaps what would take up a lot of airtime here at Bloggingheads as well. Can you view these demonstrations with equanimity? Or like me, do they disturb you deeply, and make you wish that both sides, that is Trump and Clinton/Obama, would urge their supporters to back down?

JOHN MCWHORTER: Let them vent, Glenn. I mean yes, I've seen these demonstrations. I'm not sure what they're for. I wouldn't participate in one, because it's not going to create any change. Of course, the good old boys would be

one thing, but in this case, what people are saying is that we are giving sanction to racism and sexism, and, you know, anti-Islamic sentiment, and that this is not what America is. Viscerally, I'm more on their side than I would be on the side of people who are protesting Hillary Clinton's election. But, you know, I mean the symbolism is clear. Here at Columbia, I'm going to say this. Friday when I was leaving campus, there was a man of color, I'm not sure of which color, but he was standing not in the usual where there are protests, but he was standing on one building, kind of up high, all by himself, holding up a sign saying "Not my president, fuck Trump, not my president, fuck Trump." All by himself, and you know, there was some scattered people who were looking at him and kind of pumping their fists in the air with him, but he was all alone, how much can one person do? Especially without a microphone. And I kind of thought, after about 20 minutes, I assume he's not going to be up there, and you know, we have to get on with it, because he's not going to fuck Trump. You know, Trump is the president, and that's what these protests are. The question is what we're going to do over the next four years, and I'd be interested to see. Now the question is, for me, and I don't know if you care about this or not, is it going to be that for the next four

years, hooligans are going to feel empowered to torture non-white people out of an idea that Trump likes it, and what are you going to do about it? That would really worry me. Or, is that going to be something that happens for a couple of weeks, and then everything goes back to some kind of normal. That worries me a little bit.

GLENN LOURY: The only incident that I know of, of anybody actually being physically assaulted as a consequence of the election around racial issues has been a white person who was beaten within an inch of his life and dragged through the streets of the west side of Chicago. I know that that actually happened. Chalking on the sidewalk, "I like Trump, screw you, our side won," is hardly the equivalent of that. That falls to my mind under the Halloween costume rule, which is to say absolutely protected speech which you might not want to engage in on a college campus, because most people disagree with it.

JOHN MCWHORTER: I mean I must admit that I have to wrap my head around, very carefully, and I never quite succeed, the idea that if somebody says something like that while you pass, or writes something like that on your door, that you fall to pieces. Because for me, the idea was, I guess maybe I'm just old enough to have caught this, although my mother was on the other side of history, my mother was an

interesting case about this. If somebody says something like that, you feel above it. The idea is, you are not going to break my stride. Now if somebody cracks you in the head, that's different.

GLENN LOURY: Yeah, that's different.

JOHN MCWHORTER: But, somebody puts up a sign, my very natural inclination is them having done that means I'm better than them, and I'm certainly not going to pay them any attention, and it's not going to ruin my day. But, sometime around 1966, the new idea, and I was only one, but the new idea became somebody says nigger, somebody hangs something from a door, and you're supposed to break down crying and go to the diversity coordinator and talk about how unwelcome you feel. I've never been able to truly understand that. And if I was walking across Columbia's campus and some hooligan, white faculty, you know, we're too old for it to happen, but if somebody said something --

GLENN LOURY: Sorry John, again, there was a break in the transmission just as you were saying, and if someone said something while you were walking about campus.

JOHN MCWHORTER: Yeah, you're frozen. I'll do it again. OK, if someone said something like that while I was walking by, and I would have felt this way when I was 17 years old, if would be you're beneath me in what you just did. And I

would look forward to whatever I was going to. God, I wish that today's younger black people could think that way. And understand that when I say something like this, I'm not saying I have bolstered myself against these slings and arrows. It's a natural feeling. I remember being called blackie in camp by some kid when I was nine. And my immediate feeling was how dare he call me one of these names I've seen people being called on TV? You know.

GLENN LOURY: I want to be clear, I mean I know that some of this is going on, it is very difficult for the people who have to, you know, live with ridicule or taunting, or a rude gesture or word. I don't endorse it in any way, and I don't excuse it in any way. I'm not surprised that there's some crowing going on amongst the people who were more or less closeted Trump supporters in a politically correct environment like my university, who in the aftermath of the victory say "Our side won." I'm sure that it would have been going on in the other direction, some crowing, if it had worked out differently. I don't know how we -- we just haven't thought it through carefully enough in my view, we basically want to ask white people not to have a racial identity, and not to have racial interests. Even as we immerse ourselves in a discourse about politics and culture, which is thoroughly racialized, on behalf of the

marginalized, excluded, disadvantaged, historically underrepresented and so forth, persons of color. But we want to ask white people not to feel white. And if they express a sense of whiteness, we then want to engage in a moral bludgeon, how dare you, how dare you, how dare you? And I just think we need to recover, this is what I think, I'm sorry, it's going to sound very naïve, and it's going to infuriate some people, we need to recover a language of colorblind morality. Not colorblind sociology, not blind to race, race doesn't exist, it has no effect. Morality that, at the end of the day, we are all Americans here. And at the end of the day, we should be working toward a world in which racial identity is less, not more, less salient in our politics. Yes there is such a thing as white supremacy. Yes, there is such a thing as white privilege, although I don't like to use those words casually, but I'll grant you, and I'm sure the stories could be trotted out, ad infinitum, illustrating the reality of racial domination's long shadow that it has cast over American politics and culture. Yes, those things exists. The ideal should be transcending those things. That's hard work, that's going to take a long time, we might not ever get there, just like we may not ever get to a perfect, just society. But that should be the ideal.

Holding onto race? Reifying race? Locking down, doubling down, tripling down on race? Loading the deck with race cards that we play with abandon at every -- I didn't get tenure, must be because I'm black. That kind of move is just inconsistent with us really getting to the society that we want to have. I want to say, it's not naïve to invoke Martin Luther King, 1963. That's not naïve. King '63 was King '63. King '68 was King '68. I agree, they weren't in the same place, not at all, not at all, not at all. But King '63 was not a fool. Magnificent promissory note, "I have a dream that one day my four little children, judged by the color of their skin, and not" -- "by the content of their character, not the color of your skin. Black and white, hand in hand, from the molehill of Alabama to the, you know, stone mountain Georgia," etc., etc. That man was not a fool. He was a prophet.

JOHN MCWHORTER: Glenn, let me ask you something as we near the close. I wonder what you would say in response to something. One answer to a lot of the things you're saying is that there's a certain lesson that white people need to learn about their whiteness. And that is that the essence of their whiteness is their feeling that they are not black, and their participation in the oppression of black people, that the essence of whiteness is that you are at

least not black, and that you know it. And that white people need to get over that. And this is something that you hear from a lot of our current leaders, and I have been thinking about it a lot lately, because I just had occasion, I felt ignorant about James Baldwin. I realized that I quote him, and hadn't really read that much of him. So I, frankly, and I'm not saying this to brag, I'm a completist about everything. I have watched every single episode of *I Love Lucy*, I have now read every single essay James Baldwin wrote, 1,100 pages. And a big theme of his, which I found unexpectedly unconvincing, is this idea that to be white is to be not black, and to like it, and to be dedicated to changing it. Dedicating it to it not changing. And that that's all it is, that that's what the white person is. Everybody else had various traits, all of them presumably positive. But then for white people, they're just not the people who they oppress. Now I'm sure that's being taught all over this campus right now, and all over yours, and so what most people feel is that to be white is to have this guilt that needs to be worked out. And that therefore, we can't get past race. What would you say in response to that, to people who revere this idea, which I think was first articulately expressed by Baldwin, and is a lot of why he was considered such a god, and has

been passed on to, dot, dot, dot, others. What would you say in response to that?

GLENN LOURY: Well, I'd want to think it out carefully. But just off the top of my head, I'd say you're a victim of your own racial narcissism. What do you mean, white? Maybe to you, when you see somebody who's white, that's what you see. You see somebody who's not black. Do you think that that's the way they think about themselves? In fact, do you think they're thinking about you? I mean, do you think your race is that interesting to them? They're Jewish. Or they're Irish. Or they're Armenian. You know, or whatever. I mean, this white identity, I want to be careful here, because this is a big broad phenomenon, and yes, there is a neo-Nazi, you know, let's make America safe for white Christian people reality out there. OK? There's that reality out there. I don't know what percentage of white people are Ku Klux Klanners, or closeted alt-right racists or whatever. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) put a number on it. I mean, I have no idea, 5%, 10%, 20%? I don't know, 20% seems like it would be pretty large to me. But in any case, I don't know, maybe I'm naïve, I don't know. But, you know, we do affirmative action. OK, maybe that's the right thing to do, I can see the argument that we should be doing affirmative -- racial affirmative

action. Favors black people and Hispanics, slightly hurts Asians although we try to hold them as harmless as we possibly can, and definitely hurts white people in the elite institutions, in terms of their chances of getting in. They complain. Abigail Fisher goes up to the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court parses it. Go to Black Twitter, you were telling me about this just earlier, and see what people are, my Facebook page, I see what people are saying about Abigail Fisher. Everything but the C word. OK? She's stupid.

JOHN MCWHORTER: I'm not surprised.

GLENN LOURY: She wasn't smart enough to get into the University of Texas, based upon her test scores, and so now she got to blame black people for her being stupid and whatnot. So, it's like I say, I mean you play the race card with abandon, and on every occasion, and then you end up shocked, shocked, shocked, that white people discover that they're on the other side of that card. They're on the flip side of that card. But, I mainly think Baldwin, you know, is somewhat anachronistic now, Baldwin writing in the '60s or even in the '70s is different than what I imagine that a talented James Baldwin might write today. I don't know, I don't know. But, I mainly see it as a kind of a period piece, racial narcissism, of seeing America as

if it evolved around the experience of African-Americans, and it does not.

JOHN MCWHORTER: You know, I wouldn't use the word narcissism, and I was awed by Baldwin in many other ways, but on this particular facet of him, I agree with you, I found his thesis implied that white people think more about black people than I think they do. He seemed -- he even had the idea that white people will never be whole, that they will always be a sad people who never truly laugh until they face up to their perfidy. I don't think that it concerns most white people that much, and I don't think it did in 1952, either, and I think that brings us to what happened in this election. I think that some of us wish, and I would not call them all narcissists. Some of us wish that black concerns would be paramount. I have white Upper West Side type friends who actually live in the Village, who, you know, will swear to me that race is what America is, and has always been all about, and don't you understand that, John? I get some whitesplaining from them. But, and I tell them no, I think that's an oversimplified view of what America has been. We're told that, by the *New Yorker*, but no. And I think that what we've seen is that these voters decided yes, this man is kind of unsavory, I think many of them would say yeah, he's not great on race, he's

not great on women, wouldn't want him over to dinner, but I'm going to vote for him, because he might bring factories back, or even because he seems to have my back, as somebody who doesn't look down on me as a troglodyte. Yeah, it's just, it just confirmed to me what I found myself guiltily feeling while reading all of that Baldwin.

GLENN LOURY: OK, so let me ask you this, and this could perhaps be a segue to the next conversation that we have, because it is getting late. But, how are we going to factor into this equation the reality of the political failure of Barack Obama? The first black president leaves office having, when he came in, the Democrats in control of both houses of Congress, most of the governorships, and quite a few of the state legislatures, and he leaves, the party has been completely decimated at all levels, OK? There's a Republican president. He went out and put his whole legacy on the line, begging black voters to vote for him, or vote for his candidate, I should say, based upon the preservation of his legacy. They didn't turn out in Philadelphia or Detroit or Milwaukee, where they needed to turn out in order to make that thing go the other way. A few tens of thousands of votes this way or that could have changed this election. He has presided over the rise of the Tea Party, and now the Trump movement. It's a

movement, John. Trump is going to do perhaps what President Obama didn't do. He's going to go around the country, holding rallies after he's seated in office, keeping alive the fervor of this movement. He's going to harness it in some way, mark my words. The president, and his party, are in a deep, deep hole. Barack Obama failed. He ran for president promising hope and change, I know this is more than you're going to have a chance to fully respond to, promising hope and change, and at the end of the eight years, it's bitter ashes. Everything that he did hangs by a thread. Hangs by -- so now, our country's first black president, such an elegant man, so sophisticated, so intelligent, didn't know what the fuck he was doing, as far as leading a country. And the proof is in the eating. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. He failed. So, a black man got to the highest, highest, highest bar, and he fell flat on his face.

JOHN MCWHORTER: We need to talk more about it, but I would very quickly say one, I don't think he fell flat on his face. But (inaudible) hasn't been anything like somebody like me was hoping in 2008, on any level. One, the man, who I admire very much, is only modestly talented as a politician. He didn't come in with the seasoning, he doesn't have the temperament, he was handicapped at first

by that. Then two, and it's interesting, I'm told this is too mechanistic, but frankly, it's not. We're looking for a person, 2008 and 2009 are when Facebook and Twitter became default parts of life. And I think that those two things had more to do than anything else, including Barack Obama's skin color, with focusing what became the Tea Party, and certainly this Trump movement. We live in an era in which a message can get out faster and louder, and the walls of the bubble are thicker. If there had been no Facebook and Twitter that happened to come along for no reason being at the same time as Barack Obama was elected, we would be in a very different situation, because it would have been harder for the Republicans to pull what they pulled. However, this is a rich subject and you know what? I'm going to admit here, for the first time, my flag waving and sentimental feelings about Obama in 2008, you asked me about them in 2010, I think, and I said it's too early. You asked me in about 2012 or '13, and I think I said, we're almost out of time. I will admit now, it has not panned out. But it's not only because of him, it's because in 2008, we didn't know that Facebook and Twitter were going to take over the world. And here we are. It's been a while, hasn't it?

GLENN LOURY: All right John, it has been a while.

JOHN MCWHORTER: Yeah. (laughter)

GLENN LOURY: Oh by the way, those rumors about me being a sexual predator? Completely untrue. (laughter) They're false!

JOHN MCWHORTER: You brought that up.

GLENN LOURY: They're false! I didn't do it, I swear! And I'll sue! I'll sue anybody! (laughter) All right my friend.

JOHN MCWHORTER: All right. Glenn, see you next time.

GLENN LOURY: You bet, John.

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