

The Devil May Care with Megyn Kelly Ep. 17

CH 00:30

Welcome to another episode of Conversations with Coleman. If you're hearing this right now, then you're listening to the public podcast feed, not the private supporter-only feed. Up until now, those two have been identical. And the only perk for supporters has been early access to episodes.

CH 00:47

But starting now, there'll be another difference. If you're listening to the public feed, you may hear a message from a sponsor. Until now, I've rejected every offer to run ads on this podcast because I only feel comfortable vouching for a product that's so useful and so obviously in line with the values of the podcast that no part of me would feel embarrassed to be selling it. And it turns out products like that are few and far between.

CH 01:14

But I found one, and it's called Ground News. Ground News is a website and an app, and its purpose is very simple. It sorts news articles by their political bias and collects them all in one place. So say you're interested in learning about the emerging Hunter Biden scandal, but you understand that both the left and the right will have agendas that are going to colour their coverage of the story. With Ground News, you can just click on a breaking story about Hunter Biden, and see the full range of articles labelled by their political leaning.

CH 01:50

They also have a function called the blind spot, which I find very interesting. The way political bias works, it's often just as much about what you report and don't report, as it is about how you report it. So with a blind spot feature of Ground News, you can see which stories are simply being ignored on the left or the right. Ground News is not attempting to tell you what's fact and what's fiction, which is a relief, because so much of so called 'fact checking' these days is just political bias in disguise.

CH 02:24

So you can decide for yourself what's true about a given story or article. And you don't even have to agree with the way a certain article is labelled to find this function useful. Ground News is just mechanically aggregating and crowdsourcing from other political bias ratings. So it's a very transparent tool, and it's a very simple tool, which is why I find it so useful.

CH 02:50

So I'll put that link in the description, and you can all try it out. Today's guest is Megyn Kelly. Megyn is a journalist and an attorney. She anchored for Fox News between 2004 and 2017. And then for NBC News between 2017 and 2018.

CH 03:09

Many of you will remember that Megyn's NBC show was cancelled in 2018 after she questioned whether blackface was always racist by definition, or whether there are cases where it's okay. A few months later, I ran into her at the comedy cellar in New York, and we had a long conversation about her cancellation. I had written about her case for the National Review, where I noted how many people who are still on TV actually did blackface, from Jimmy Fallon and Jimmy Kimmel, to Sarah Silverman and Ashton Kutcher, and the list goes on.

CH 03:44

Anyway, in this podcast, we don't talk about the blackface incident for two reasons. One, I didn't want to rehearse the same conversation that we had when we met, because that would just be less interesting for both of us. And secondly, I think one of the pernicious effects of cancel culture is that every new person you talk to, for years perhaps, is constantly asking you to revisit the thing you were unfairly cancelled for, the thing you shouldn't have had to think about even once. After a certain point, giving more airtime and mental energy to a person's cancellation, in my view, actually compounds the harm done to them.

CH 04:27

In this episode, we talk about her new podcast, the Megyn Kelly show. We talk about what Megan has been doing in her time out of the public spotlight. We talk about the bombshell film, the challenge of being vulnerable when you're in the spotlight. We talk about her relationship to feminism.

CH 04:46

We talk about the first Biden Trump debate. And we spend a good deal of time talking about Black Lives Matter, the riots, and the politics of race. So without further ado, Megyn Kelly. Megyn Kelly, thank you so much for coming on my show!

MK 05:07

Hey, it's good to see you, Coleman. How are you?

CH 05:09

Good. How are you?

MK 05:11

I'm great; I'm doing very well. It's been a fun week.

CH 05:13

Yeah. So, I have a lot to ask, and I may be skipping around pretty abruptly between very different topics and parts of your life. But I just want to start with how the last roughly year and a half has been for you, you know, being somewhat out of the public spotlight after your departure from NBC, aside from, of course, the major Hollywood blockbuster that came out that was largely about you. You know, aside from that, you've been pretty out of the spotlight. So, how has this, sort of, hiatus been for you? What have you been up to, and how have you been?

MK 06:00

Well, I'd say it's been an evolution, right? When I first left NBC, it was a period of trauma. And I was in an unhappy place for a while there, and just reeling, just sort of reeling, like not knowing what was coming next, or how to handle the amount of negativity that was coming my way. And I just was unsteady for a while there.

MK 06:27

And, you know, I've got a family; I've got young kids- was just trying to get the plane flying straight again, before I touched any of the controls. And that took a while. And I saw a lot of my therapist, who's, you know, he's definitely not getting paid enough. And then over time, you know, time is a healing balm, and I started feel better.

MK 06:49

And then I sort of spent some months doddering around the house like that old guy who has nothing to do after retirement, that's kind of bothering everybody. I do a lot of crossword puzzles. I, in my mind, I always thought if I had a bunch of time off, I could go into the MET every day and becoming a cultured person. No, no. I didn't watch much TV, but I did do a lot of crosswords.

MK 07:12

And I tried to take piano which didn't go anywhere. Anyway, over time, I started to feel better, and got more present for my young kids, and my husband and my friends. Started exercising- that helped. And I don't know, about 10 months ago, I'd say, I started to feel really well, you know, more like myself. But happier. Even happier than I've been in years. And that's, that's where I am now.

CH 07:38

Yeah, that's great to hear. You know, in preparation for this, I read your autobiography Settle for More. And that came out, you know, it's funny, that came out four years ago, right. And so much has happened in your life in the past four years that it really feels like you need to write another one that just starts where that one picked off. It feels like, or it feels like you should have just waited a few more years.

MK 08:04

Maybe so, I don't know I'm done talking about myself. You know, I don't want to write anymore about myself. I gotta get older before I write another memoir.

CH 08:09

Yeah, yeah. But, um, in I think one of the themes of not only the the movie, the bombshell movie, but one of the themes that I sort of see throughout your story is the tension between ambition and other things that we care about in life, like, you know, happiness and personal time, but also, you know, not compromising on our values. Really the bombshell film, which for listeners who who haven't seen it or heard of it, I imagine there aren't that many, but, you know, it follows this story of the takedown of Roger Ailes and Bill O'Reilly for you know years of sexual harassment and, and centres around yourself played by Charlize Theron and, Gretchen Carlson in that story.

CH 09:03

And a lot of it is sort of the story, the tension between a person's understandable career ambition on the one hand, the desire to climb up the ladder and achieve the goals that you've you've been working towards your whole life, and a moment where you have to compromise and do something that you shouldn't be asked to do. That is, that would call for a kind of courage to say no to, and how people negotiate that trade off.

MK 09:39

Yeah.

CH 09:40

You know, if people read your your autobiography, you know, you are a very ambitious person. You've been so, you've been a kind of, and I relate to this as well, a person who is always in danger of sort of working themselves much too hard, and and throwing other things by wayside. But you've also been a person, when put in those moments, where a pure concern about ambition would have led you to do something you've often chose chose to do the other thing, despite the, the sort of disapproval of the higher ups.

CH 10:19

That was, I think, as far as I'm concerned, that that was your brand when you were in mainstream media, right- you were the person that asks Trump the question that I'm sure you know, many people around you, not on your team, but you know, sort of higher ups, wouldn't have wanted you to ask, which was an interesting moment in Bombshell because I think, in that, they portrayed Roger Ailes as having liked that you asked Trump the question-

MK 10:44

Yeah.

CH 10:45

About his sexism. But I think you've said that that wasn't accurate, right?

MK 10:51

That was not accurate. Roger did not like that question one bit, and really didn't speak to me, or Brett, or Chris, for months after the debate. He, he was angry. And finally, he called me in there first, we were probably the closest of the three, and he tried to hold it in, and then he couldn't anymore. And he let me have it. I mean, he just was really angry. And of course, Trump had been attacking me.

MK 11:17

And so he was having to deal with that on an executive level. I understand that was stressful. But he did not like that question. And now I think we have a better idea as to why. I mean, I remember him saying like, what you never know what he could say in response- you know, what can he say in response? And I remember thinking, nothing about me, I'm good! I've never harrassed anybody.

MK 11:41

And, even in that moment, I wasn't thinking, but you're a harasser; I wasn't thinking that. I, I was I never thought about Roger that way. I write in my book, I always, I think it's my own hubris, I always thought it was just about me. I always thought the guy took a shot at having an affair with me, didn't work out, we move past it. And he never came close to retaliating against me. He gave me a bunch of opportunities. And if I did well, then I would advance, you know. And I did, I did well, in the situations he put me in.

MK 12:10

Um, so it's still, it's funny. At that point, I wasn't, when he's yelling at about me about the Trump question, I'm not thinking, O'h, of course, I'm thinking it was a fair question, Roger, you know. And Chris Wallace backed it, and Brit Hume backed it, and Bret Baier backed it. And those guys are good journalists- I know I'm on solid ground.

MK 12:28

But, to go back, I'm thinking about the word ambition. I wouldn't exactly describe myself as ambitious, though I don't think there's any problem with women or anyone copping to that- I think it's a great thing to be. But I think the reason I've been able to make choices that might curtail my ascent in certain positions, or with certain people, is because I have not been driven by ambition so much as by a desire to be excellent. And that, if you achieve it, tends to open other doors. And so, that was my only- my only goal was ever to do well, well enough that when the next opportunity came along, whatever it was, the door would be open.

MK 13:11

And then I would decide whether I wanted it or not. But, I will say, it's worth stopping and looking at the whole landscape each time to decide whether the next big thing works for you. And some, some people may be thinking I'm talking about my NBC leap, you know- that's not, that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about, there was a time at Fox where I had a two hour show, went from 1pm to 3pm, called America Live.

MK 13:34

It was the first show ever solo anchored, was in the middle of the day. I got home every day by five o'clock. I didn't have to get up at the crack of dawn. And they were paying me well. I, you know, I wasn't making as much as I made in primetime, but I was getting paid very well.

MK 13:48

When I got offered the Primetime spot for which I did not lobby, that was Roger's idea, I took it because you know, didn't seem like something you turned down. That's the brass ring. That's, that's what everybody wants in cable. And I thought, okay, well, that can work. I'm definitely going to get a big raise and have more power. And I suppose that's just the next step; I should do it.

MK 14:10

And so many times, once I, once I took that position, I thought I didn't know how good I had it. You know, I was, I was well known. So that's good because that gives you a little market power, but not so well known that I become a huge target, right. And I had some ability to drive the national debate, but not so much that I was out on the thin reed that I would live the rest of my life on, or, at least today.

MK 14:36

And I had two hours of airtime to cover whatever I wanted. So that was fulfilling for me, because that's a long time in television news. And I can see my kids; I can see my kids, I can see my husband, I got friends at a reasonable schedule, which is hard to do in TV. So it is a lesson that sometimes the next rung on the ladder is no good for you. You really have to get honest about how important power, money, position are to you before you say yes.

CH 15:00

Yeah. The other question I had thinking about your story, and it was, you talk a little bit in your autobiography about your father and your father's death when you were in high school- his sudden death of a heart attack, and sort of how that affected you. I guess it's been, it's been a while since then. And, you know, my reason for personal interest in this question is my mom passed when I was 18.

CH 15:33

So I think often about what, what having a parent pass in that crucial transition time from childhood to adulthood does to a person. Or, you know, it's always, of course, possible to tell your life story in a way that attributes too much causal power to something in your life. But do you, do you see any relationship between who you've ended up becoming as, as this person who is sort of willing to break, on principle, in spaces where people don't normally do that, and, and your father's passing at that age?

MK 16:14

I mean, I wouldn't say that my ethical code exactly is linked to his death. It's more linked to his life prior to dying, and my mom. And frankly, being a Catholic. I'm not a religious person, but I was raised Catholic, and I went to church every Sunday, and I did all the religious ed classes. And so while I have the same doubts anyone else a person of faith or not might have, it does, it does give you an ethical code. They drill it into you, you know, what, what's important and what's right.

MK 16:47

And so I did, I did have that thanks to my parents and my upbringing. But I will say the biggest difference that my dad's death in me and my life after the huge pain was the the knowledge, the everyday working knowledge, not just the occasional knowledge where you almost have off a cliff, the everyday working knowledge that no tomorrow is promised. And, if you really know that, as you know, if you really know that, because you've experienced it, and it's so merciless, I do think you make different life choices.

MK 17:17

You know, I, when I left Fox, I didn't want to do that job for one more day. My kids were growing up without me. And I was so unhappy. I remember talking to my sister in law, Doug's sister, and I said, Diane, they're offering me all this money. And they're, you know, they're saying all these wonderful things about me and my future. And you know, if I stay, this is where I'm going to get. And she said, so you'll have this and you'll have this and you'll have that. But will you have any joy in your life?

MK 17:53

And I knew immediately the answer was no- no, no, no, I won't. And honestly, Coleman, I remember talking to Doug and saying, if I sign another deal, I'm going to get cancer. I am going to get cancer. And it wasn't, I know people who hate Fox are like, 'Oh, of course, Fox 'course,' but it's not about Fox or its ideology, it's about the lifestyle I was leading in this very prominent role, under attack all the time, whether it was the media, Trump, the thing with Ailes, and so my internal colleagues there, some of them not all, or just the life of the cable news anchor in general, where you're doing battle.

MK 18:27

Yeah. Somebody takes a weird shot at you. And then it's viral, and then everybody's coming up and asking you about it. All while not seeing my family. All while having no grounding it with the people I love. Forget friends; there's no time for friends. You can't have friends. And it's like, well, what's this for? what is this for?

MK 18:44

I, I have a fancy apartment. Yeah, we bought all these books. But who gives a sh*t what we have? Who cares, right? Who cares? I've been rich and I've been poor. And I can say the biggest advantage of having money is you don't get that sick feeling in your stomach when the bills come each month. And I've had it, I've had terrible credit which took me years to repair.

MK 19:05

But, in terms of your overall lifestyle and your day to day experiences, it's pretty steady. And so, I didn't need all that money. I didn't, I didn't need it. What I needed was my life, my personal connections, my little ones. I could still see Doug because his schedule was always flexible as a writer, but not seeing my kids grow up was not okay. And I fixed it. I managed to find a way to do it.

CH 19:30

Yeah, I want to talk about your new project now, your media company and the podcasts that you've just started. We'll get back to that in a moment. But another thought that occurred to me as I was reading your autobiography is the tension between vulnerability and sort of putting one's walls up. If you're in the media in any capacity, that would go for it the podcasts you're doing now or that I do, and it would go for being a primetime anchor on Fox news or NBC.

CH 20:09

There is one spot in your book where you remember just having started at Fox in the 2000s, and Roger Ailes pulling you aside and telling you, listen, Megan, you're doing a good job, but your problem is you're just as vulnerable as everyone else, but you project no vulnerability. And viewers find that to be alienating, right? And you, you sort of took this criticism in stride and tried to work on it, I think with some success.

CH 20:44

But it occurred to me it's sort of a perpetual battle in in this business, because the more vulnerable you are, the more honest about your shortcomings, and your opinions, and the thoughts you have that aren't fully fleshed out but make you appear relatable to people- the more you go in that direction, the more, the more you genuinely connect with other people that are watching you and listening to you.

CH 21:14

The more you give them value. And the more you give them a break from the constant fakery that pervades the media space. But at the same time, you actually make yourself more vulnerable, that's why it's the word we use, to attacks and to, to takedowns, right. You put more of yourself out there which makes you a much easier target when, when people shoot at you.

MK 21:43

Yeah.

CH 21:44

So, how do you negotiate that?

MK 21:46

Well, I mean, I always found it curious how people didn't understand how somebody who was doing battle on cable news every night could possibly go into a role that required more, a more personal side, a softer side. And I always thought that was a little sexist. Because everyone I know, man or woman, has has, they can be tough, they can be soft, they can be, they can fight, they can be loving, and gentle and generous. And so just because everyone only saw me fighting in the Colosseum doesn't mean that when I went back to my house at the end of the night I wasn't throwing the feet up and having a great time and using my 12 year old boy humour.

MK 22:21

Right, like, that's who I am. But I think there was a lot of politics built into the unwillingness to see that other side of me. You know, that if you were an established leftist, you're just never gonna like me because I came from Fox News, and that was that. And I understand that we're so political right now, and then, as well. But I also think I had way more pressure on me to be vulnerable and prove it than I ever saw George Stephanopoulos get.

MK 22:47

And that's a guy who has a Sunday show- it's all about politics, it's hard knuckle brawling, and then went to GMA. So it was, it irritated me, because I do think there are some circumstances where you've got to, you know, you have challenges that they're they just come your way, and there's nothing you can do to satisfy a certain session. But I do think the negative experience I had at NBC on this was, anytime I took a personal risk, or showed a piece of myself, there were so many detractors in my life by that point, from all my years at Fox, that they seized on everything, and everything was seen through the least generous lens.

MK 23:23

I'll give you one example. There was a woman who, she had fat-shamed other women online. She, she had just had three children, in like, four years, which I did as well, by the way, it's not easy. And she got back in shape and her body looked amazing. So great. So far, so good. Then she sent out some tweet or some Facebook post showing in her bikini with her three kids next to her going, what's your excuse?

CH 23:49

I remember this. Yeah.

MK 23:50

Right. So, she meant to be inspirational, right? To sort of get us off our couches and get us back to exercising. But you know how that went over, like a like a lead balloon. You know, women were like, screw you.

MK 24:02

A year went by. She put on a little weight, she had some time to self reflect, and she issued a heartfelt apology saying, my heart was in the right place, but poorly executed. We had her on the show. And she was really, she was beating herself up.

MK 24:18

In an attempt to make her feel better, I told her a story. And I said, you know, when I was in law school, I was studying all the time. I didn't have the time to work out and I had always taught aerobics. So that was unusual for me.

MK 24:29

I was used to working out more. And I used to have my stepfather fat shame me before- whenever I'd get up to go into the kitchen late at night. And I wanted him to call me a name like, 'Don't go in there fatass.' Right? And I told her on the air.

MK 24:45

Well, it really was Meghan McCain, but others started coming after me like, 'You, you're a fat shamer and those terms are very damaging and super negative and you're perpetuating stereotypes,' and I, I was on my heels not wanting to offend anyone of any size, having grown up the daughter of a an obese woman. My mum loves it when I bring this up. But she had been overweight her whole life.

MK 25:10

I didn't want to hurt anybody. But that was my own personal tactic. You know, I just shared it because I certainly would never advocate someone calling that to somebody else. I was trying to make this woman feel better. And so I told her, you know, there are some of us that do respond, okay if it's our choice to, you know, some people have a little cow they put on the refrigerator, and when you open it up, it moos at you.

MK 25:33

But now we're in this place where you can't say that, you know. You, you can't say that. And incidents like that- I mean they do cause me to reflect on well, why did I do that to myself, really I wanted it to be thin, well how thing do I need to be, and it started a thought process- but in the end, having time to reflect on it, I still say me choosing to tell you that story about myself shouldn't have been shamed.

MK 25:56

That was my experience. I'm telling you where I was. And everything just got so twisted. I felt like everything I said got so twisted, that the real me was not being seen. And it wasn't safe to take risks like that.

CH 26:14

Yeah, that's the thing about the the world now, especially the social media world. I think, more and more, it's distorting all of the feedback. So if I tweet something that's vulnerable, it could be that 1000 people like it, and a lot of people say, oh, that's, you know, I've been thinking the same thing, and it's amazing, I feel less crazy for the fact that you have that story or whatever, but really what I only- what I see is who comments. And the people who comment, invariably hate it.

CH 26:45

So it's as if they're, and I have to imagine, there's some analogue to this if you're on television, which is, it's like being in a room where 10 people are shouting at you telling you you're an asshole, but there's a 1000 invisible people behind them cheering you on. But you only ever see the 10 assholes in front of you.

MK 27:05

You have to remember, though, I mean, I'll say to my kids, I'll, here on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, I don't get stopped on the street with accolades that much. I don't get too much either. But, um, if you go anyplace in the middle of the country, or down south, those are big fans of mine. And people will come up with tears in their eyes and want to hug me.

MK 27:24

And I hug them, and we have great exchanges. And I always say to my kids, you remember that. You know, mommy's got a lot of lovers in addition to all the hatred you're going to read about me online. I don't want them to think that the negativity that is online is representative of where I am in the world, where I am with the world, nasty covers on the National Enquirer- that that is not, as Maya Angelou once told Oprah, 'You're not in there. You're not in there.'

MK 27:52

So yeah, you try. I think the more negativity you've had in life, in your life, the better you get at dealing with it. I'm kind of in a place now, Coleman, where it's my philosophy about being a public figure is loved, hated, never ignored.

CH 28:07

Yeah, like that. So a question that occurred to me, it occurred to me when I met you, probably, maybe over a year ago, sort of just after your departure from NBC,

MK 28:21

At the comedy cellar?

CH 28:22

Yes, that's right. It occurred to me, why aren't you talked about? And, when I say this, I'm referencing the circles I run in, you know. My Columbia friends, and, you know, my whole life I've been in blue America. Why aren't you talked about as a feminist icon?

CH 28:40

Because the more I look into your story- like for instance, I misremembered the whole Roger Ailes and Bill O'Reilly takedown for sexual harassment as having been a part of the MeToo movement, but it was actually before the whole MeToo movement. And so it, in that sense, it took much more courage to participate in it, because you didn't have the entire cultural wind at your back. Right?

CH 29:05

So there's that. And then there's just the phenomenon of being a woman who has succeeded in, in various spaces that have historically been a man's world. Whether that's, you know, almost making partner at a law firm then going into journalism and, and so on and so forth. And then, you know, holding Trump's feet to the fire on women's issues when it was not, when it would have been easier not to do that. And I do think I can't help but think that political bias just has a lot to do with this.

CH 29:44

But the strange part about that is I've never seen you as really right or left in the way that you talk about things. And I was curious to read- and I want to talk about I want to ask you about political bias as well as part of this question. I was curious to read when you started at Fox, you said Roger Ailes actually wasn't looking for a republican or conservative. Right? So I want you to talk a little bit about political, how political bias operates in the media, and whether you've seen it change over the course of the path of your 16 year, sort of tenure, in mainstream media.

MK 30:21

Well, to get back to the feminist issue. You know, you know from the movie and my book that I don't call myself a feminist. Because as a journalist, I think that connotes a certain position on social issues that I'm not going to telegraph to the world I have or don't have. But anyway. It's funny to me your question about the women and the feminist icon thing.

MK 30:40

Even if you want to say female empowerment icon. When I asked Trump that question and he came back at me, talking about my period and that I must have been having it in order to ask him such a question, who do you think would be the first women's group, you know, if it had been, I don't know, take your pick, I'm thinking of somebody like Campbell Brown, but let's say Dana Bash- who do you think would have been the first group to come out and say, 'This is wrong, and not appropriate?' It'd be NOW, wouldn't it? It'd be the National Organisation of Women.

MK 31:12

Crickets. Nothing. I've not, I didn't need their support- I didn't need them to say anything. But it was just an observation I had because I remembered, four years earlier, when Sarah Palin was the vice presidential nominee, and I think it was Newsweek put her on the cover in little biker shorts, a picture

they'd apparently grabbed from, from a athletic shoot she had done for athletic magazine, they put her like looking kind of saucy on the cover of Newsweek with some really sexist caption.

MK 31:38

And none of the left wing women's groups said anything about it, anything about it. And even Gloria Steinem was out there saying Sarah Palin was a woman only a man could love, because she was pro-life and she had republican positions. So that's another reason why I don't I, don't identify as a feminist, because what they say now is that you must you must be pro-choice to be considered a feminist. And I'm not saying I'm not pro choice.

MK 32:01

I've never said where I stand on that issue. I've never said it publicly. And I won't, because it's such a divisive issue. But why, why would you rule out half the country?

MK 32:11

A lot of Republicans, republican women, are really strong and believe in female empowerment, but they don't share your issue your views on the most divisive issue in the country, right? Whether having an abortion is murder, or whether it's about a woman's right to choose what happens with her body. Anyway, it always kind of amuses me more than bothers me that that the women's groups aren't there.

MK 32:36

I'll give you one more point of note. When Bombshell came out, I think it was Glamour, one of the big women's magazines, gave her an honour for playing me, and for making the movie about me and the women of Fox News. But they had never given me the honour for like- which is fine, I don't need their honour. But I always laugh like okay, so she's getting some award for being a strong woman for playing this roleb ut all they would ever write about me is, oh, god, she's horrible.

CH 33:03

Yeah, I think, I think what that tells me is that like the the feelings associated with political bias run deeper in most people's hearts than the feelings associated with feminism and hatred of sexism. So when they're put in competition with one another, the feelings of hatred for the other side, actually, trump those feelings. Which is, which is scary that that's the point that we've come to.

MK 33:29

Well, that's one of the reasons it's been so frustrating to me to be in that position. And I think one of the reasons why I was found acceptable by some on the left when I was at, even though I was a Fox news anchor for many years, for a while there anyway, is that I'm really not political. I'm not. I don't have a horse in the in the fight, in the race.

MK 33:47

And, I can be persuaded. I'm a lawyer. So I want to know both sides. And I want to know the evidence. And once I've made up my mind, I can argue the point or steer the direction one way. But I'm very open minded.

MK 33:58

You know, all my, all my best friends here on the Upper West Side are democrats, they're all liberals, have one republican friend here. Everyone else- half of them are marching against Trump every weekend. So it's like, they understand we have political differences on some issues, and we don't talk about politics when we're together.

MK 34:13

My one friend. She's white- she's married to a black man. Her daughters are mixed race and one is my daughter's best friend. She, she marches against Trump. I mean, in her sleep, she's marching against him. And she's very pro Black Lives Matter.

MK 34:28

And we've had talks about it that sometimes are fraught, because I have my own views about that group. But we are still friends. You know, we found a way around that bullshit, because those are charged issues on which people do have strong feelings. But I would never make my friendship at stake over someone's political views, or any views on any of this stuff.

MK 34:51

At most, I've either talked to them and if it got uncomfortable with the talking, I would just table it. You know, it just- my friendships are about talking about our lives, talking about our kids, talking about our schools, you know, our marriages, our drapes. And I think that's enabled me to have friends across the aisle and also to feel naively surprised when I keep getting my hand slapped when it does reach across the aisle.

CH 35:14

Mmhmm. Yeah, that's the thing is I've always adopted that attitude, too, towards both politics and religion. Just instinctively, it seems like we all have different ways of thinking about the world. But insofar as I can relate to you about something and we become friends, I actually actively seek out friends who disagree with me on the issues I'm most passionate about.

CH 35:37

Because A, it keeps me in check- it keeps life interesting. And it prevents me from- I don't know what, I think you probably have this to some extent, too, which is, if you're in a room where everyone is thinking the same thing, and just ceaselessly agreeing with each other, you begin to be suspicious that maybe something isn't right.

MK 36:00

Yes. And as a journalist, it really bothers me. As a journalist, it's like when everyone is out there saying, 'Russiagate Russiagate, he should be impeached,' you know, everyone, except for Fox. It really puts my radar out. Because, to me, that's all political agenda. And it almost makes you want to take the other side just to slow things down, just so that the audience at home understands that there is another argument, you should be aware that there's another argument you're not being told.

MK 36:31

That stuff really drives me crazy. Because, listen. If, if you sent me into court when I was practising law, and said, you're the prosecutor, and I got to put on all of my witnesses do my opening and my closing, and the other side didn't get to do an opening, a closing, or cross examine any of my witnesses or even present a case, I would win every case; it'd be very easy to win. And that's what what I feel the media does these days.

MK 36:55

And honestly, like, it happens on both sides. But the, the media outside of Fox is all controlled by the left. And it drives me nuts, because I think honest consumers, not partisans, partisans, for the most part, just want to hear their worldview affirmed, but honest consumers, they want to get smarter. They want to get more informed.

MK 37:14

How do you do that? You've got to listen to your adversaries argument. And then decide, is this something I want to pursue? Because I know instinctually that I'm right, and I got to go get the evidence. Or is this a position I should abandon because he's got the better of me? I have that intellectual curiosity.

MK 37:31

I always call myself a learner-it-all instead of a know-it-all. And it really bothers me to watch. I watched MSNBC the other night after the presidential debate, and they had they had three hardline leftist, not liberals, leftists, talking about the debate. Like, well, this isn't helpful! I'm not even hearing what the republicans are saying in response to this. Like, I learned nothing, learned nothing in that debate. But I really learned nothing from the coverage afterward.

CH 37:58

Yeah, I get incredibly bored when I know what the take is going to be if you hate Trump. The take is going to be Trump was horrible and Biden won, right. There's no possible debate that could have happened that would elicit a different take. So, what I want to hear is from someone that genuinely doesn't have a stake in saying either Trump or Biden won.

CH 38:19

I want to see what their reaction was, because their take is actually dependent upon what happens. Right? I wanted to ask you, how did you think, you know, as someone who's moderated, how did you think Chris Wallace did in that shitstorm of a debate?

MK 38:34

Well, I, I felt bad for him. Because it was so out of control. I was a little surprised that he was so taken aback by it, because when we prepared for debates back in the Fox News days, and I've done five of them, a few with Chris, we always had a plan for if they get out of control. We always we, and especially Trump, we knew he had an ability to talk over and try to hijack the exchanges. And we did have a plan to cut his mic.

MK 39:01

So, I'm not to this moment even sure whether he had control over it. Like I don't know, if you do- I've never done a general election debate. Does the Commission on Presidential Debates control the camera, and the mic, and the rules? Or do you and your team?

MK 39:14

I wouldn't anchor something that I didn't have control over, you know how the logistics of it we're going to go. Because if I'm hosting, my job is to protect the audience. That's the job. Ask fair questions.

MK 39:26

Make sure the system's fair, people can be heard, and the audience at home is well served. That's it. I'm not in it for either one of these guys. Screw these guys.

MK 39:33

It's these guys behind me who I have to protect. And I absolutely would have done it, I would have said, you got to put the camera on me and you got to give me the ability to cut the mics. And if Trump started doing this, this, this this, this, I would have said, go on as long as you want, the cameras off and your mic is off- but go ahead. We'll wait.

CH 39:52

Yeah,

MK 39:53

Coleman, you only have to do that once, only have teach them one time. And then they, they get back in line in my experience. And it should have been done early so that he learned. And Biden interrupted Trump something like 70 times, too, so that neither one was a model candidate.

MK 40:07

But I think Chris, you know, I, I'm very objective on it, because I like Chris. He's not a warm and fuzzy guy, but he's a talented guy. And I think he leans left politically, though I couldn't swear to it. But I've never seen him be anything but fair. I really, I think he's he presses both sides of that debate.

MK 40:28

I see why the right was upset. I see he cut off Trump going after Hunter Biden. He didn't follow up with Biden on him saying he didn't want to answer the question about whether he'll pack the Supreme Court. Right? It was like, that's a pretty important one.

MK 40:44

He kind of gave the benefit of the doubt to Biden a few times, and never to Trump. So I see their complaints. The only thing I would say is that, in the heat of the moment, when you're anchoring the debate, and the clock is ticking, and you're stressed, because every interruption he's doing and they're back and forth, is costing you another question, and you're gonna get hit for not asking this question, it's an important question, you tend to like, want to wrap it like, just like, okay, I see your point. And that's why I think Chris was like, 'You're gonna really like this next question, Mr. Trump!' Or just try to put a point on it in a way that wound up sounding more favourable to Biden. And here we are.

CH 41:19

Yeah. And the way Trump speaks, I think, makes it more difficult. Because- so I watched the debate, and my impression was that Trump started out much stronger than Biden seemed. But as the debate one on, Trump got increasingly petty and narcissistic, which looked bad, and then Biden sort of stopped stuttering as much and hit his stride and was looking more presidential. So they kind of started in one position and ended in the other as far as I could tell.

CH 41:53

But there was a moment at the very end of the debate where Chris was asking both candidates whether they would concede, because of Trump's recent comments. And when I viewed it in real time, Trump seemed unwilling to just say, yes, if it's yes, I'll concede if I lose fair and square, which really made me nervous because the, the peaceful transition of power is the bedrock of a democracy. And so I got incredibly anxious when when he was saying that.

CH 42:26

But then I went back and read the transcript. And there's actually a part where Trump is about to say, yes, I'll concede if it's fair, but Chris actually interrupted him mid sentence. And the thing is, the way the way Trump talks, it's so elliptical- he doesn't start with the topic sentence.

MK 42:44

No, it's true.

CH 42:45

Joe Biden will start with a topic sentence, even if there's some stuttering involved. And you know, he'll just say yes, if it's fair. Trump will start on a caveat in the third paragraph that he really wants to talk about, and won't get to the topic sentence. And I think that makes it easier for, because, because there's no other politician like him, to take the worst possible interpretation of what he says.

CH 43:09

And then anything you say to try to persuade, you know, a Trump voter, they can just point to 10,000 instances where the media has taken him out of context. And it's this very toxic thing.

MK 43:20

But we're broken. We're really broken right now in the media. And the hard partisans are broken. I think, you know, people who aren't that political, they're fine. They're, they're a little fed up with all the nonsense.

MK 43:32

But I think you spent too much time in news, and cable news, and, you know, you see that the most divided fashions a lot. I don't know if it represents normal civilians in the country. But I do think it's really bad between the heart partisans. I think, as far as Trump goes, I actually think he will go. I think the reason he won't if he loses, I think, the reason he's not going to answer that is because if it's a tight

contest, and it goes up as a legal challenge, he's not going to promise anybody he's going to vacate the White House one minute before he has to.

MK 44:05

But once it's settled, if there were a legal challenge that went up to the Supreme Court, I don't think there's any chance in hell Trump would hold on, sitting at the resolute desk, you know, being dragged out kicking and screaming. That's not going to happen. He, he his ego is too big to allow that to happen. So he will go if he loses. But Trump never likes to give up his leverage. He's a real estate guy at heart.

CH 44:30

Yeah, I think that that is one thing that I've been very slow to understand about how Trump communicates and what his instincts are, is that he, he's always thinking like someone who is, you know, negotiating a contract and just, he's taking- this is why it's hard to always interpret him at face value. He does communicate differently than than other politicians. Yeah. And I think the whole the idea that he, that he would somehow remain in power by force, enact some kind of coup, that's what people mean when they complain about Trump derangement syndrome.

CH 45:04

I think, at the same time, one of my worries is that because he hasn't been clear, and because he has sort of, he's not clear about the notion that he'll concede, and he doesn't just kind of say it in that way that Biden just said yes, I fear that he's training half the country to- he's he's preparing them to think the election was stolen no matter what actually happens.

MK 45:32

Oh, yeah.

CH 45:33

Let's say it goes smoothly. The mail-in ballots aren't a problem, which hopefully they won't be. And Trump loses. I think the story on that half of the country, for years and decades to come, is that we were robbed.

MK 45:47

Oh yeah. I heard somebody on National Review on their podcast today say it's a heads I win, tails you cheated prospect. And no question. He is doing that. I guess you could say the same thing happened to George W. Bush after Bush v. Gore. And he was, he's still called an illegitimate president by lots of people, even though, you know, those ballots were recounted in Florida four times.

MK 46:11

And four times he came out ahead, and the Supreme Court did side with him by four. So, there's some risk of that. I don't, I don't really see it resulting in anarchy. Unless it's really contested. Trump will gin something up.

MK 46:27

But I think if the facts really support him, it could get bad. If the facts don't really support him, I think the right wing will be content to be like it was stolen, the democrats suck. You know, and they'll criticise everything Biden does and say he's legitimate. And that's that. And then four years later, they'll have another chance at it.

MK 46:43

But if history is any guide, it's really more of a rhetorical anger and not something like what we've seen in the streets of, of our country over the summer. And I realised that the fuse has been lit. So it's, it's a powder keg right now. But I just don't, I don't know. I think it's going to be decisive.

MK 47:03

I think one way or the other, we are going to know, whether it's through court or through balance, and whatever Trump says people will know, in their hearts, the truth, and I don't see rioting unless it really is ambiguous.

CH 47:14

Right, yeah. The the rioting threat is pretty squarely from the left right now.

MK 47:19

Yeah, he was right about that.

CH 47:21

Yeah, yeah. And I thought, yeah, this is a huge issue, of course. And it's one on which the democrats are vulnerable, because there are so many people on the left that the moment there is a riot and people burning down cities, you know, they can be burning down black neighbourhoods for all some people care, but the thing you're going to be told is, well, we have to understand the riots. Which is, it's it's a way of saying the riots are okay without saying it explicitly.

CH 47:52

Because, you know, you can understand anything. I could understand Ted Bundy if you gave me enough time, and and i unpacked his childhood.

MK 48:01

Right.

CH 48:02

But you only, you only ask me to understand things sometimes. Right? So this is obviously something I've talked about a lot. But how do you, how do you see Trump and Biden playing that issue on the topic of race and Black Lives Matter? And, you know, how do you think Biden did, and where do you think we're going on that issue?

MK 48:24

They didn't really get to it. Right? There was that one passing exchange that got a lot of play the next day, but what, nothing of substance came out of that. Biden wouldn't condemn and Antifa saying, oh,

it's just you know, it's not an organisation, an organisation, it's an idea. Which is like, not at all- Chris Wray, the FBI director said something to that effect, and then immediately came out and clarified and talk about this is a dangerous group. It's organised at the national level, at the local level.

MK 48:49

And people just understand, well, that idea shot two police officers. So are you going to condemn them or not? And that was a no brainer for Biden, and he should have condemned them. And obviously, same for Trump out.

MK 48:59

He did say he would condemn white supremacy. He said, sure. And he has said he condemns white supremacy of white supremacists and the KKK. He has said it many times.

MK 49:09

So it was a little bit of an unfair, tee up to him that the assumption is he's never said it before. And then he wouldn't condemn Proud Boys, which was wrong. And he's been trying to clean it up ever since. I, I suspect, he didn't know who that was.

MK 49:22

I really suspect, because I didn't know what it was. I really didn't understand. I saw black commentators who I follow online, and really respect, saying, 'It's not a white supremacist group.' But I was like, it got mentioned as one, what is it doing? I don't know. But I still to this moment haven't really looked into it.

MK 49:38

But you know, Trump, he, he finds a way, tries to thread the needle. And on certain days, it's like, why would you even argue that? Like, just give it like, give it to them? Um, anyway, I think at some point, maybe the townhall debate, they'll have a more meaningful exchange on race, and what's happening in the country. And it's fraught, because, as you know, and as I have learned, but I remain undeterred, it's next to impossible to talk about race in a way that works, or in a way that doesn't lead to demonization by one side or the other.

MK 50:14

But my own contention is we must do it. We must do it, even at risk to ourselves, even if we screw it up, even if we offend, even if we stumble, because these are complicated issues. And human beings are complicated. And there's no way forward without talking to each other. Honestly.

MK 50:34

And, and ideally without as little- with as little judgement as possible. Because my own view is just shaming someone, like Trump or whatever, racist, racist, racist, that doesn't change hearts and minds, that just makes the person like withdraw, like, okay, I'mma peace out. Now Trump, he's had a lot of charged rhetoric around the issue of race.

MK 50:57

And he doesn't really know how to be gentle in the way he talks about things. So, I don't predict it going particularly well. But I think he's got a case to make on Black Lives Matter, the group, capital B, capital L, capital M, that's persuasive. You know, if you look at their list of demands, defund the police, that hurts the black inner city, the moms, the kids- they want more police, they don't want less police. They're the ones who get hurt.

MK 51:20

I don't know if Trump is- he's smart, but I don't know if he's like a good enough study to explain why BLM is controversial. Why, what does it mean to be a Marxist and have Marx's ideology? What, what are the demands of the Seattle chapter? Why do they want to open up all the jails and then all the prisoners out?

MK 51:37

You know, does anyone want to live like- I've never seen him tick off examples to really make his case. He just says stuff, like he said the other night. Like, about critical race theory. That was horrible, horrible! So, it's not persuasive.

MK 51:51

And Biden, by the same token, he's in a, he's in a tough position, because he doesn't want to distance himself from BLM, and apparently now from Antifa, although that one's a no brainer, because he's worried about the message that will sent. We're in a place right now in the country where people have BLM banners in their windows and schools are putting it up. And I think what most people think that means is you care about black lives, you know.

MK 52:16

In general, you want black people to be well and safe, just the same as white people. They don't totally understand it means more than that. We're talking about the organisation. So he's got to be careful, because I think people have seen Black Lives Matter tipping people from it, tipping over tables and threatening diners and, you know, making the raise of fist, and I'm not sure he wants to be associated with that. So they're both in a tough spot.

CH 52:40

Yeah, I think aside from the Antifa slip up, I think Biden did pretty well. And when he said he wants law and order plus justice, I think that's about the best messaging that the democrats will be able to muster on this issue. And as long as he sort of stays right in that lane, where he he is really moderate on these issues, I think he could- this is sort of a people have different philosophies- is it about getting the middle swing voters? Or is it about turning out the base?

MK 53:16

There's no way- Trump, Trump's going to get the republicans to vote for him. His base has never left him and never well, Biden has that problem. Biden does have to get his base out and get- he's got to get the Obama coalition to go out to the polls. You know, that's a huge surge, and then he could win. And right now they seem engaged, though, you know, the people who answered the pollsters don't always actually show up at the polls on Election Day.

MK 53:40

You're talking about all these young voters who are newly registered- well, young voters tend to be apathetic and as though they might march in the street, but they don't want to wait at the polling booth for three hours, especially during COVID. So we'll see whether that translates into votes. I do think Trump is the biggest motivator on the left. And the more we see of Trump, the better it is for Joe Biden.

CH 54:01

Yeah, because I think there's a lot of people who didn't show up in 2016 because they thought Hillary was such a shoo-in.

MK 54:08

They did. And frankly, if Joe Biden's about exactly where Hillary was four years ago, he's like a teeny tiny bit ahead of her in the swing states, which are the only states that really matter. And so anything could happen on November 3rd.

CH 54:21

Yeah, that's the thing is the polls, especially with the culture getting more and more about self censorship, the polls get less and less reliable by the day. Because, the truth is, say I were a Trump supporter. That fact would be, would derange my life. It would derange my social life to be a public Trump supporter.

CH 54:45

So just the fact that I know that's true, and has to be true for almost anyone living in blue America, means that I can't really trust anything I read that's trying to calculate how many Trump supporters there are. But- and I do think the left has this huge blind spot, many blind spots, but blind spots that account for why they didn't understand Trump's popularity to begin with, blind spots that suggest that, you know, it could be Trump in a landslide again.

CH 55:19

And the, you know, the biggest one is one you mentioned- this is the shaming blind spot. Like most people who are on social media or in real life shaming people, calling them racist, sexist, and so forth, I doubt they could really point to many times in their life where they were just shamed into a new opinion, like instantly. But, as a tactic, it's it does a lot more for the person shaming than the person being shamed.

MK 55:47

Well, I mean, I think it has exactly the opposite effect of the intended one. And it may be, it may, in some cases, be a a just assertion of anger. But it's totally ineffective in effecting real change. I think we've seen that this summer. Because I do, I did feel, after the George Floyd death, there was a, there was a moment of unity in the country.

MK 56:11

People were angry on the left and the right. And I think all of us felt it, felt like there was something different about that one. And I know you've done great work and research on putting that case in perspective. And there's no question that media plays up any situation like that involving a black defendant way more than they do- and I know it was done to a white man, not long before George Floyd.

MK 56:35

I do think after that people were angry, together, together and angry. And then the media did what what it's gonna do, and the the riots happened, and the whole debate got dishonest and violent. More people died, police officers died, David Dorn was killed. It's like, things spun so far out of control that whatever goodwill might have been built up toward a group like Black Lives Matter, I think is gone. It's gone. They wasted their capital.

CH 57:06

No, yeah. And you saw that in the polls. Just after George Floyd's death, you saw something like 60 or 70% support in the country for Black Lives Matter, just warm, warm feelings for them, which must have included a lot of Republicans and people who were previously hostile. But over the past two months, you've seen all that erode. Um, and that's obviously a trend that would benefit Trump come November,

MK 57:33

They have to be motivated by it, right? It has to be something where that's going to be their issue. And that's why, I mean, if I were running the Democratic Party, I would do everything within my power to stop the riots, to stop not even just the riots, the the boorish behaviour of like, the video where the, the older man is made to unroll his car window, and they make him raise the fist and they make him say Black Lives Matter.

MK 58:00

He's clearly under threat if he doesn't say it. That stuff gets to the core of people's like, that's not America. Right? Like, you're allowed to say what you want to say and feel how you want to feel here in America, still. And so that gets to something else. People just don't want to live like that, where they are told how they must be in order to be accepted or safe.

CH 58:24

Yeah, and there's, there's something that is so much more gut wrenching about that, than about the admittedly gut wrenching videos of someone, say, wearing a MAGA hat and getting chased during a protest. It's like, yeah, I have huge objections to that. But there's something different about going up to someone who is totally neutral. Right?

CH 58:44

Like you have no idea what this person thinks they're just eating a cob salad. And you need them to raise your hand. That makes me think of communist China, and the Cultural Revolution. And that scares me- I'm not sure that I've ever seen that in my life as an American in this country. And it scares me to a different degree.

MK 59:08

Same. And I, I have friends, professional friends, doctors, lawyers, who will privately say, I can't like a tweet, even if it's by a black man, that goes against BLM, or, you know, any of these controversial issues. Nevermind draft a tweet, but I can't even like one, because I could get fired. So they'll privately want to talk to you about it and express their opinions in a room where there are no other people, but they do not feel comfortable really saying anything else outside a very intimate company. And it's not like they want to talk about you know, really racist thoughts like 'oh, isn't this skin colour bad,' whatever that stuff. It's just, hey, did you see you know what happened to that guy in the truck?

MK 59:55

They're uncomfortable saying that. I feel like we're becoming East Germany. You know, we're like, we're having these conversations underground. Like, I'll meet you later and I'll tell you how I really feel. And what, what good does that do? If you're trying to get somebody, even somebody who's mildly racist, right, isn't that- there's that song from, is it Avenue Q, 'just a little bit racist; -you're trying to get him over, like, help them understand.

MK 1:00:20

My own personal belief is, you don't do critical race theory, you don't do implicit bias, which, by the way, they all say, brings out the racism that might never have been acted on. I think you, if they give you an avenue to talk, then you talk. And you, you try to do it as non-judgmentally as possible. This has been my experience as a woman trying to fight for to eliminate the sexism that I've run into, or the imbalance in the power, the balance of power with women.

MK 1:00:48

One of the downsides of MeToo movement has been, we blew it off so many bombs. And went after, you know, 30 year old men with 30 year old career, 30 year careers got ruined over one allegation that was pretty mild, that the men now are like, 'I don't want to work them.' Like, 'oh, my God, hell no!' And they'll tell you- there's another thing. They'll tell you behind closed doors, quietly, when no one's listening.

MK 1:01:13

But of course, if they were interviewed on camera, they'd be like, 'Girl Power. Yes, you know, hashtag MeToo.' But I think we women were so angry, and righteously angry. But anger is not an effective tactic for convincing the people you need to convince. And we're only 50% of the population, and we need the other 50%, to bond with us, to help us. And instead, we really alienated them by taking the MeToo movement beyond what it started as, which is to fight sexual assault and true harassment in the workplace and turn it into you touch my shoulder after you got back from lunch after having a glass of wine, and now you're done, your career's done.

MK 1:01:51

Which happened, that happened here in New York at a publishing house. So, anyway, I sort of see some analogies there where there's got to be a way of partnering without judging and being too harsh if we want real change and real ascension to the halls of power.

CH 1:02:07

Right. Yeah, I remember during the height of Me Too, I always felt like I was, I would just be a natural ally for that movement, just by instinct. You know, having been raised by a very strong woman who was also a left wing Marxist and having two sisters. But there is something interesting that the moment it becomes all men are X, there's a tripwire in my brain that says, fuck you. Because I'm not that, right.

CH 1:02:37

And that, that's a blind spot people in these movements have, right. And, and as a black person, I understand just in the same way that I have that trip wire in my brain for false accusations. You know, ironically, the, the few times in my life where I've been a victim of actual racism, where someone has assumed that I was suspicious or criminal where they're not doing it for someone else, it's actually that same trip wire in my brain.

CH 1:03:07

It's the trip wire of feeling falsely accused of something when I'm completely innocent that just brings out all of this anger. Right? And it's that same trip wire that is, that's tripped when, you know, all men are accused of some, you know, some sin in a Me Too context. And I have to imagine that's the same trip wire white people feel when the, the finger's pointed at them over things that they have absolutely nothing to do with.

CH 1:03:37

Or you know whether they have nothing to do with it, or you want to, in a hyper academic way, say they're complicit in it, or they benefit from it. Okay, fine. The truth is, we all have that tripwire for being falsely accused of things we haven't done. And insofar as these movements are just running over that trip wire constantly as if it doesn't exist, and then wondering why they get so much backlash.

MK 1:04:03

And diminishing the power of the accusation. Right? If you call somebody a racist today, it doesn't have anywhere near the effect it would have had 20 years ago The word is just thrown around. I mean, if you if you support Trump, you're a racist. That's what most of the Democratic Party has said, their leaders.

MK 1:04:18

If you support Trump, you're a racist, you're a xenophobe, you're a sexist, you're transphob. It's like, oh, how do you argue with that? Right? Like, you just don't. You just, you just have to move on. And I think Republicans, you know, who I know a lot of having worked at Fox News for 30 and a half years, they're used to being called all those names.

MK 1:04:38

Like, they- it's like water off a duck's back for them. They're like, yeah, comes with the territory. Any elected Republican has been called all that stuff. And I think it's been overused to the detriment again of the costs.

CH 1:04:52

I thought Bill Maher was amazing on that point. After Trump won, he said, 'Come on guys, my side. We called, we call George Bush a racist, we call Mitt Romney a racist. It doesn't mean anything anymore when when we have someone who may actually be one.' Now whether Trump is a racist is a longer conversation than that, I think. But I thought he was totally right about that.

MK 1:05:14

Yeah, it's- I don't we're so angry at each other right now and our politics are so divided. That is just, it's just this, I don't know if there's room for honest conversation. You're, you're somebody who's making that space. And I appreciate it. And that's why I fell in love with you when I when I met you that first night.

MK 1:05:33

We had such an honest conversation about race, and my time at NBC, and the whole whole thing. It's so hard to have those conversations. It just is. I'll tell you a personal story.

MK 1:05:43

So, I mentioned our good friends who are in a mixed race couple, and she's- the mom is white, and the dad is black. And when the whole stuff went down with George Floyd, beginning of the summer, we were talking with our friend; name is George, too, what how he was feeling about it.

MK 1:05:59

And this is a guy, he's a star, he's a star. He, he makes such a name for himself, a big bank here in New York. And he came from a very modest background. And he's never somebody who's been focused on race. But this got his attention. And as the summer went on and the event started rolling and I was sending out my tweets, we had another really long heart to heart about the way I feel about law enforcement, which my brother's a cop, the way he was feeling about his lifetime experiences with cops, with cops- because where he grew up, which is not a good neighbourhood out in LA, he did not have favourable experiences with them.

MK 1:06:34

And I learned and he learned. And it's not necessarily like, I persuaded him away from his views on cops, or vice versa. But the air was clear. And I think we both felt better. And I just, I feel like we're better for having had the conversation and more of that needs to happen, Coleman.

CH 1:06:51

Yeah, absolutely. Especially, you know, this is one of the things about America that's makes it so different than other countries, is we're like 12 countries in one. If you grew up, you know, during the 90s in South Central LA, say, where the cops were, you know, notoriously a terrorising force in the black community there, that's a very different thing than growing up in with the NYPD today, you know. And so, to be able to sort of share one's experiences on all these things without just assuming your experience is the same as everyone else's, or that anyone's experience, any one person's lived experience this is sort of my thing about lived experience.

CH 1:07:35

Obviously, all of ours are important. But it seems like some people's lived experiences are put up there as the full story, where other peoples are just thrown by the wayside. So this is when, why people, when people on the left say, you have to respect my lived experience, pretty much everyone else hears is you think your experience gets to dictate policy more than mine, when they should be equal. Right?

MK 1:07:59

No, it's true. And I think, like, I don't understand how you, you can extrapolate to an entire group your negative experience with one person. I mean, if a white person was robbed by a black person and decided to do that to blacks, it would be racist. So it, it's not okay to have a negative experience with a cop, and just say all the cops are brutal, or racist.

MK 1:08:24

But like we have to, we have to be more open-minded to the possibility that there are more interactions with black men and police, that black men commit 60% of the crime, the violent crime in our major cities, and they interact with police more often. And then the answer that is you're racist. Well, we have to be able to talk about data.

MK 1:08:42

And you can contextualise it; that's important. You could talk about, well, you know, why, why is that right? Why is the crime rate what it is? And how do we get to that? Fine, that's all good. But more information is the way forward.

CH 1:08:54

Yeah, definitely. I was, I was talking to someone, someone recently I know was doing a sort of social media thing where they went around to every black person they knew and got their stories of being profiled by the cops. It was a very, really good project to dive into, if you, you know, want to understand why so many black men have the attitudes that they have towards the cops. And the person brought this up in, in a kind of conversation or argument we were having, where I was trying to, you know, contextualise, bring in what I think are important facts about the police, namely that a cop gets shot almost every day in America.

CH 1:09:36

It's an incredibly difficult job. It's you know, Chris Rock has the joke where cops should be like airplane pilots- you don't say you have a bad apple if a plane crashes. It's a funny joke, but a bad point. Because it's much more like being a fighter pilot in war when, you know, and not knowing which pilots are going to pull, you know, a pistol out of the glove compartment and shoot you, and which ones are totally peaceful. So we were talking about this and it occurred to me- the other, the other week, I saw somebody get robbed in broad daylight in New York.

CH 1:10:12

He was, you know, a small man who looks Indian or Pakistani who runs one of those carts where they sell newspapers and gum. And he was robbed by, you know, an over six foot tall, black kid that looked anywhere from 16 to 24, say. And he was, he was fighting for his cash register with a kind of passion that suggested he really couldn't afford to lose it, you know.

CH 1:10:41

It was, and I was the only one that saw it. It was, it was, it was strange. And then the kid, after robbing him, kind of looked at me for a second. It was like something out of a book and then ran away. What I thought to myself is, there is no one who's going to string together a set of, you know, videos of people talking about their experiences, say being mugged, and, and put all of that machinery of empathy behind those folks.

CH 1:11:12

And this is my my problem with how empathy is used selectively. It's not that I'm against empathy. You know, it's what makes personal growth and learning possible. It's just that I'm against the selective use of it, to, you know, putting all of it behind one half of a conversation, and pretending it doesn't exist on the other side, and that the solutions to these questions are so easy.

MK 1:11:36

This is what Glenn Lowry has been saying, too. And I love his show, the Glenn Show, which I know you've been on. Professor Brown, for the people who don't know. But he's brilliant, and he's been having very honest conversations with John McWhorter, about Columbia, with about race issues, and the cops, and so on. And he has made that point, too, that what we definitely don't want to get into a situation where the white people feel the need to point out all the black on white crime that goes on.

MK 1:12:02

Like that, where does that get us?

CH 1:12:03

We're already there.

MK 1:12:04

Even I, as somebody who's been speaking out about this and defended the cops where I thought they deserved it, which is not in every case, but where I see, where I see them getting unfairly piled on before we have the evidence, or the evidence is clearly on your side, I will speak up, I try not to retweet anything where it's just a random act of violence of a black person on a white person, because it makes me feel uncomfortable. It makes me feel like I'm sending a message of like, well, blacks for whites, you know. That's not, that doesn't feel like the way forward. But you're seeing more and more of that on Twitter.

CH 1:12:38

Right, no, I feel, I feel the exact same way. Okay, I'm aware of your time. So, for the last question, I just want you to tell people about the podcast you started and why you started it. And I also just want to sort of flag that I'm, it concerns me that that someone like yourself has to start your own media company, or independent project, because the mainstream media may not have a place for the level of nuance. If, I don't know if that- maybe that's just me projecting onto you, but do you see that, and and just sort of give me a summary of your new media company?

MK 1:13:27

I do. I understand exactly your point. Um, I felt it in so many levels from so many different places. The point of my media company, it's called Devil May Care Media, which is from the saying the devil may care, but I do not. And I'm happy that I've finally gotten to that place. Because, for most of my career, I wouldn't say I was on eggshells, as my past will show you, but I was closer to eggshells than am right now, in my discussions.

MK 1:13:52

And that's not me. I think one of the reasons I've gotten hit over the head so many times is I'm pretty blunt. I'm not Trump blunt, but I don't tiptoe around my statements and the points I want to make; I just kind of say them, and usually in the Queen's English. I'm, you know, I'm a middle class girl from upstate New York. So I don't usually dress it up.

MK 1:14:12

And I like that about myself. Not everybody likes that; I'm not everybody's cup of tea, but I like it. And I want to be able to talk the way I talk. And I want to be able to address tough issues, and have guests on who are the same as I am in that approach. They can have different viewpoints, but just they want to talk, and they want to talk honestly, and they want to educate me and be educated by me and bam, we're off to the races.

MK 1:14:36

And I got, I like a couple of times, I've wandered into the discussion of race, and all I get back is racist. And you would think a smart person would say maybe I should stop talking about this. But my instinct as soon as you tell me I can't talk about something, is exactly the opposite. Well, I must- now I will. Now I won't stop talking about it.

MK 1:14:56

If I have something to learn, something to learn that helped me learn it. I am an open-minded, open-eared listener, right? I want to engage. If you don't want to engage with me, no problem, that's on you. You know, I joined this book club here in New York, that was ,it was reading a lot of African American History and African American books.

MK 1:15:17

And I thought that would be a worthwhile thing so I can educate myself a bit. And one of the women who is in the book club is black. And I was talking to her about this philosophy, about how I think we need to help each other. I think women need to help men on the sexism front, and black people need to help white people on the sexism front- I mean, on the racism front, and so on. And by help, I just mean, dialogue.

MK 1:15:38

And her response was, but we're tired. We're tired. Like we, we don't want to educate you. You should know it already. And I get that, but you must.

MK 1:15:49

Women talking about sexual harassment in the workplace? We must. Not everybody knows, and our society is evolving really fast. You know, as you point out, when the Roger Ailes takedown happened, there was no Me Too movement, right? Trans issues- I remember defending Chaz Bono on the air because Dr. Keith Ablow was suggesting watching Chaz Bono on Dancing with the Stars might make your child trans.

MK 1:16:16

And he and I went at it, and I defended the trans community. And like, 10 years later, look how much we've changed. You know, it's like, couldn't even really talk about it back then. And now, it's a, it's a 180. Now, it's like, you can't talk about it the other way.

MK 1:16:31

You can't- just yesterday, if you had a vagina, you were a woman. And now if you say that you're a transphobe. It's like, wait, what? Wait! If I say women are the ones who have periods, I'm a transphobe? Shit. How did that happen? So my point in starting this company is, can we just, like, stop judging each other and continue the dialogue.

MK 1:16:49

That's what we're going to do. If you don't like it, you don't have to watch it. Although I'll take your hate watching or listening. But people, I think, are thirsty for smart conversations that are non-judgmental about the tough issues we're going through. And I included our president and his behaviour.

MK 1:17:06

Because I've also been, you know, at work in places where frank talk about him is now encouraged, for or against. I've been in both of those places. I'm sick of it, Coleman, I'm sick of it. I'm free. And I'm gonna I'm gonna I'm gonna let the devil care, but I'm not.

CH 1:17:22

Beautiful. I'm really excited to see where your show goes. And thank you so much for coming on my podcast.

MK 1:17:27

Thank you. So good to see you. Thanks for having me.