

# The End of Trump with Andrew Sullivan Ep 18

**CH** 00:30

Welcome to another episode of Conversations with Coleman. So there's a lot going on this week, and I have the perfect guest to help me break it all down. Andrew Sullivan is a British born American writer and blogger. Sullivan is a political commentator, a former editor at the New Republic, and the author or editor of six books.

**CH** 00:52

He also started a very famous political blog called the Daily Dish, in 2000. Eventually moved that blog to Time Magazine, the Atlantic, The Daily Beast, and is now running an independent subscription based format on Substack, which I recommend you all subscribe to. This was recorded on the Thursday, right after the election, before it was completely certain that Trump had lost. We look at Trump's single term presidency in retrospect and evaluate which fears about him proved true and which proved false.

**CH** 01:30

We talk about the lack of a Biden landslide, and what that means for the long term prospects of trumpism, even in the absence of Trump himself. We talk about the problem of elite bubbles misunderstanding the rest of the nation. We talk about the relationship between Trump and the far left. We wonder about how to explain Trump's rising support among voters of colour and gay voters.

**CH** 01:56

We talk about the use and misuse of history in social justice thinking, and much more. As always, thank you so much for the support. Please do like and subscribe, or visit colemanhughes.org to support. Without further ado, Andrew Sullivan.

**AS** 02:20

I'm delighted to meet you properly for the first time and to chat properly.

**CH** 02:24

Although not, not really properly. This is still, still virtual, unfortunately.

**AS** 02:31

I know. I'm worried that I'm becoming an entirely virtual person. I'm just barely interacting with other humans anymore. And it's really disorienting, isn't it?

**CH** 02:42

It is. There's a, there's virtual virtual options on Tinder and facetimeing on Tinder. There's virtual comedy shows I've heard about which sound absolutely horrible.

**AS** 02:54

I think in Provincetown, this summer, they had they tried to put all the shows online, which was an incredibly heroic attempt. But it was incredibly dull when it turned out you just can't replicate live performance. You just can't.

**CH** 03:10

It's impossible.

**AS** 03:12

And part of your other repertoire is that you are actually a musician, right? What kind of music do you do?

**CH** 03:18

Mostly jazz and hip hop?

**AS** 03:21

Awesome. Jazz has been- my best friend is a, plays jazz piano in the city, and it's just been devastating. Jazz particularly, which is so dependent upon the live interaction of humans, that alchemy that it has a that just has disappeared.

**CH** 03:39

It's sad. I haven't touched my trombone in months. And I, you know, pre-covid was a still a gigging jazz musician, as a trombonist in New York.

**AS** 03:49

I don't know how you do it all. But anyway, how are you feeling today? I mean, what are the emotions? We're currently at Thursday after election day, around recording this in the middle of the day.

**AS** 04:00

So we don't quite have final results. But we have a lot to absorb the last two days- it's been bewildering. I described it as as being on a roller coaster with a blindfold on, watching those results come in. How do you feel?

**CH** 04:14

I woke up with an analogy in my head today, which is, I've been some, I supported Biden, I voted for Biden, and it's more accurate to say I voted against Trump. But the analogy I woke up with in my head today was that I feel like I'm being held hostage in a bank. But I'm also rooting for the robbers, because this election- what we know is that if Trump had won, the city I live in and love would be burning, to a degree that it isn't. Although there was some, a few incidents of violence in Manhattan yesterday.

**CH** 04:59

There's this feeling of the nation being held hostage. I read something in NBC today about a small business owner in the Bronx who said he planned on closing up early and huddling inside as he waited for the results to come in. And I thought to myself, that's not the country I remember growing up in.

That's what I remember as my caricature of third world countries where every election is expected to be chaotic.

**CH** 05:26

And yet, at the same time, so I feel held hostage by the primary threat of violence, which is from rioters that, whether they're consciously on the left, are certainly reacting against the right. And yet, I'm also voting for that side; I'm voting for the same thing that they are, which is to get the maniac who, who just degrades our culture and our politics so much out of office. And it's a strange feeling to have.

**AS** 05:55

It sure is. I feel exactly the same way. There must be a German word for it, or at least we may come up with it eventually, of this feeling of the feeling I had when I voted for Biden, which is that I- this is my duty. And he's the best we're gonna get from the democrats, in terms of a sane, presidential and viable candidate.

**AS** 06:20

And yet, so much of my gut, having absorbed what the left has been the last year, particularly, but also before that, made me just intensely uncomfortable about it. And I did my duty, anyway, the same way I did in with with Hillary last time around, even though I really am not a left liberal in any way. But I don't know why this- I feel, I feel clarified. I feel a little bit saner.

**AS** 06:55

And I've learned something. I've learned that I was in a bubble, in the sense of understanding the resilience and strength of the Trump coalition, even though, analytically, I think I understood it quite well. I think I've not been among those blinders to the forces that are bringing about this change. And yet, I had been led to believe by all the media, I believe, and primarily by the polling, that the country is different than it is. The big news for me this week was that, wow, Trump really is much more popular than I kind of believe.

**AS** 07:36

The polls were incredibly deceptive about where we were as a country. The big lead that Biden had was a chimera. He may end up- I don't know what the percentage would be, he will win the popular vote by quite a lot. But I- the picture that emerged, as you could see from the mainstream media's coverage of it, just was not what we had been expecting. So my first question is, what did I miss? What did I not understand?

**CH** 08:04

See that, that's immediately what separates someone like you from a lot of people that I see on Twitter. And that's also- I had a version of that reckoning in 2016 when I was completely blindsided that anyone would like Trump. And your first question in those moments has to be what am I wrong about? Because you have a model of the country that's somehow deeply flawed, or else you wouldn't have been so surprised.

**CH** 08:31

But what I'm seeing is people interpreting the election results as they emerge as just yet more confirmation that the country is deeply white supremacist, and racist. You could point to what appears to be a significant increase in Trump support for among blacks and Hispanics. And somehow, this gets looped into white supremacy is so powerful that it's brainwashing people of colour. And it's completely unfalsifiable.

**CH 09:02**

But there, there definitely has to be some reckoning that isn't just moral judgement on on Trump voters that's something that goes a bit deeper than that, that tries to understand why they might like him. And one thing I heard from a friend, recently, I thought it might be a good analogy, was that if you think about why black voters are so loyal to the Democratic Party, despite having, in general, few illusions about how amazing democratic governance has been for American cities, it's not that they think most black voters think Democrats are going to solve every problem. There's quite a bit of cynicism of, well-earned cynicism in the typical black voter, I would say.

**CH 09:52**

It's that, when given, when faced with two options, you go for the person that, at minimum, pays lip service to caring about people like you, whatever that means. And the typical black voter sees the republican party and just sees very few people that make strong efforts to signal that we care about people from your culture. And they go with Democrats by default. So thinking about it from, from the reverse perspective, what does the average person in quote unquote 'flyover country' see, when they see the Democratic Party?

**CH 10:30**

They probably see a party who talks more about caring about illegal immigrants than about people like them. And without having any illusions about, and to be clear, there is just a pure Trump cult that thinks he's a demigod, but, the thing to explain is the person outside the Trump cult that maybe voted for Obama twice, and then flipped. And, you know, what is it that that person saw?

**CH 11:02**

It could be that they saw a party that talks more about illegal immigration than about people like them, whatever that that means. And they they voted for Trump for the same reason that a lot of black voters remain loyal to the left.

**AS 11:17**

In other words, just tribal identity, in some in some way. Because here's where, here's the- in 2016, I was not surprised, as on the first few that weren't. And I think it's because it really resonated with me, the kind of basic themes that Trump was emphasising that had been essentially removed from mainstream public debate. Like, for example, should we really crack down on illegal immigration and maybe even reduce legal immigration.

**AS 11:46**

That, really, was a very fringe issue among the elites, usually dismissed as a form of racism. But, in the country at large, dealing with the biggest influx of mass immigration in a century, and the highest

number of people, percentage of people in the country who were foreign born now about the highest ever in American history, about close to the early, early 20th century. And so, when Trump said, if we don't have borders, we don't have a country, said it as bluntly as that. And also when he also I mean, coarsely and horribly, and I don't know, I mean, he does this all the time, which is associate immigrants with with crime, and so on, I just felt he's touched a genuine issue.

**AS 12:31**

And he's pulling certain levers in terms of people's core identity that are very powerful. And he's up against someone who seems to symbolise everything that ordinary Americans kind of resent about the ruling class. So I expected him to win. And I expected people to think well, he doesn't really mean all the things he's been saying about seizing power, and doing everything himself, and bypassing the Congress and, and he has expansive understanding of what he as a president is and does.

**AS 13:03**

I think they just didn't take it that seriously. And I understand why that is. Because worrying about constitutional balance, worrying about a completely out of control executive, is an abstract issue for most people. As it is, did the President obstruct justice, did he collude or conspire.

**AS 13:20**

These questions are quite esoteric and quite elite. And I think what I've learned the last four years is all those things which I was concerned with just don't resonate with most people. They really don't care how our constitutional balance is maintaining itself, which makes me unnerved, and dismayed, and concerned. And I don't think genuine concerns about the way Trump understood his role are illegitimate; I think they're valid.

**AS 13:50**

That's why I voted against him. But I do see, in terms of the broader politics, the democrats misreading dramatically the mood of the country, how they understood Trump, how they didn't take him very seriously, in some ways. How I think it was absolutely irresponsible not to take him seriously. And, after four years, I think we've seen that it was very dangerous at the same time.

**AS 14:15**

Nonetheless, the worst did not happen. Most people looked at this and and were not as horrified as those of us in the elites, and were quietly intending to vote for the guy. And that's what we found out. That we were telling them this man is a tyrant.

**AS 14:32**

I was telling them that. And he may well be in his psyche, and he may well have acted out of all norms for most presidents. But most Americans were like, hey, the economy's doing okay. We haven't entered another war. We may be getting a grip on illegal immigration.

**AS 14:48**

We know he's an absolute maniac and asshole. But, so what? Look at the alternative. And that's, that's my gut feeling about the election- that people like me fail to one understand the priorities of most people.

**AS 15:03**

I mean, not entirely, but I think we failed to see that they did not buy what we were telling them about Trump. They believed the system was more resilient than we did. And that on the broad questions of policy and culture, I'm with them. I actually agree with most people who voted for Trump.

**AS 15:21**

No, I mean, in terms of where we are as a country and what things we need to do. Do we want to have a completely globalised system? Do we want to have, essentially, mass immigration forever? All those questions I'm with them.

**AS 15:34**

Do we want to racialize our entire society, want to turn everything into a racial spoils game? No, I don't. And I felt in the last- it's funny how you check your feelings and notice your feelings- but the last week or two of the campaign, I just felt my stomach lurching a little bit about what the left could do. I don't know whether you saw that this little cartoon that Kamala Harris put out there about equity over equality.

**AS 16:02**

I had already voted when I saw it, but it just, it just made me feel ill. Because that is such a radical programme, would require really blatant, clear racial discrimination on the part of government itself. And I can see why people- and I'm looking at the exit polls, and the late deciders went for Trump. In some ways, that's what happened here.

**AS 16:26**

Because, normally, late deciders who are undecided go for the challenge and not the incumbent. Something happened last two weeks in which people's guts moved them into the Trump camp. And that's fascinating to me. So what do you, what do you take of my stream of consciousness there?

**CH 16:45**

No, I think you're right that my being a member of the elite in 2015, and 2016, probably blinded me to the extent to which people didn't take seriously Trump's claims at their worst. I was someone who heard the sound bites of his worst moments, and was picturing that as I voted against him. That was the primary reason was I want to prevent the, even if it's a 10 or 20% chance, that this guy is Hitler. Right?

**CH 17:17**

That's how I was thinking at that time. And the past four years have, I think, fully disproven That kind of fear. Trump is not, Trump is a different kind of asshole. He's not an ideological fascist. And I think something, something Kevin Williamson wrote stuck with me about Trump.

**CH 17:38**

Which is that a true white supremacist and a racist has an irrational loyalty to a particular tribe of humans. Whereas Trump has no loyalty to anyone. He's not capable of it. He's loyal only to himself and his narcissism, which presents its own kind of danger, of course, and more than that turns people off.

**CH 17:58**

So you saw he lost more of the white vote than of any race of vote. And that- I have to imagine that it could partly be because of his management of COVID. But it could also just be fatigue at his personality. So, I was definitely wrong about that in 2016.

**CH 18:15**

And it's made me rethink quite a lot about how thick the elite bubble is. And it's made me very sensitive to wanting to point out when the thickness of that bubble is leading us astray. My favourite example of this is the idiotic word Latinx. And I have a, I think, a special hatred for this word, as a half Hispanic person who grew up hanging out with my Puerto Rican family and in the Bronx, where no one would be caught dead uttering such a stupid anglicization and bastardization of the Spanish language.

**CH 18:52**

And the polls find 98, 99% of Spanish speakers don't know what the hell you're talking about. And yet, this is the word that is now the polite word for Latinos in the New York Times, out of Elizabeth Warren's mouth. And, and it's less of- that word is just a signal of how thick the bubble is. It's an obvious signal for those who would want to look at it. But, in any event, I do, I share your deep concern about the Kamala equity and equality tweet. The notion that she would tweet this the day before the election astounded me and wonder, just from a practical point of view, who in her campaign thought that this would be a good idea?

**CH 19:39**

Is it that they're using Kamala to pander to the far left and, and keeping Joe to reassure the centre? That could be a maybe a workable strategy. Is it that the same staffers that think Latinx is a real word are just so in a bubble that they don't understand how rejecting the notion equality, explicitly, for the much more totalitarian notion of equity could read bad to half the country? It could be that.

**CH 20:11**

Either way, as someone who has spent a lot of time on this podcast and in my writing explaining why the notion of equal outcomes, while it sounds amazing on its face, and sounds like exactly what an anti-racist should care about, is actually a Trojan horse for totalitarianism. Right? And as listeners to my podcast will know, I'm trying to engage Ibram Kendi in a conversation primarily about this point, because he is the, really the intellectual face of the pro-equity argument at this moment, and has advocated a way of getting to equity that is actually realistic in the sense that, what it would take to get to equal outcomes is what we would recognise as totalitarianism.

**CH 21:02**

A central government pre clearing every local state and federal law, so that it, you know, to ensure that it doesn't increase racial inequality of outcomes. Right? That's what Kendi has explicitly said he wants. And I don't think it's realistic, now. I don't want to sound alarmist.

**CH 21:23**

I'm not fearing this in the next four years. But in the next 50 and 100 years, our attitudes about race, and what the path for it is, are going to change. That's a fact. The question is, in what direction are they going to change? I fear that in 50 years, the kind of effortless Martin Luther King style of anti-racism that I grew up with, that, that really should be our goal, is going, is going to be so far in the past that people don't even remember what it felt like to want that.

**AS 22:01**

Well, I don't think that's gonna happen. Because I, and this election helps me feel better about that, because I don't think most people have junked the core understandings of the meaning of the word racist, for example, what racism means. Two points. The Latinx point.

**AS 22:19**

I am, my own beef, is with this hideous term. It's not even a word- LGBTQ plus, for some reason, the, the far left really has a problem with vowels. They, they, they, they really keep getting rid of them, even though they really do help language along. So the LGBTQ plus. I've also, literally never in my life, in any gay conversation, had anyone ever say the word LGBTQ plus.

**AS 22:52**

It is bullshit. It's insulting. It's condescending. It meshes together very distinct communities with very distinct identities and very distinct ways of living.

**AS 23:03**

And it's done so in order to coerce us all into some victim group that has to be tended to and cared for, when this is not actually reality. With that little beef gotten off my chest, I want to talk about Trump's authoritarianism. Because this is what I was concerned about. And I think it's what you were concerned about, right?

**AS 23:25**

And he said, you know, go ahead, cops beat people up. He said he enjoyed watching individuals or dissenters being treated violently. He said he could do whatever he wants in the presidency. He openly declared fake national emergencies for political purposes.

**AS 23:43**

He found a way to appropriate money from Congress. He refused to subject himself in any way, or his administration, to the most routine subpoena requests from a congress which has the power to subpoena the executive branch. He mooted every single inspector general. He got rid of every cabinet member who ever stood up for them, and place them with these acting secretary cronies and, and toadies, essentially.

**AS 24:11**

He threatened not to obey the results of an election. He is currently going to challenge and probably push our constitution to the breaking point. All this stuff, I think, has proven true. But here's where it didn't prove true, and with some of the genuine counter argument to what I was saying is worth considering.

**AS 24:33**

Which is that his authoritarianism was only in as much as he is anything bound his own power or course of action. It was not actually a desire to control the lives of anyone else. It was a kind of weird, sort of, leave me alone authoritarianism of I am the president- I do what the hell I want.

**AS 24:58**

This system is bullshit. You all know it's bullshit. I was elected. Blah, blah, blah. And of course, it's alarming to simply say those things you never assume the responsibilities of his office to keep saying those things like a, like a talk show radio host, even as he was actually the sitting president was incredibly destabilising, remains destabilising, has been dangerous, but it did not attempt to control other people's lives as most people understood and understand authoritarianism.

**AS 25:33**

The press has thrived. He has obeyed every court order so far, even though he was pushed, he's, he's just sued everything so that he can push off illegal reckoning. So he's partly succeeded by just obstruction and delay. But he hasn't actually violated a court order.

**AS 25:53**

Yes, he's got himself a pliant Attorney General. But even then, this Attorney General was, did not come up with the goods he wanted him to come up with before this election, the Durham report. And the Mueller investigation turned out to be not entirely conclusive. It didn't tell us that much more than we knew already, which was this guy was openly calling on Russia and other countries to intervene in the last election, and has no compunction because that's who he is.

**AS 26:23**

It's not that he's a traitor, he just has no ethics. And I eventually came to sort of try and understand this to say that he was a kind of tyrant within a democratic system. And so his every instinct was to oppose everything that our constitution stands for. And yet, the constitution did., by and large, hold together. And I think most people who, firstly, weren't that concerned with his authoritarianism anyway, because they have a rather basic feeling about politics, but secondly, the evidence that we were not actually citizens anywhere, we're not being rounded up, the media was not being actively or successfully persecuted- his own indolence and indifference to actual substantive reality as opposed to what makes him look good.

**AS 27:14**

It made the authoritarianism essentially a sort of paper tiger that we were rightly, and this is the, this is, this is the nuance here, we were rightly concerned about it, but misread the full dimensions of it in such a way that most regular Americans didn't see it as badly as we did, or was brutally as we did. Is that a

persuasive account of, of missing the authoritarianism, that authoritarian nature of Trump? Is it a confession of fact, regular people who looked at Washington from time to time, looked at what was going on and thought, okay.

**AS 27:50**

Were they wiser than someone like me who has a PhD in political science worrying to death about the separation of powers and the balance of forces in our Constitution? That's the question. I wonder whether they were right, and I was hyperventilating and overreacting?

**CH 28:07**

Yeah. I mean, I don't think that you were. I think you're right to describe Trump's kind of authoritarianism, as, what I hear in what you're saying is that he's so selfish that he can't even manage to have an evil vision for the country. Because all of his visions are only for himself.

**AS 28:30**

Exactly.

**CH 28:31**

And that- it's, it's sad that that's been our saving grace. But it hasn't really been our saving grace, because as you say, the framers of the Constitution, I think, were brilliant in anticipating, more than anything, a scenario in which a tyrant tries to bend the system to his own will. And I think the system is proven very robust. And that's to the framers credit, I think.

**CH 29:00**

I do worry about the consequences of Trump's breaking every norm for the for the long run. Because I have to imagine that there are lots of people who are like Trump, that are my age, that see him, and they now understand what's possible for an American president to get away with. Which is not to say that Trump was, Trump's infractions were completely unprecedented in US history. Because I, you know, a careful historian is going to find examples where other presidents did similar things.

**CH 29:36**

But his, his way of speaking, his flagrant selfishness and public pronouncements of being victorious in the election, for example, this is something that is truly strange. It's truly strange, and it breaks important norms that we as Americans thought separated ourselves from the countries that are always vulnerable to dictatorships. And I wonder if there will not be a sort of long run incentive change in the culture for politicians, where we're going to see more and more Trump like candidates. Or, whether this is going to be, in the final analysis, a fluke, and followed by a return to normalcy?

**AS 30:21**

Yeah, well, you could say- and this is partly what I wrote about in a piece I wrote looking at the Roman Republic and how it shifted towards the dictatorship. It took quite a while. But what was necessary was certain precedents being broken, one by one, in different contexts, around different people, such that the inherited understanding of the practices became so anaemic and attenuated that eventually, oh,

yeah, go on, Cesar, you know, take it- we need someone. And that is entirely what I was concerned with here.

**AS 30:59**

And I think that the proof of the danger of that is, is that the democrats were beginning to respond by desiring to change the composition of the Senate, alter the rules of debate in the Senate, pack the Supreme Court. This is exactly the process by which democracies have been undone in the past. One side breaks and warns the other side, rightly understanding it's been unfairly attacked. And I do think the decision on Merrick Garland and then the last minute dash for Amy Coney Barrett is incredible, hardball.

**AS 31:34**

It's not done in the spirit of a liberal democracy. It's done in the spirit of everything is victory and nothing is for compromise. So I can see why the democrats have done that. But I could also see how Trump were setting off a pattern whereby, essentially, these tribal conflicts were going to completely swamp all the procedures, and balance, and norms that keep liberal democracies from becoming autocracies. And I tried to show that, in fact, democracies, which people sort of think of the end point of history, according to the ancients, they were the breeding grounds for tyranny.

**AS 32:13**

That they were the most receptive to the possibility of, of a tyrant emerging to, to put to an end the chaos and disorder of multicultural, multiracial democracy. So I, I haven't thrown away that analysis, because I think it holds. It also is important to remember, I think, that Trump was capable of creating an entirely false conception of the world. I mean, things that were demonstrably empirically untrue.

**AS 32:44**

And that became more and more- he's telling a story in the campaign that really was divorced from empirical reality, and he did not care. And his followers did not care if it were true or false. They did not care. In other words, we also have a moment of postmodern politics on the right, whereby a narrative, this, this, this, this paranoid narrative, became much more important than reality itself.

**AS 33:18**

As similarly, I think, on the left, we had, again, a delusion, this creation of this fantasy that we live, we still live in some sort of white supremacist state where the words white supremacy have become so meaningless, because they become so debased in, in, in terminology to explain things that clearly never used to be explained by this this term. So I do think that has also been an extremely worrying development.

**AS 33:50**

And I think Trump has been at the centre of it. The question is, is the middle of the country's decision, and it really wasn't that bad, a sign that they all had their heads screwed on straighter than I did? Or they're just blissfully ignorant and unaware of what's going on, or they don't really care that much. And so I don't think any of those three is particularly encouraging in terms of what happened the last four years.

#### CH 34:18

So, I mean, one thing that I see a lot of right now is people who make a pro-Trump or, kind of tepidly, Pro-Trump argument, are often framing the choice as Trump versus the far left, rather than Trump versus Biden. And Trump versus the far left is a much easier case to make. And the case goes something like, well, the far left hates America. The far left wants to import the 1619 project and critical race theory into schools, and already is doing so.

#### CH 35:01

And these are all things that I have a lot of sympathy with and agree with these concerns. The far left takes a stance on police abolition and defunding that, you know, in polls, 60 or 70% of black people would reject. And it makes no sense from the perspective of keeping people safe. But, and so, when you have this truly revolutionary radical fringe that has so much cultural power, despite their small numbers, that the most quote unquote powerful multinational corporations in the world feel that they have to kowtow to such people, Walmart and Target have to say Black Lives Matter. Right?

#### CH 35:52

They couldn't, they feel they couldn't get away with probably saying the opposite. Because there would be some, you know, insurrection in their ranks. So when you have that, people see Trump as the only person willing to stand up to them. They see Biden and they say, okay, yes, we know Biden's not woke. We've seen Joe Biden's career for four decades. We know he's not, you know, a blue haired radical.

#### CH 36:18

But he also doesn't have the spine to just throw up a middle finger to the far left. Whereas Trump, take all of his flaws, he's going to throw up the middle finger. And I think that's part of the feeling. I think there's something, there's something that argument is missing. One is that you know, the woke social justice is a cultural phenomenon and an intellectual phenomenon that precedes Trump. And that is going to occur independently of who's in the Oval Office.

#### CH 36:56

Where, you know, I've fear I'm going to be talking about the problem with intersectionality and equity no matter who's in the Oval Office, maybe for decades to come. So the notion that Trump is is the, you know, the saviour from wokeness probably just describes too much power to the executive in the first place. And then the second place doesn't account for how difficult it Trump makes it for anti-woke liberals to, you know, spend time and energy persuasively critiquing the woke. Like if it really is a choice between Trump and woke, then what is the, like a huge swath of people who are liberal and perhaps centrist or democrats and really dislike woke, but really dislike Trump- does that not make it more difficult for them to really combat woke ideas?

#### CH 38:00

Because the world will just come back and say, well, listen, which side are you on? Are you on the side of grabbing by the pussy and kids in cages, or are you on our side? And it's very difficult, given those two bad options, for the liberal to say, no, still still, despite Trump's boorishness, you, you folks are going to be a huge problem and your ideology is going to create a huge problem for this country.

**AS 38:30**

It is a very tough position to hold in this culture. I've tried to hold that position the last several years of being emphatically, as a conservative constitutionalist and as a, as a classical liberal in that sense and believe in liberal institutions believe in the individuals the basis of our society, to excoriate Trump. I was one of the first to call him out on this stuff, and I don't think I've relented. But I've also been increasingly disturbed by the rhetoric and philosophy of the left, and the inability, incapacity of liberals to stand up within these liberal institutions to the woke, whether that be university professors, editors of the New York Times, the heads of major foundations, every single mainstream media institution.

**AS 39:28**

But, nonetheless, and because of that tribal pull, because of the impossibility of doing that, those of us who were in liberal mainstream organisations that wanted to maintain this distinction became intolerable. Because you either had to buy into all of it or none of it. To say that you're half right and half terribly wrong is not something tribalized and polarised readership really wanted to hear. Although that's what the assumption was.

**AS 39:58**

In fact, of course, for those of us who've always had one foot outside the mainstream media are now able to be completely outside of it, there is a real audience for a complicated position like that, actually. And it says something about the way that tribalism is kind of, has sort of cut a swath through the chattering classes, that those kind of voices are precisely the voices that have been marginalised and excluded. And that, by the way, I think is also I would say this about the media, and the left, and the takeover is that, it was not good for you guys. You didn't know what was coming, did you?

**AS 40:37**

You are completely lulled into a full sense of reality. You were already onto your, you know, grand schemes to resurrect, you know, progressive movement that had vast majorities in the reform the constitution and that ploughed more money into all sorts of government, but you were way out of- you didn't get where you were. And it helps to have irritating honorary dissenters in your midst to occasionally get you to think, am I right or am I wrong? And the chorus of, of confirmation bias, so intense, to such an extent that I also was a little blindsided by this.

**AS 41:16**

I didn't expect it to be this close, in so many ways. So, that's where I am. I'm, I'm kind of relieved in a way that this election, however awfully inconclusive in some respects, and I don't want to even jinx it, because God knows what, what, what new twists and turns 2020 still has to give us, but we, it seems we've removed Trump from the equation. So the worry about the authoritarian, crazy, irresponsible, reckless president is gone, at least, God willing.

**AS 41:57**

At the same time, it seems to me that the entire woke analysis of the world and the progressive take on the world is, has been obliterated. It's just the idea that after four years of this towering white supremacist that more black voters would vote for him than they did last time, more Latinos would vote

for him than last time, apparently more gay people. I mean, these exit polls are little to be taken with a certain amount of skepticism at this point, but those seem quite obvious that he won over various minorities.

**AS 42:28**

It also appears, by the way, that Biden's big lead among seniors has evaporated, too. That they're much more equal in the exit polls than they seemed to be in the polls beforehand. So we've got rid of Trump. We've also struck a blow to wokeness in its analysis.

**AS 42:45**

We have a Senate that is not going to capitulate to every crazy ass left wing proposal. And then we have this rather moderate, naturally compromising figure in Biden, who will now attempt to do what Obama attempted to do in '08, and come up with some kind of way of creating a governing agenda.

**AS 43:12**

Now, whether Biden is in a better position to do that than Obama was, I think, is a good question. I suspect he is, just because of the relationships he's built over the years in the senate, particularly. And precisely because he notably refused to go full tribal in this campaign. And his final speeches and presentation, and in certainly in the dignified way he's handled the results, is trying to position himself as the unifying, sort of, reach back to the days when these things weren't quite as gridlocked.

**AS 43:48**

So we actually have, from a pragmatic point of view, about the best balance we could have hoped for from this election, if you didn't want a left takeover, and you wanted to remove the danger of Trump. So shouldn't we be actually kind of thrilled that this is, this turned out to be really where the country really is? It's, it's closer to where you and I are than many people understood, even than we understood. Again, we have this- I mean, I like Biden.

**AS 44:20**

I, I don't see why people despise them. I do think he's been a bit, I do think he's a little sentimental. So I think that he, on some issues, like on the race issue, even on the trans issue, he just doesn't want to think about some of the trade offs and choices we still have to make. He just wants to be on the side of being nice to people. Which is a very admirable sentiment, but it's not necessarily the only way to approach these questions.

**AS 44:48**

So that's my concern about him. He's a bit soft headed. And also that he's tended to be where the party wants him to be. But I do think this election has given him real credibility to make the case that I've been elected as a centrist.

**AS 45:08**

I've been elected to do my duty. I've been elected to bring people together. And either he crashes and burns in that, or he's able to pull out some kind of miracle. And that's what is to be seen.

**AS 45:22**

But I tell you, the other thing, I think, is what it what is clear to me is that a non crazy, non insane representative of trumpism is waiting to take the country by storm, in a way that happened in Britain last December, when most people, well, no one knew what was going because it was incredibly unstable, but the idea that the Conservative Party, after Brexit, would win the biggest majority in the last century, was not something that people really had absorbed or thought was going to happen. And if the Republicans could find a new figure, like Boris, someone capable of channelling these feelings without being a complete megalomaniac, psychopathic, malignant narcissist, then the game is really on, I think.

**CH 46:18**

Yeah, and that kind of person is very easy to imagine for me. Yes, for some people, they say, Trump's personality is a, is a package deal that you couldn't have his politics about immigration and, and all that without the character flaws. Because they see the policies as a kind of character flaw, too. But, to me, I know people who shared all of Trumps basic instincts about politics, but are normal, psychologically normal people. So it seems to me just a matter of time before we get someone like that.

**CH 46:52**

And, you know, as regards Biden, I feel the same way. The times I feel best about Biden are when he's talking about being the president of the whole country. Right? And that's the perfect- it also highlights what I hate most about Trump, which is, in the end, not all of the aspects about his personality, but the fact that he feels like he enjoys provoking the left. Right? And that's just so unpresidential.

**CH 47:22**

Whereas Biden goes out of his way to tell us that he's going to try to be the president of the whole country. Now, whether he lives up to this is anyone's guess. But it seems to me more than mere lip service. And that certainly reassures me, and makes me, as you say, like him quite a bit. So I wanted to go back to the point about Trump's share of the minority vote increasing.

**CH 47:50**

And with the caveat that we don't have all the data in, but exit polls, as well as 538's analysis last week, both suggested Trump's support among black voters almost doubling, and as well as hispanic voters. You know, a huge and misleading category, of course. But, and as you mentioned, quote, unquote, LGBT voters.

**AS 48:16**

LGBTQ

**CH 48:21**

I'm curious if you have any explanations for that trend. I have my own gut feelings. And we'll need to do some research to actually just find out where tis trend comes from, if it turns out to be real. But do you have any sense of where that could come from?

**AS 48:38**

Yes, obviously. Because minority groups can have different opinions within them.

**CH 48:45**

But what accounts change in the past four years?

**AS 48:48**

I know. Well, that's because there has been shifts within these communities within different opinions. So, for example, in Florida, we do have this Cuban question. Whereas if you, if you really do polarise around the Cuba point, and I think the Trump people were very good at doing this, you're gonna get a big shift of Cuban votes. I also think that cracking down on illegal and mass immigration is something that many Latinos will eagerly support.

**AS 49:22**

The people who are most at risk of having their wages decline, competition for their work, as well as a difficulty in assimilating and integrating with the numbers of mass immigration are so great that they take away the incentive and the necessity to integrate, and to assimilate. Yeah, I can see why many Hispanics after four years of seeing immigration actually come down, to some extent, and then also witnessing the increase in wages and jobs for people at the very low end. That is what you have to remember, and part of this is designed, but part of it was also luck. That essentially, if you play out a recovery past, you know, the length that it went after the '08 recession, eventually you're going to reach the people going to benefit at the bottom of the pile.

**AS 50:18**

Now, if you put that in and combine that with restricting immigration, you saw the biggest gains, I mean, Trump never stopped telling us, among working class, blacks, and Latinos. Now, why would- it's perfectly obvious. And I find it amazing that more African American votes aren't rallied around the immigration question. Because historically, of course, from Barbara Jordan on, I mean, this is African Americans have always actually not not been terribly pro mass immigration.

**AS 50:51**

And so I think maybe the effect of restraining immigration, the increase in wages, and, and decrease in unemployment among people at the lower ends of the spectrum, who were Latino and black, could be something that they completely agree with, and support someone who helped bring that about. And they have not, and this is a key thing, they didn't blame Trump for the virus. I don't, I mean, many of them didn't. The LGBTQ people- well, again, it's meaningless, because I don't know what that means.

**AS 51:27**

There are going to be big distinctions between gay men and lesbians in terms of their politics. And there will be different responses within gay, lesbian, and even the miniscule transgender population, depending upon their class, race, personal feelings, and all the rest of it.

**CH 51:46**

Let's assume that if the LGBTQ bump is real, that it's primarily driven by gay men.

**AS 51:53**

Probably, yes. Absolutely.

**CH 51:55**

I think that's a true what could be a- it's a strange question to ask, because there's nothing about, you know, being gay that would necessarily be relevant to the, to the trend. Right?

**AS 52:08**

Well, I do think gay men being told by their own side that they are the oppressors, that when you show up to every gay fundraiser and all you're taught is that white people are bad, and you're a gay white person. When you're told that you can't speak. When you're told that, when you see that all these organisations have rigid racial quotas. Yeah, there's going to be a point at which gay men and some, and some lesbians too, and also some trans people, who haven't been brainwashed into thinking the only meaning of their life is being a victim of heterosexuals, which is not that many people.

**AS 52:51**

I mean, there are some people who live that way. But it's not all gay people at all. And so, they might have been giving a bit of a middle finger to the left that's been waging war on them for the last four years, telling us, telling gay white man they really don't have a place in this movement, telling them that they're essentially full of their own privilege, telling them that their whiteness is the most important thing about them, telling them that gay men are not subject to any of the kind of pressures that for example, trans women of colour are, when you see gay pride parades being shut down by the radical left around racial issues.

**AS 53:25**

And when you see the extremism at the transposition, which is essentially, now, that homosexuality doesn't really exist, because there is no such thing as biological sex- there's only gender. I mean, these things, gay men have always been politically heterogeneous. And when the far left takes over again, the entire movement, and spends its entire energy lambasting white people as opposed to aiming to talk to straight people about how to integrate gay people, and how to see us as who we really are in all our diversity, and difference of opinion, and backgrounds- um, I think that's real.

**AS 54:03**

And also remember that the, the gay community doesn't have the kind of structural historical continuity of other communities. So if you're, if you're born into a Jewish community, or a blackcommunity, your parents and your grandparents will be telling you a story of your own community's past struggles or, or victimology. Gay people, every generation is born afresh, randomly across the country, blue states, red states, always going to be more diverse than other minority groups.

**AS 54:37**

Because we're, we're never we're always being born into straight societies in different parts of the country. We are, we are just as influenced by our culture and our environment as anybody else. And our gayness does not completely obliterate all those other things. So, of course, it's possible that gay men would have found that this is really the way that the left is going is really kind of ugly and coercive. They're not going to say this in public. They're not going to, but they are going to.

**CH 55:06**

But I think your last, this last point, to me, seems like it might also account for an increase in the black vote as well. Because, at least according to the 538 article, the increase, Trump's increasing share has only been a young phenomenon. Older black voters are not representing this trend at all. So if it were about, you know, immigration and economics or some something like that, in the past four years, you'd expect to see it probably among older black voters, too.

**CH 55:38**

And my, my, what my gut tells me is that something like the explanation you just gave about why gay men might see the, the movement of the left, the cultural left on the issue of what it means to be gay, and, or the the grouping of gay with trans and all of these other only tangentially or completely unrelated things, and recoil from the way that they're talked about, and talked for, you know. It occurs to me that a lot of black people, you know, below the age of 35, say, growing up in, in a country that is less racist than it's ever been in its history, which by definition, means that I have less experiences with racism than my father did.

**CH 56:29**

And he has less experiences than his grandfather did. And that fact has consequences. When then when the narrative that, you know, and, you know, there's data on this about the Great Awakening, just the the number of times white privilege and systemic racism has been mentioned has increased by an unfathomable factor over the past five or six years, just at the same time that the country is, in actuality, the least racist it's ever been. And so, I can imagine how younger black voters, particularly over the past four years, would feel like the the narrative simply doesn't describe them.

**CH 57:11**

You know, really, when I read the New York Times, I'm supposed to fear jogging while black? Are you kidding me? Because of one story, you know, Ahmaud Arbery? Would you ever use that kind of logic if an illegal immigrant killed an American?

**CH 57:26**

And what would you jump to say, I should fear being killed by an illegal immigrant when I leave my house? It's completely illogical. But it's, it's the, if you're just- you cannot avoid this narrative. You would have to be a complete hermit off the internet to not be bombarded constantly with the message that it's dangerous to walk around in a black, especially black male body nowadays. It seems like that would provide a set of people that could be sympathetic to anyone who rejects that.

**AS 57:57**

Well, yes. And if you- I'm a gay man, now, my adult life has seen and witnessed. And I've been honoured to be a part of an unbelievable victory in terms of civil rights in 20 years, 25 years. So, gay people have in front of them an absolutely vivid experience of a liberal society changing its mind through a process of persuasion, engagement, argument, courts, legislators, journalism. All of that, happening as it does in a liberal society, leading to a breakthrough in core civil rights to such an extent

that the Supreme Court, which is a basically conservative Supreme Court, just ruled the discrimination against gay and trans, trans people, is against is against the Constitution in every state.

**AS 58:53**

And yet, the next day, you'll get admittance from the Human Rights Campaign, telling you that this has been, and I'm not exaggerating, an unprecedented assault on gay lesbian trend, on LGBTQ people. Where? Yes, he has reversed some of the more progressive end term Obama executive decisions around trans people.

**AS 59:19**

And I think that's regrettable. Although, I do think the way that, for example, the bathroom thing was just imposed across every high school in the country, by the Justice Department without any consultation at all, to be really kind of extreme. And I also think the, the attempt to tell people who are male and female that they're not really male and female, that, that they've just constructed some sort of gender around themselves, which applies, which could in which they could be maybe 50 to 100 different varieties, just flies in the face of your own fucking existence.

**AS 59:54**

I mean, what are you going to do, believe your own lying eyes or these people's propaganda? And even though they won't say so publicly, because the incentives are so geared to what's shutting any gay non-leftist up, trust me, I've lived this for 30 years, or marginalised, stigmatised, smeared, turned into the classic uncle Andrew, as it were, phenomenon, to channel Joy Reid for a second, of course there's some resistance. This is the most radical agenda ever. They tried to abolish sex.

**AS 1:00:27**

What gay man is gonna be that down with that? And they are witnessing the most incredible revolution in civil rights, and calling it a catastrophe. This stuff is insane. It lacks any kind of perspective.

**AS 1:00:44**

And I, although you won't find many gay people in public saying this because they dared, they'll be crucified. But in private, I got to believe this stuff has taken a toll, and made people feel like we're not as beleaguered as they telling us. We do have more freedom to vote as we want. And voting for Trump is, again, a middle finger to gay Inc.

**AS 1:01:07**

It's saying no, we don't have to do what you tell us. We don't have to believe the things you're telling us we have to believe. The world is more complicated than you're telling us. And our own lives have proved this.

**AS 1:01:19**

Now, think of a younger generation who have grown up in the knowledge that you can always get married, which is a light years away from the world I grew up in, light years. Of course, they're going to feel less victimised. Of course, they're going to feel they have more of a choice in what their politics is. And, even though they don't want to hear this, the truth is the Trump administration has not been that

vocally homophobic at all. It is not- even when it's done these things, mainly anti-trans, it hasn't really broadcast it.

**AS 1:01:51**

This hasn't been their core message. It hasn't been their branding in the way that it was when bush endorsed the federal marriage amendment, for example. So, I think it's just minority groups don't feel, at least let me put it this way, there's a growing number in minority groups that don't feel that they're victims. And when the left has doubled, down, tripled down, quadrupled down on the notion that all of us are oppressed constantly, they're going to lose credibility. And quietly, gay men, and gay women, don't-not all lesbians are radical feminists at all.

**AS 1:02:29**

And certainly not trans people. A lot of trans people do not buy this insane postmodern crap about who they are. They don't. They think they are men who happened to be presenting physically as female.

**AS 1:02:44**

That's a very binary understanding of what gender and sex really is. So, I think, do not underestimate people's quiet resistance to the work propaganda within the minority communities themselves. And I don't know whether you read the Charles Blow column, good lord, of course, when we do this, from the work point of view, which is simply siding, siding with our oppressors, becoming the oppressors, enjoying the privileges of white adjacency, enjoying the privileges of patriarchy- well, fuck you. You know?

**AS 1:03:23**

No, we, we, we don't buy that view of society. We don't see it as reflected in the lives around us or in the reality we've lived in. We think we have the ability to choose based on a whole bunch of different issues. And we're not going to be browbeaten into one particular political position, whatever these organisations say and do. Sorry, that was a bit of a rant but I needed to get it off my chest.

**CH 1:03:47**

No, perpetually needing to get this off my chest. That with these organisations, that I feel like there should be a word for this one, an organisation that was formed to combat a legitimate threat, an organisation that had to be formed as a matter of moral righteousness, is a victim of its own success. Like, there's something that must be terrifying and deeply depressing about winning a moral fight because we know, at some level, we all love to fight the good fight, at least at least many people do. To have something to fight for or against in life, something that let's you escape from the nihilistic search for mere physical pleasure all the time, that we're all sort of, constantly, to some degree, engaged in, something that is larger than yourself- that's what makes humans tick.

**CH 1:04:44**

And when you latch on to something that fills that hole, but that also is aimed at a genuine scourge in society, and God forbid you're victorious in your fight against the scourge, then, As Douglas Murray put it, there, there are soldiers that, you know, stay on the barracks because they have no, no home to go to. Right?

**AS 1:05:08**

Yes. And they have to keep then sustaining, they have to create a new vision of society in which they're still victims. Now, look, if you were say to a person in 1990, say, that, by 2020, the Supreme Court of the United States would have included not just gay men or women, but transgender people within the rubric of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, they would have said, well, that's all we want. That was our goal.

**AS 1:05:34**

That has always been the goal. It's achieved. Go home, pack it in, get on with your lives. It's done. But no, no, no, no- every time they broadcast the victory, they have to say, but there is always more work to be done. There isn't, actually, in terms of civil and legal and political rights. There's been a revolution, and gay people and our allies and supporters have won a fantastic victory.

**AS 1:06:06**

And the gay groups are essentially pointless at this point, which is why they're becoming morphed into and disappearing into the woke racial coalition, as opposed to being a distinctive opposition force. But also, what troubles people, I think, is that when you've got all that formal civil and political equality, when you can, when it's illegal to discriminate against you, what sustains the sense of purpose? Well, in the Equality Act, it will do two things that the voting rights inclusion would not do.

**AS 1:06:40**

It would make sure that religious people have absolutely no rights whatsoever in dealing with gay people and trans- that they have to, they, they have to violate their religious conscience, in certain contexts, if they deem it to be so. And, secondly, that sex is subsumed within gender, within the understanding of civil rights law. Now, those two things are not necessary. They are, they're deeply radical.

**AS 1:07:07**

Um, and, but that is what we're told is essential, unless we're going to have, you know, unless we're going to be back to *The Handmaid's Tale* or something like that. Again, just not true, not persuasive, but still maintained with unbelievable uniformity and unanimity in all these organisations. And they will not let go of this; they will not let go of this.

**CH 1:07:29**

Isn't the usual counter argument to the, the religious freedom point tha, basically, you know, the, the- without the the Equality Act, it would be like Jim Crow, where you can just refuse a black customer, and shouldn't the federal government step in to prevent that?

**AS 1:07:49**

That's not what's going on. It would step in to prevent that. But in the case of religious organisations, say, like a Catholic school, that decides its religious values, required not to have a married gay people on its staff, I couldn't disagree with that more. But as long as they're within their own sphere, and it's part of their religious identity, and they do not think they can compromise that, and yet do the services they need.

**AS 1:08:17**

Same thing with, like, adoption agencies, where Catholic organisations have shown unwillingness to help get adoption for the children of help, same sex couples get custody of, of children who need parents. I, again, let me say, I think that's abhorrent. But, I don't think it's a big and I do think it will hurt the churches as it is, we're seeing a collapse in support for Christianity, but do I think we need to compel them to do something that is against their religious conscience, to compel someone to actually write a message on a cake that that person doesn't feel is there's another cake shop down the street, when there's another florist down the street?

**AS 1:09:00**

Live and let live, I say. We've won so much. They're definitely in retreat. We do not need to rub people's faces in their defeat.

**AS 1:09:10**

And it's precisely that impulse that provokes a reaction like Trump. Take the win and get on with your life. I mean, that, that's my- this isn't mean that gay people don't have problems we do. And we always will do. But they're not going to be solved by some leftist agenda. They're part of the plight of humankind.

**CH 1:09:30**

I think this is one of the big philosophical differences that so often puts me at all at odds with far left ideas is the notion that there are problems that are inherent to human nature, that, that aren't a mere product of bad policy, or that appear to be a product of bad policy, but the moment you solve this problem, you know, you create a different set of incentives for people to abuse and game. And that there are trade offs inherent. Right? There's there's no such thing as zeroing out misery, and poverty, and, and suffering, and that rushing into a supposed cure, naively, can often be worse than the disease itself.

**CH 1:10:16**

I mean, that's just a bedrock philosophical idea that that is going to put you at odds with a lot of naive ideas. I mean, like that, for me, the notion of reparations is one. Like, the notion that there is something the government could do in the year 2020 to make good on the enslavement of millions of human beings hundreds of years ago, and to, to close that wound- that seems naive and utopian to me. And it connects to something you said earlier, which is a phenomenon I've noticed in people's psychology. Which is that before something happens, they have a very different opinion on how important it is than they do after it happens.

**CH 1:11:01**

So you could probably do this with marriage equality. But the one I think of readily is Obama. Right? You ask any anyone I knew, definitely any black person, any older black person, in particular, whether Obama could win in 2006-7? Hell no. The unanimous answer is hell no, because the country is too racist to elect that kind of person.

**CH 1:11:25**

So that, when that model of the country gets falsified conclusively by Obama's two term presidency, there, there, there's no adjustment of the model itself. Right? It's like you just pocket the gain and keep walking.

**CH 1:11:41**

And, and it doesn't matter. You don't actually update your view of the country to account for the fact that you were wrong about how racist the country was. And that's exactly the kind of thing that is happening over and over again, which was each gain and that what happened with something like reparations. Right?

**AS 1:11:59**

And that's why they've had to almost redescribe Obama as a white supremacist. They don't say that bluntly, but if you read Obama's Jeremiah Wright's speech, it is a full scale attack on left racial politics. It is, it's, it's, it's an understanding of the history and plight of African Americans in this country. But it is emphatically a rejection of the 1619 mindset that this country's irredeemably flawed.

**AS 1:12:26**

Well, I think you take this question of, of racism that people are- can treat people have some obviously different race or appearance to them with some level of hostility. Now, I happen to think that's regrettable. And, in some ways, I agree with the far left that it's universal. I think it's also universal, regardless of your skin colour.

**AS 1:12:51**

I think that the deep evolutionary strategy of our being a little instinctually, prerationally suspicious of people looking very different than us, was boiled into our genes for 195,000 years. We never, humans have never lived in these kind of multicultural, multiracial societies. So you can sense that this has been an actual achievement to have this amount of diversity with this amount of human freedom.

**AS 1:13:20**

And indeed, equality is unprecedented in the history of the world. It really is. And it's, you know, you can say the Swedes are less racist, but they were until they had actual, serious racial minority in their own country, when we've seen things shift very quickly. And I think people give Americans far too little credit in terms of their ability to overcome and work against this ugly part of human nature. But it means, at the same time, I don't believe it will ever disappear.

**AS 1:13:50**

I don't believe it will ever- I don't think homophobia will ever disappear. I don't think it's ever going to be easy for a young guy, early teens, to realise he's gay, and no one else is. I think that's- even though we can reduce dramatically the amount of justification, legitimization of that sense of being different and other, we're never going to eradicate it. So we live with it.

**AS 1:14:19**

And what we have to do in living with it, at a certain level, even though we've achieved all sorts of political civil and social equality, and, and visibility, is working on our own ability to be immune to it, to be resistant to it, not to absorb the hate, or the suspicion, or the ostracism others put upon us. You know, there used to be a liberalism spoke like Eleanor Roosevelt that said that no one can make you feel inferior without your own consent. There is a balance if you're a minority, understanding there will always be prejudice against you because it's human nature, and therefore, ineradicable will always be around.

**AS 1:15:00**

Therefore, the job is psychologically to build up your own ability not to be affected by this stuff, and to carry on proudly and independently as if it were not there. And the current strategy is for people of minorities to do nothing but immediately look for the hostility around them and marinate in it, and seek some sort of end to it. This is, it's a kind of madness. And so because racism, as I understand it, or homophobia, or all the rest of it, are part of human nature, need to be mitigated against, need to be fought, but will always be here.

**AS 1:15:39**

Because the left can't believe that they have to say that racism or homophobia is a function of structural forces, that if you shift the structural forces, which normally, in their case, means simply rigging the whole system so that it's demographically equivalent to reality, and we will somehow abolish this and we'll all live happily ever after with no prejudice at all- I just, just it's just false. It's based upon, or at least, it's only half true.

**AS 1:16:08**

And the, and the other truth is that we're dealing with human nature. We're dealing with very difficult topics. We are dealing with changing culture. But there is some deep level in which humans will always be humans, and a sane and free society will allow them to be that way, as long as they don't objectively harm anybody else.

**AS 1:16:28**

And that's, that's the best we can do. And not only that, but when we get to that place, as a gay person, I would tell anybody else like, yes, we have problems. But is there any other culture in any other society in all of human history that you would choose to live in as a gay person than America in 2020? And the answer is no. Nowhere!

**AS 1:16:48**

Maybe if you were a berdache in a Native American community and were integrated into that culture- maybe you would have felt better. I don't know. But I certainly think we live in a place today that would be regarded by gay people in the 1950s and 60s as simply Nirvana.

**CH 1:17:05**

It's so strange to me to see the claims made about America. You know, I can, I grew up in a very blue place, where criticising the country was absolutely normal. And where there, there wasn't very much reflexive patriotism. There wasn't- if someone was on the news burning an American flag, or pissing on

an American flag, no one in my immediate vicinity would be throwing a fit about it. At the same time, that it was there was not such anti-American sentiment that they would have done something like that themselves.

**CH 1:17:43**

But as I've, you know, as I was an adolescent and a young man, just hearing the way the country is described, it just, it's not reflexive or unthinking patriotism to say that America is among the best places to live on planet Earth. And that's not just my opinion, right? People vote with their feet in this world. Migrants leave everything and travel thousands of miles based on rational understandings of where they think themselves and their their families will best flourish.

**CH 1:18:21**

And the overwhelming choice of the world's migrants, black, brown, white, Asian, what have you, is America. You have to describe a country, when you're describing America, that accounts for why it's the most popular destination for Nigerians. Are they coming to a country that is so rigged against people with black skin that it wouldn't even make sense to come here? Are they writing home to their cousins: don't come here, it's horrible, the police are intractably racist, you can't get ahead as a black person here?

**CH 1:19:00**

Or are they writing, oh my god, America is fantastic. Please come here at the first opportunity if you want a chance for a better life, despite its flaws. And so, to me, the basic question is whether you compare America to an imagined utopia and find it lacking by comparison, or whether you compare it to the actual alternatives. And with every intention of improving it, and in highlighting its flaws, have a realistic assessment of where we are as a country and not this paranoid and anxious desire to overturn everything because things are so terrible.

**AS 1:19:45**

I mean, I'm an immigrant. I chose to live here. I really did. And it wasn't easy, and I had a pretty tough path into becoming an American citizen.

**AS 1:19:56**

But there's no question to me that this is the country I would most want to live in. And make that effect- when I hear this country which I've witnessed, you know, and what happens when you say, I just don't see this. They say, well, that's because you're white. That's because you're already privileged. Fuck you.

**AS 1:20:13**

Which, again, is not an actual empirical argument about where the country is. It's not an argument that says, well, we're white supremacist because we only let white immigrants in this country. No, we've- 80% of our immigration is non-white. What white supremacy has that policy?

**AS 1:20:28**

It doesn't make any sense. When you come from an overwhelmingly white country as I did to this country, you're, you're the first thing you're aware, for instance, one of the things you first become aware of, is the incredible power and vitality of African American culture. It is a global phenomenon. It permeates every part of American life to everybody's benefit.

**AS 1:20:53**

I sometimes say that as a white boy from England, you know, grew up with, with nothing but whiteness. White Americans, even the most reactionary of them, have no idea how black they are. Have no idea how much of this culture they have absorbed, and how much it has enriched and made America unique. And, and I'm not denying and no one is or should, ever should, that this country has committed unbelievable atrocities in terms of race, that the slavery wasn't a hideous gulag, a brutality and dehumanisation.

**AS 1:21:30**

But to see the journey that we've made on all of this and compare it to anywhere else in the world, and to conclude that this country is hopeless, irredeemable, evil, racist to its core, patriarchal- I mean, you look at the amazing power of American women. Like, again, you go to other countries, this is- women are in the workforce, they're in the culture, they're everywhere, and they're succeeding in colleges and universities, they are kicking ass everywhere. And yet, the hysteria that we live in a patriarchy has never been more intense.

**AS 1:22:05**

At some point, you want to say to people perspective. And when they turn around and say, well, you don't feel these things? I'm like, look, No, I don't. But I feel other things. I feel other forms of exclusion. I just don't let them get to me.

**CH 1:22:19**

But, you know, it's disingenuous, because it doesn't matter who you are. Right? If you're Glenn Lowry from the south side of Chicago, or Thomas Sowell, from pre electricity, Jim Crow South, they'll, they'll just find other convenient arguments for why you're not the right person, you're not well placed to understand what I could understand.

**AS 1:22:40**

That's not an argument- that's simply a smear. And that's all they do. I mean, the character assassination of people who are minorities, who are not absolutely completely in line with the hard left position, is really- and I think what happened last several years is that the the tools available to assassinate the characters of people who are in minorities, who are not toeing the correct line, has been amplified massively by social media. And therefore there has been this distortion of the elite conversation in which people like you and me are regarded as completely marginal and, and obviously, awful human beings.

**AS 1:23:18**

Whereas, in fact, as we find from this election that lots of people agree with us. They're not as vocal as we are. But it's definitely not the country that these people are saying it is. And that's been one of the more liberating parts of the result of this election, is to see we're not alone.

**AS 1:23:38**

When, when, when those of us we're surrounded by, this sort of summer BLM cult, in which, in which certain assertions about the reality of America were made as fact which are utterly and clearly disputable, and we were all supposed to agree to this or be regarded as bigots. Those of us who simply quietly did not go along were not crazy, or racist, or bigots, we were actually reflecting half the people of this country, in terms of their understanding of where we were.

**AS 1:24:06**

Here is the thing. It's, it's how do we judge ourselves in history? What I find astonishing is the racial left, as it were, seems to be obsessed with history, but only in order to kind of revive it, to insist that it hasn't shifted or changed, that we're actually exactly where we were. When, in fact, the obvious, empirical influence the last hundred years, or the last 60 years is we are not where we were. We have pioneered something quite remarkable.

**AS 1:24:38**

We still have some serious issues, which we need to address practically, pragmatically, and resolutely. But the idea that this country can be written off as a place that's riddled with evil of the white patriarchy, as Charles Blow says this morning, is a kind of cultural like belief that really isn't, and will not, survive an inspection of reality.

**CH 1:25:03**

The way history is used is something I think about a lot. The way history is taught, I think, the stories we tell ourselves about who we are as a nation, matter. And the way- it's possible to lie by omission. The most important lies about history are lies of omission, not distortions of fact.

**CH 1:25:26**

My deepest problem with the framing of the 1619 project is the implicit lie of omission that somehow slavery was unique to America. People get criminally miseducated on this point. There are different kinds of slavery going back to the dawn of civilization, and some kinds are worse than others, if we want to split hairs about the relative wrongness of human bondage. But the truth is that Saudi Arabia didn't abolish slavery until, probably when you were born, Andrew.

**CH 1:26:04**

This is, the whole world has been on a learning curve with regard to the questions we view as obvious today. Namely, is it unethical to carry human, humans in bondage? It took the world thousands of years to get to the point where where anyone was even making universal arguments for why this is wrong. And most people I come across don't actually know that when they're talking about American slavery.

**CH 1:26:33**

It's not that they've been educated wrongly about the facts of slavery on on this portion of the earth, it's that they think there's something unique about it. And that really matters because it colours your whole- there's a, there's a common fallacy which is to attribute sins to America, which are actually sins of humanity. And that fact really can anchor an entire worldview. And, and, and you can see how threatened folks-

**AS 1:27:07**

The omission thing is fascinating, isn't it? Because, you know, I could read a piece by Jamelle Bouie that simply says, the slaves freed themselves, that white people had no real impact in the liberation of American slaves. As if hundreds of thousands of white people who sacrifice their lives as part of the struggle to end this didn't exist. Or how you can call Abraham Lincoln a racist, and therefore condemn him, without, again, seeing any historical perspective.

**AS 1:27:38**

My favourite is Churchill. The statue of Churchill in Westminster being vandalised with the word racist sprayed on it. And to which one can only say you should have met his opponent. This is, again, this is just historical perspective, and insanity. Isn't this, this this constant ideological fixity that judges every single thing that ever happened in the history of the world, but actually only, almost only, in the West.

**AS 1:28:10**

As opposed to noting that, in fact, what cultures have actually undergone massive struggles to abolish slavery forever. That's what the enlightened allowed us to do. And the ability to exclude all of that, around a mood of resentment, and envy, and bitterness, is, is the agenda of many parts of the left right now. And it's deeply unappealing to many, most Americans.

**AS 1:28:40**

And I think to most human beings who want to get on with their lives without blaming everyone else and everything else for their own fate. America, to me, when I came here, was all about not doing that. It's all about yeah, you can make it. I was astonished by the optimism and the going to the top of America. They looked at me as an individual who might do things, not as, oh, you're lower middle class person from this school, and that place, and therefore your role is this and that.

**AS 1:29:05**

No, do whatever you want. And I'm never going to lose that sense of America. I don't think it's dead. I do think an alternative psyche has been introduced and has corrupted the people's minds. And partly because it is so much easier to live in a world where you can identify good and evil just by looking at the colour of someone's skin.

**AS 1:29:27**

It's such an easy human temptation. It is, in fact, psychologically, the same thing as racism, in as much as you're immediately understanding every individual however, whatever their story, which is going to be unique, and extraordinary, and different, and difficult, complicated- you immediately know who they are, and where they are in the pecking order. That is, that is the thinking that, that has animated racist regime. It has to influence what Ibram Kendi would call anti-racist regimes. It is, it is it appeals to one of

the deepest, simplest, crudest, and ugliest of human nature. And that's why it has such strength and resilience.

**CH** 1:30:05

Yeah, I recently had Ayishat Akanbi on the podcast.

**AS** 1:30:09

Who is she?

**CH** 1:30:10

She recently- Ayishat Akanbi is a Nigerian British woman who's a fashion designer turned cultural commentator, who has probably the best Twitter that that I've discovered in the past year. And it would be a good guest for your, for your show. But she recently tweeted that if you're going along with all of the fashionable, woke ideas of the day, and particularly of the past six months, then you're wrong to believe that had you been alive 200 years ago, you wouldn't have gone on with the fashionable moral ideas of those days. Like, in an era where, a few hundred years ago, the average person you went up to saw, saw nothing wrong with slavery as such.

**CH** 1:31:02

They just didn't want themselves to be slaves. But the notion that it's immoral, that it's a violation, it's evil to hold someone else in bondage, was just not a well-subscribed opinion in the human race. And now it's it's almost universal.

**AS** 1:31:19

Well, I would say that Christianity insisted upon that from, the from the get go, however, distorted and abused it was by things like the Southern Baptist Convention. And that's another issue about well, how do you sustain a notion of real equality of individuals and their sacred individuality, their uniqueness, if you do not have some kind of religious understanding affirming that? Is, is another big question. And the collapse of Christianity, I think, has something to do with some of these, these new doctrines, both about the salvation of the soul, and indeed, the obliteration of the individual into the racial identity group.

**CH** 1:32:01

Yeah. Well, I was rereading White Fragility recently to write a, write a book review. So White Fragility is a book that, when I read it, I feel I'm reading one of the worst books ever written on any subject. But I also understand that this is a very popular book. And it's popular with white people. And not just white liberals; I've heard white centrists and and others say that there was something of value here.

**CH** 1:32:28

So I want to work hard to understand what is it doing in their minds that it's not doing for me? And it occurred to me that it reminded me of something Christopher Hitchens would often say about original sin, in one of his riffs, was that we are created sick and commanded to be well. Right. And one of the DiAngelo's main messages, which I think accounts for some of the appeal, is that the first thing she does is actually forgive white people for being racist.

**CH 1:33:00**

The, the whole point of her message is that you're racist, inherently. Right? There's nothing you could have done differently to not have been born racist. You're blameless in your racism. You were created racist.

**CH 1:33:13**

And then, of course, she commands you to be her species of anti-racist, commands you to take part in a never ending programme of recovery that you can never fully achieve. But that initial expiation of guilt without actually taking you off the hook, I think is very attractive, because, you know, white guilt is intolerable. It's, it's, it's, I think misnamed, as Shelby Steele says.

**CH 1:33:43**

It's really more of a terror than a guilt. It's a terror at the notion that you might actually be racist, and that you might be perceived as, as racist. And for someone to come in and say, take that terror and say, well, actually, you are racist, you can stop being afraid- you were created racist the same way you were created an English speaker. By no hint of your own, you know, agency, right? I think there's something powerfully seductive about that.

**AS 1:34:16**

Well, yes, because it's rooted in a religious impulse that you are born with original sin, and your job is to overcome it. But the difference with Christianity is that we believe that we can't do that ourselves. That only with God's help can we do that. And that it's also something only knowable between us and God, and not something you could measure empirically, or culturally or, or sociologically.

**AS 1:34:38**

No, I do think that wokeness is, is an attempt to recreate the dynamics of Christianity without Christ. It's an attempt to reconstruct a kind of Marxist form of Christianity, in which there is actually, unlike in Marx, no resolution. It's Marx without a happy ending. Marx always had that happy ending.

**AS 1:35:00**

And for Marx the happy ending was inevitable, just as in Christianity, the second coming is inevitable. For the woke, it never comes. We will always live. You have to read Tallahassee to see how bleak and dark and utterly nihilist this vision is. So, it has all the, I think, the worst aspects of Christianity, and none of the salvific possibility, which is why it is so soul destroying to engage it.

**AS 1:35:29**

We could talk all day, Coleman, we, we've, we've talked so long, we should really wrap it up. I'm so grateful to start this conversation with you. I hope we can continue this conversation over the next year or two, God willing, if we were still around. But I also want to thank you.

**AS 1:35:48**

Because it takes courage to do what you're doing. And you seem to do it with the extraordinary tenacity and calm that I've found difficult over the years; I'm notoriously excitable, you less so. But um, it's so

fantastic to have reinforcements, especially in such a unique way that you are, a unique human being with great gifts. So it's an honour and a pleasure to talk with you. Thanks for chewing this over with me.

**CH** 1:36:21

I appreciate it, Andrew. You've provided an excellent example of clear thinking and courage to model myself after, so it's it's great to be speaking with you, too.

**AS** 1:36:30

Thank you so much, Coleman.