

Giving the Devil His Due with Michael Shermer (S2 Ep. 14)

SPEAKERS

Coleman Hughes (CH), Michael Shermer

CH 00:30

Welcome to another episode of conversations with Coleman. My guest today is Michael Shermer. Michael Shermer is the founding publisher of skeptic magazine, the host of the Michael Shermer show, and a presidential Fellow at Chapman University where he teaches skepticism 101. For 18 years, he was a monthly columnist for Scientific American. He's the author of New York Times bestsellers, Why People Believe Weird Things and the Believing Brain, Why Darwin Matters, The Science of Good and Evil, The Moral Arc, Heavens on Earth, and Giving the Devil His Due, which is the subject of today's podcast. Michael and I talked about the declining relevance of Christianity on the political landscape today. We talked about threats to free speech. We talked about q anon. We talked about conspiracy theories and why people believe them. We talk about the one conspiracy theory, I do believe we talk about laws that would ban the teaching of critical race theory in schools, and much more. Once again, my own incompetence with my new camera led to the video quality being less than ideal on this one, so forgive me again. But hopefully it's not too bad. So without further ado, Dr. Michael Shermer, Michael Shermer, thanks so much for coming on my show.

Michael Shermer 02:18

Oh, nice to see you. Thanks for having me. I think the last time we saw each other was that Quillette party in Toronto?

CH 02:24

Yeah, that must have been what, 2019? Something like that. Yeah.

Michael Shermer 02:27

In the before time, as I'm calling it now. Instead of the after time.

CH 02:32

Yeah BC, BC, before Corona.

Michael Shermer 02:34

Exactly. Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

CH 02:36

I remember, the first thing I read of yours was the Moral Arc, the book from years ago. When was that published?

Michael Shermer 02:45

That was 2015. The Original cover here. Yeah. I have a little...I have a picture of Galileo there schooling the church fathers. Yeah, that was 2015. And you know what, so most of the data I had in that I collected in 2014. You know what, it's all pretty positive in terms of race relations, and so forth. And boy, things have taken a turn in the wrong direction, since then, at least in terms of, you know, the kind of anti racism movement or however you want to characterise it. So, seems like I'm fighting this battle all over again, of trying to convince people that things are really quite good, comparatively speaking over the decades and centuries, terms of race and gender and so on. But if you just listen to the current events, you'd think things that never been so bad in America.

CH 03:34

Yeah. And that might be a good place to start. You've been along with people like Steven Pinker, who, who you dedicated your most recent book to. We'll talk about that book as well. I think both you and I have been part of a cast of characters that are inclined towards not optimism in the sense of sort of always looking at only the good of things, but empirical optimism about actually how good it is to be alive right now how much progress humanity has made over the past decades. And this is obviously a very controversial argument. I think most of that controversy has fallen on pinker for his book enlightenment now, and I had him on the podcast several months ago, but your book, the moral arc is in that vein, and you have a lot of so many different books, it's sort of hard to know where to start or what to talk about with you because you have books, talking about skepticism and rationality of books about sort of conspiracy thinking and or at least one of your book touches on that topic, which I find interesting and free speech and then older stuff about Holocaust deniers and you've been sort of all over the place. So I guess a good place to start would be sort of what you what you were just sort of talking about what do you see right now in the landscape, as regards attacks on rationality and free speech and the principles you've devoted many books and your work at skeptic magazine to?

Michael Shermer 05:10

Yeah, I'd say the common theme, tying all those different books together. And throughout my entire working career has just been the search for truth that is what's objectively empirically true? And how can we contrast that with, say, religious truths, or political truths or literary artistic trues? You know, which, which we evaluate claims for differently. So part of the problem that we just touched on is this kind of binary thinking that things are either great, or they're terrible things or, you know, either human nature is good, or it's evil, or America is either this, you know, racist cesspool, or it says, you know, perfect utopia of equal equality between the races, you know, of course, none of which is true, you know, it's a continuum. And so to pinpoint where on the continuum we are, you need data. And you can say, at once and the same that things are better than they've ever been. And they're far from perfect. And so one of my objections to this is kind of binary thinking, where say, the anti racism movement wants to say, you know, systemic racism is rampant, and it's in all our institutions and so on, is that there's nothing to do about that. It's like, Well, where's the problem exactly, that we can solve, because in the, you know, centuries long arc of the moral universe, it's bending, because people solve very specific problems, like we should abolish torture, we should abolish slavery, we should expand the

franchise to include blacks and women in America, and on and on, and not very specific things. And so when you hear these things like, well, everybody has to go through sensitivity training, because pretty much everyone in America is a racist. It's a complete waste of time, because most people are not racist. And so you're capturing the, the few percentage of, you know, races, assholes that are still out there in your net, by you're hoping to capture them by putting everybody through the sensitivity training, say, so like the Starbucks example, member. I don't know. It's two years ago now, or something where a couple African Americans went in to use the restroom, and they were standing around or whatever the manager called the police. And Okay, so, you know, the next thing, you know, Starbucks closes for 24 hours, and all 700,000 employees have to go through this sensitivity training. How about just pinpoint that person right there, the manager right there, that was the problem, not to Starbucks in a city 1000 miles away that, whatever, you know, that that that's one troublesome thing. The other thread, though, is that I think we can draw conclusions about not just whether Bigfoot is real or not, or whether aliens have come to earth, you know, the kind of standard skeptic stuff. That's kind of the fringy elements. Really, it's the same principle. How do you know anything is true? And so the moment you start thinking about that, you think, well, there is a way to find out science. And so can we apply scientific thinking and reasoning and empirical evidence and falsification and Bayesian reasoning and on and on to everything, you know, not just, you know, this claim or that claim, but everything. So that's been my, my life's work to try to do that to everything. So, you know, the latest projects are, you know, can you tell the difference between right and wrong, moral and immoral? Using facts and reason? I argue you can, at least in some cases.

CH 08:41

So it seems to me, I wonder if you share this perception, it seems to me in the Bush era, in the early Obama era, one of the biggest threats in the culture to the rational pursuit of truth came from the Christian right. And the just the influence of Christianity and politics. We, you know, when we had George Bush, you know, talking, strangely similarly to the Islamic theocrats, we were fighting against but with a Christian inflection. But it seems in the past five or 10 years, I've seen Christianity and politics seem less salient than it did in the Bush era and early Obama era so that the attacks on rationality increasingly come from other places, right. And then there's, on the left, obviously, there's identity politics and the this sort of critical race theory notion that rationality is not a human value, but a white value and often simply an excuse to find to justify the status quo in which black people are held down. And then on the right, there's, you know, there's on the far right, there's q anon and just conspiracy nonsense. But I wonder if you as someone who's very prominent in the skeptic and atheist community, have noticed the decreasing salience of Christianity or if that's, or if you disagree,

Michael Shermer 10:18

Well, I guess most prominently in the areas that I used to deal with, like teaching of creationism. And in public schools, for example, or the blatant attempts by the religious right to influence politics, that's changed that's waned a bit. But the people who tracked this stuff through polling data, and other examples, say that the influence of Christian right is as strong as ever, but it's, it's more subtle, it's more bottom up, it's more, you know, local, and you wouldn't see it on, say, a national media level. So organise prayer groups, for example, in which the local politician, the mayor, person running for senator or Congress or the governor, and so they go to these prayer meetings and those people there and making donations to their party, and so forth. That kind of thing happens largely under the National

radar, it still goes on a lot. So when I was in college and say, roughly your age, you know, that was just beginning. Say, when the religious right, the Moral Majority started in late 70s, early 80s, then Reagan became president there, there, it was quite public, you know, you could see it and so that all that changed with Obama. I mean, W was pretty religious. And I mean, he found God when, you know, he was an alcoholic and his wife threatened to take the kids and leave him. They said, Okay, I'm gonna go find God and get rid of the alcohol problem. So he did. Okay. But after that, you know, Obama, of course, he's religious, although a lot of my atheist friends insist that he's only mouthy in the words, but I don't think so. I think I think he's a true believer, but not publicly, so not politically, they I think the influence of the religious right on politics in the Obama era was greatly decreased. And then, of course, Trump is the anomalous person of all 84% of white Christians, white evangelicals voted for Trump, and almost as many in 2016, and almost many in 2020. It's just stunning, because at least the people that they have historically backed, were really religious, they really were evangelicals, they really believed in God, they really went to church seemed like they had the courage of their convictions religiously. Trump is you know, nothing. He's the least religious person ever. And the opposite of that. I mean, he's like, he like violates every Christian principle there is. And so last fall, I had a debate with Dinesh D'souza, the public, pretty public, intellectual, conservative, Christian, and at a church and so I asked him and everybody in the church, how can you back Trump this guy is like the least, you know, for every he goes against everything you guys stand for. And their response was kind of eye opening? Well, he is pro life and none of the previous republican presidents we've had were really pro life they didn't do anything about abortion, you know, travel these wants to do appointing judges, Supreme Court judges, but also all the local judges, you know, hundreds and hundreds of them. He's supporting politicians that are pro life and pro Christian. And, and that that the final one was, well, you know, God works in mysterious ways. He picks flawed characters in the Bible, look at some of the characters in the Bible. I mean, these are just crazy people are flawed people, immoral people, and yet they still deliver the message of God and maybe Trump's like that. Okay. Well remains to be seen if they'll stick by Trump now that he's out. But you know, that to me was a quite a change from the religious rites, normal operations. To me, it showed me that it really is more politics than it is religion, or at least politics in the service of religion, right to in the long run, get your, your judges in your in your laws enacted.

CH 14:13

Yeah, I mean, I have to imagine people, when push comes to shove, could not actually believe that he was a Christian, deep down. It's just he has too much of a public record of having sex with models and just you know, just being the type of person that is just so obviously, almost trying to signal how unchristian he is right. Like he wants you to know, how fully he's not living by the principles of chaste, right?

Michael Shermer 14:43

And honesty, and honesty, integrity, right. Yeah. All those things. Well, so common, I think one thing we might parse here is what it means to believe in something or support something like QAnon. Um, you know, this is our last issue of skeptic. Oh, yeah. This is the the idea that there's a safety cult of pedophiles led by Hillary Clinton molesting children and pizzerias. I mean, this is so insane, so stupid, so crazy. No one could possibly believe it. So when you have 29% of Republicans that pulled two weeks ago report, they think there's maybe something to it. They can't possibly really believe that. So when they're, they're operating on an objective truth, empirical truth level, there really are pedophiles

really doing these things at a pizzeria. Hillary's really involved? No, I think it's more of a political belief. That is, I'm signaling that I am committed to our position, our tribe, our leader, almost like a cult, the crazier it is, the more virtuous my signal is by saying I commit to it. And I think maybe that also explains Trump. You know, no matter how crazy he got, as he himself said he could shoot somebody on Broadway and he'd still have his supporters. Okay, what is that saying that saying that that's a different kind of truth? Sort of a political tribal truth, you might call it.

CH 16:03

I think a point you made there in passing is what I find very interesting. You said, the crazier it is, the more virtuous a signal it is. And I think that's a very deep point about how tribalism works in general, which is, if you if you just reimagine if you abstract away from the actual propositional content of the claim that you believe in Q anon or whatever the claim is, and just think of it almost as an evolutionary psychologist, or as a biologist would think about the way a peacock feathers like what a peacock feathers do, the utterance you're making, at some level operates as a proof of how loyal to you are to a particular tribe that you were arbitrarily born into, or whatever. And the dumber the utterance, the more crazy the utterance, the more embarrassing the utterance outside tribes, that's the key part, the more embarrassing your utterances to other tribes, the deeper, you're signaling your attachment to your own tribe, because you're saying that you're willing to pay a deep reputational price visa vie the rest of the world in order to show how much you care about your tribe and your tribe only. And none of this has to be happening at a conscious level. So this is not Machiavellian. And this is just in assumptions, how we're wired, right? It's all mediated sort of through emotion and gut feelings and so forth. And I just, I think that that's something I think about pretty often. At the same time, there are true believers, certainly in queue anon. No doubt.

Michael Shermer 17:45

Yeah, that's right. There are. But again, if you think about religious truths, like say, the resurrection, and that Jesus died for our sins, came back to life and so on. Now, some of that story, you can put in the bin of historical truths that could be empirical, we could come to some consensus among historians about whether someone named Jesus of Nazareth actually lived. And whether he was crucified, you know, Rome was crucified practically everybody. And so yeah, okay. You know, most theologians and historians of religion say that that part is probably true. Now, did he come back from the dead after three days of being dead? Okay, resurrection? Well, there, you know, I've calculated it at 100 billion to one of the odds of that happening since 100 billion people lived and died, not one has come back from the dead, except for maybe one if you're a Christian. So you can put a kind of a Bayesian calculation on it, and then ask, you know, with the principle of the equally principle, extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence, you have the most extraordinary claim of all time 100 billion to one, how extraordinary is the evidence, it's not it's not even ordinary. It's, it's pretty crummy. So but people don't believe it for that reason. In a way, it's this kind of signaling, I'm a Christian. That's what I believe if I didn't believe the resurrection, I wouldn't be a Christian, I'd be a Jew or Muslim or whatever. And, you know, so I think in my favourite story that has been at a conference with Richard Dawkins and, and Ken Miller, Ken Miller, everyone knows who Dawkins is. But Ken Miller is a world class biologist, he has one of the most popular textbooks of biology. He was the definitive debunker of intelligent design creationism, he wrote a brilliant book explaining why evolution is true, and on and on. And on the last chapter of his book, though, he defends Catholicism and in the resurrection, Jesus died for our sins,

why he believes it. And I remember Dawkin's saying something like, you know, can if we found a piece of the True Cross, and on a piece of the True Cross was a little bit of flesh and we could extract some Jesus's DNA. You know, he was supposedly born of a virgin, right? So what does DNA be different from your in mind? And you know, it can just stop them and said, Richard, I'm not saying this is true. This is just what I believe I'm a Catholic. This is that this is what we believe. Full stop. Like oh, Okay, so they're really talking about two different levels kind of empirical truth. Is it really true that the resurrection really happened? Or is it more kind of religiously true or mythically true, Jordan Peterson talks like this, like whether it happened or not to kind of irrelevant the story of being born again starting over, you know, an oppressed people being resurrected by overthrowing the chains of their oppressors, Jews being oppressed by Roman se, and on and on, and then you can apply the principle to your personal life, I'm going to be born again every day, I'm going to start over, I'm going to, you know, apologise to people I've sinned against and find forgiveness and be forgiving and live the kind of the life of Jesus, whether it happened or not, that could be entirely made up. And there's still a truth there kind of literary truth touching on human nature, something like that. And so there, I think we're talking about two different kinds of truths.

CH 20:57

Shelby Steele, who I had on my podcast a few months ago, has this notion of poetic truths, which I think is a phrase that I like, and he was using it to refer to the idea that in Ferguson, Michael Brown, died with his hands up saying Hands up, don't shoot, which is has been debunked every which way, by the witnesses of the event, and by the report, by Eric Holder, and so forth. But the notion is, it's just a poetic truth. It's not literally true, but it's something that gives people meaning gives people a story that makes them feel that they are a part of something larger than themselves, that they have something to fight for. And this is this kind of thing is, is ubiquitous. It's not just religion, it's politics. It's, it's everything. And yeah, there's always, I think a lot of what your work deals with is that there's always this sort of gadfly. There's a gadfly, going back to Socrates is saying, is this stuff actually true? And doesn't it matter? If it's actually true? Like, aren't we doesn't matter that we're actually in contact with reality is improving humanity and just creating a better world simply a matter of telling more and more compelling stories that might be true? Or is it a matter of getting closer to the truth and finding, finding reasons to make all of those kinds of improvements you mentioned, such as you know, you know, George W, you know, getting over his alcoholism and so forth finding reasons to do those things that don't require fairytales.

Michael Shermer 22:39

Yeah, I get the idea of poetic truth. I understand why that motivates people. It's like the message that pinker and I have, you know, if you put in a slogan, you know, what do we want slow, gradual change through legal measures? When do we want it eventually, over a long period of time? It's definitely exciting. You know, the poetic truth, you know, America is a racist cesspool, and the police are all, are all bigots. So let's defund the police and overthrow them and get out there and March that has kind of an appeal to motivate people, you know, like in, in network news, you know, to put your head out the window and say, I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore. You know that that motivates people, right. And he saw this, not only with the anti fire movement, and Black Lives Matter movement, some of it in Portland in Seattle, but also on January 6, that's capital. You know, a lot of people went there, because they think the boss said, to come down there and do something. And he didn't have to

say exactly what to do. He could even say, you know, we're going to go down there and be peaceful, which he said, After an hour of, you know, rabble rousing to fight like hell, and don't let him steal your country. And of course, by then, you know, they were fired up. And you could see the people in those videos walking around, they just looked like oh, my God, I can't believe what we're doing is, this is our 1776 moment. They're thinking I'm Hamilton and Adams and Jefferson, Oh, my God. And, and that's just not how it happens anymore. I mean, again, changes most of the good changes done non non violently, very peacefully through legal measures, you know, and that Dr. King and Gandhi show that that's the best way to do it. But it's not exciting. It's not romantic. It just takes a long time.

CH 24:19

Yeah, I did. I did want to circle back to QAnon actually, because this is I don't think I've ever had the chance to talk about QAnon at length with anyone on the podcast, but you seem like maybe the perfect person to sort of talk about this with I hadn't seen that skeptic magazine had published something on QAnon. Did you write that or was that somebody else?

Michael Shermer 24:41

We have two articles one by me one by Dan Loxton are one of my editors who researched it pretty carefully. We show that it's really it's a very old conspiracy actually has elements of past conspiracies, including the kind of recovered memory move in the 90s. The Satanic Panic of the 80s. That kind of white Nash elitism of the 50s and 60s pushing back against the civil rights movement, all the way back to, you know, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, how they're going to the Jews are going to take over the world as a strong anti semitic element to the conspiracy theory. You know, the Jews are doing this and that. And even back to the blood libel, you know, we're gonna drink the blood of children, you know, this, this goes back centuries of Christians thinking this about Jews, and that led to many European pogroms over the centuries. So, you know, it's kind of a, a global conspiracy theory with a lot of elements of old conspiracies, theories in it. And, and, and then there's, there's, you have this kind of patternicity and confirmation bias, where people are just looking for any kind of connect the dots patterns, and then even like, Trump's little typos in his tweets, or his, you know, he would, I think, maybe, accidentally, but maybe on purpose, he would say things like, he would throw a queue in front of a word like conspiracy or something, I forget the example that they used for that, but just enough that they think, you know, hey, he really is involved in all fighting against the deep state and all this stuff, just enough to I think fueled the idea that it something like that could be true, but again, back to this kind of poetic truth or mythic truth. Even if I showed pq believers, which I have, that there is no conspiracy that the one guy who really believed it and acted on his courage of his convictions was a guy that went to the Comet Ping Pong Pizzeria in Washington, DC with his gun. And he's like, where's the basement? and they go, there's no basement here. He's like, what? Then he shoots a couple bullets into the in the ceiling. No one was hurt. He was arrested. You know, he went there to break up the pedophile ring, which, which is kind of a rational thing to do. If you think there's a crime unfolding right before our eyes and no one's doing anything about it. I'm going to do something about it. Right? Yeah. But I think for the average person, it just represents its mythic, it represents something else, like I don't trust the government, I don't trust the state. I don't trust politicians, they are lying, cheating bastards, and I'm going to do something about it. And Q is giving us some cute clues or whatever, whatever it is, it doesn't really matter what it is. So that I think that would be an example Q is kind of an example of poetic mythic truth that stands for something much like, you know, what the BLM movement and you

pointed out? Well, but you know, the, the actual number of police encounters with African Americans is pretty low, how many are actually shot? It's very numbers do digit number. Each year, it's just nothing compared, say 50 years ago or whatever. race relations are better. Most police are not right. That that's not they're not operating at that empirical level. They don't want to know the numbers. You know, what's the actual number? What actually happened in Ferguson, at this point, as Shelby points out, that's irrelevant. They're operating at this other mythic poetic level, like, and I think that's the problem. And the solution is what you just said is like, what's true really matters. Because if it's not true that most police are racist, then there's no reason to define the police. If there are racist police officers, people that should never have a badge and a gun, go stop them. If it's that department right there. And that city, that precinct of that city, do something right there. It's like, what bothered me about that letter that Princeton University really sent out six months ago or whatever saying, well, we're complicit in the systemic racism. You know, we've been doing terrible things here on campus. And you know, we got to be much better people. And then the Trump administration said, Oh, yeah, what did you do? Exactly, because it's probably illegal. And we're going to charge you and remove federal funding for violations of civil rights and title nine, and so on. And they're like, oh, what, no, no, we didn't actually do anything specific. We're just mean we're kind of generically systemically guilty of racism, like everybody else. It's like, okay, of course, you know, that's where the rubber meets the road is like, how do you solve that particular problem? It's like that now with this shooting last week of the Asian massage parlour women, you know, six of the eight, I guess, were Asian women. And was this racially motivated or not? Well, we don't know. But okay, let's assume it is. Let's say this guy did. He didn't just like, dislike women, he disliked Asian men. Okay, let's say that's the case. You know, now we're going to go through this. Well, everybody has to go through sensitivity training. Me and you and everybody because there's one nut job. Well, maybe it's just the one nut job, and maybe there's 10 of him in America or whatever the number is. It's not 340 million Americans are anti Asian. So we all have to go through sensitivity training, complete waste of time, waste of money, and if anything, I'll have a backfire effect. People will just resent it and think Well, okay, maybe I'll just be a racist asshole. Then if you're gonna keep accusing me of that. So you have kind of sidetrack there on but the Q anon thing Again, this is a real test of, of the motivation behind conspiracism is that again, it's kind of signaling a distrust of something like anti vaxxers. They distrust big corporate and Big Pharma, big corporations, money making organisations, or on the other side, they distrust the government. And, you know, anti GMO that's largely anti Monsanto, you can pinpoint it to an actual company that they don't like, or anti nuclear. I don't trust scientists, I don't trust technology, you know, one disaster, you know, like Chernobyl, okay. And then, you know, on the other side, climate deniers, they don't trust the government and science organisations or scientists themselves. So, again, even the role we have at skeptic of debunking those claims, and showing here's the actual numbers, or here's what's actually going on. Sometimes it's effective for people that are not committed, but for those that are already committed to the belief that that's not why they believe in the first place. It's more of this poetic thing, it stands for something else, that I don't trust the authorities.

CH 31:06

Right. And it might even stand for something that's partly true. Like, you know, it makes sense to not blindly trust the government are blindly trust, huge corporations. Because all of these entities do immoral things from time to time. And presumably, they don't get caught doing every immoral thing that they do. So you can acknowledge that and then not believe, a specific conspiracy theory. But you

know, I've seen at least I've read a long excerpt from skeptic magazine about 911 truth or ism and your debunking of that. And I wonder if you ever feel this is sort of a thankless task, right? Because most people don't believe in the 911 truth or and, you know, conspiracy and roll their eyes if they have the one friend who sort of goes on about it. And in my case, I have a an acquaintance whose latest conspiracy theory is that the trans industrial complex is trying to make people gay, by using SSRIs, which has so many separate questionable links, all thrown together. But I guess one of one of my questions is do you get people writing to you saying, I was I was hook line and sinker for nine 911 truth or until I read your article, and now I actually understand why the steel beams could melt at or could partly melt at 1200 Fahrenheit, or is it? Do you feel like you're just shouting into the void on these things?

Michael Shermer 32:35

We do get those I do. I don't have a data set for that. But more often we hear from people that were just curious, and they just didn't know like, well, what is the deal with the nanothermite? or What does temperature does deal melt at or whatever. But again, one of these mythic truths again, I guess, you know, and so in 911, truth or circles, there's a debate between the lie hoppers and the AI hopper. So Lie, lie hub, let it happen on purpose versus my hub made it happen on purpose. The question is, what was Bush's role W's role in this? Did he know about it and let it happen? Or did he actually orchestrate? Okay, well, neither one of these are true. But there is a truth in there. I call it cowhop that is capitalised on what happened on purpose. This is what politicians do. This is what presidents do. Like there was conspiracy theories about Pearl Harbour. Maybe Roosevelt was in on it, maybe he knew about it and let it happen. And they found a few memos, you know, dated like a few months before. So showing, you know, the chat Japanese are intending to attack American military bases. And they had a list of them where they might attack, one of which was Hawaii. So this was uncovered after Pearl Harbour, so it was like, aha, look, there's an Intel given to the White House. But it wasn't given to the White House. Actually, they had so much intelligence about what the Japanese might do, that they stopped sending them all to the president's office because he couldn't read them all. And they couldn't process that much information after the fact. The hindsight bias you go, Oh, okay. So it was Hawaii. So there's the memo. Same thing happened August 9 2001. Condoleezza Rice has a memo saying bin Laden is intending to attack the United States on US soil. There it is, Bush had to know about that. No, there was like 10,000 pieces of Intel that summer, about what Al Qaeda may or may not do here. They're all you know, all over the world. It's only after the fact that you go, okay. There's the one that we should have paid attention to. Now, of course, what Roosevelt was, you know, glad that happened was he was trying to unite the American public into getting involved in the European war because England was hanging on by their teeth before the Nazis. And, and Churchill was begging him for support the actual financial military support, and Roosevelt couldn't do it. He didn't have the support of Congress. And so that and America first or movement was pretty strong led by Lindbergh and after Pearl Harbour that all disappeared. Everybody said, Okay, we're we'll do whatever you want to do. Okay, we're going to port Churchill, we're going to attack the Japanese. We're sending troops to Europe we're in. Right. So he capitalised on what happened on purpose and bush the same thing. That'd be one, he wanted to invade Iraq. And even though it was clear, there were no weapons of mass destruction, never any evidence that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. And really, Afghanistan was the proper target. And we had already invaded there. So why Iraq? Well, you know, again, capitalised on what happened on purpose who could object the even Ellery voted for the war for the invasion of Iraq? You know, I'd

say he had general support because of what happened. So there's that then there's, I mean, you mentioned enough true conspiracies I call this constructive conspiracism. That is, just enough of them are true. And as you rightly pointed out, those are just the ones that got caught on. Surely we're not catching them every time. So there's probably a bunch more Volkswagen cheating the emission standards in Europe. That's a conspiracy. Watergate, conspiracy. Iran. Contra.

CH 36:05

Yeah, como nursing homes? cointelpro. Yeah, they, you know, they happen. And I think, well, there's, there's, you know, isn't another subject I wanted to bring up is, what's the personality profile of a person that gets really into conspiracy theories, because, in my experience, it's never seemed to me to be a problem of intelligence. I've met some of the most intelligent people, you know, people that scare me with how smart they are. Or I'm clearly you just know, very quickly, you're in the presence of someone, just like cognitively sharper than you. But that are all in on some of the craziest conspiracy theories, right. And I do think famously, there is a guy with maybe the highest IQ in the world. That was a total far right, white supremacist, and the kind of Rogue white supremacist that was deeply into particular conspiracy theories, right. And it seems to me that the part of the mind that is, you know, is tasked with noticing patterns in the world, you can ratchet that up to, to 11. But if you're noticing the wrong patterns, or you have some, for whatever reason, inclination towards it, you can use all of that cognitive power to just make more and more compelling nonsense. So I wonder if you've noticed, like, what type of person becomes into conspiracy theories?

Michael Shermer 37:34

Yeah, I like to say that belief and intelligence are orthogonal. They're like this. They're not related to each other. Except after the fact once you've committed to a belief, intelligent, educated people are better at rationalising beliefs that they arrived at for non intelligent rational reasons. So they're better looking stuff up and finding connecting the dots and surfing the net and, and making all those arguments you've heard, you know, like, nano thermite, and super secret super nano thermite and the speed at which buildings fall I mean, when I started investigating nylon and truth is I couldn't believe how complicated a lot of this stuff was, you know, yeah, architects and engineers for 911 truth. Like he read their papers like, okay, these are not dummies. Yeah. Clearly, they're, you know, they're smart, and they have tonnes of facts. Obviously, that's not enough. So the psychology of conspiracy theorists conspiracists, yeah, they're not, you know, overweight, 40 year olds living in their mother's basement, that that's a myth with a tinfoil hat. You know, these are normal people. Most of us believe in some conspiracy, or another. Yeah. Which may be true. Maybe not. So just normal people. different cohorts have different emphasis on conspiracy theories. You know, why you'd say African Americans tend to believe you know, that because of the Tuskegee mass and all that and other things that really happened that were really bad. They tend to think, say, for example, during the crack cocaine epidemic, that that was orchestrated by the CIA or the FBI, I forget which one, and you now we're seeing with the vaccine shy people in some African American communities, because of Tuskegee, and so on. But why it's, you know, okay, it's, you know, it's guns, they're going to take away our guns, and they're building, you know, Obama's building concentration camps in Texas to put us poor white people with guns away, and on and on. So different groups have different conspiracies that they believe in having to do with power, mostly power, who doesn't thinks somebody else has power and who wants to get it? Again, the weird reversal with Trump is that almost every losing campaign in history has thought the election was

rigged somehow the assumption that and there's nothing the winners who were also worried about this, the moment they won, they just drop it like, Oh, no, that was a totally fair election. Weird thing about Trump is he keeps talking about it was a rigged election. It's like, dude, he won, so shut up. You're not supposed to be talking. Anyway. Yeah. So quirky. Yeah, you know, it's in there. Differences and say just kind of open to new ideas, maybe to open to ideas that could be sort of a gullibility rather than a skeptical element to them. There was an interesting study done called dead and alive. And it had to do with people that tick the box with it, saying that Princess Diana was killed, were also more likely to tick the box that she faked her death and is still alive somewhere. Well, they can't both be true. Can't be dead and alive. And but the consistent finding in that study was that people that are distrustful of authorities or official stories tend to do this across the board, no matter what story you give them. They go, yeah, I doubt that. I don't think we're getting the full story on that. My colleagues at Chapman University did a funny story about that very phrasing. To what extent do you think the government has not been forthright and giving us the full explanation for Pearl Harbour 911, blah, blah, blah. And then they threw one in the North Dakota crap? Well, 33% of Americans said they had some doubt that the government was telling us the full story about the North Dakota crash, what North Dakota crash, they just made that up, they just threw it in there. Just to see if people would take the box. Either people don't know what they're doing when they take surveys or they're just are kind of globally skeptical of any kind of authority.

CH 41:21

Right. And, and I share that skepticism in many ways, but and this is another thing I've noticed is that I've often found I tend to get along with conspiracy theorists up until they start talking about their favourite conspiracy, at which point I'm totally skeptical. But it does seem to me, my position as a writer has often been that I'm challenging what I view as a mainstream consensus on the topic of race. So you, for instance, the idea that I remember when you know, when Ahmaud Arbery was killed several months ago, you see a New York Times op ed, about how it's rational for black people to fear for their lives when they go out on a job. And that's something I'm seeing in the New York Times, which is, you know, obviously, enormous Lee respected mainstream, so forth. And immediately, I just doubt this, right, I doubt it from the point of view of common sense, from the point of view of, you know, as well as from the point of view of just being in touch with the data, in addition to lived experience, the whole set of ways in which people come to conclusions about the world, I very much doubt, it makes sense for a black person to fear for their life going for a jog. And, and yet, I'm sort of constantly inundated by this sort of species of beliefs. That seemed totally irrational to me. And, and that has definitely led to a skepticism, especially with regards to certain issues about which I know that a place like the New York Times is going to reliably exaggerate, I can often get along with a conspiracy theorist, because they can sense that I also doubt what the man is telling us or whatever. But then it just, you know, the moment you start talking about a specific experience, a conspiracy, I can't get on board almost, with almost anyone because I'm thinking of how many people would have had to keep it silent. You know that that's a huge factor for me and the implausibility of, you know, 99% of conspiracy theories. If it requires two or three people to keep a secret, then I'm listening. If it requires hundreds, then everything I know about human nature and the tendency to gossip and how difficult it is to even keep a secret from your friends, friend, right? Just reflect on your own social life. Like how long have you been able to keep a secret or how many secrets have been told to you by your friend did you know x did y with you know it takes

about two seconds is like we love gossip? More than we almost love food rise. So especially when something as juicy as a huge conspiracy theory, right that you just can't keep that.

Michael Shermer 44:15

Yeah. How many times have you said to a friend, Okay, I'm gonna tell you this one thing, but you can't tell anybody else. They did this exact same thing. He had three people can keep the secret of two of them are dead. Ben Franklin. Yeah, I was on G. Gordon Liddy his radio show in the 90s my first book came out why people believe weird things and of course he was the one of the main orchestrators of Watergate break in and he asked me that question I said, well, you're the one who knows about this he goes yeah, the two things he said were the can keep their mouth shut problem and the competency problem most bureaucrats are incompetent. You know that. You know, if you had a dozen of them have to do 20 different things all at the right time. They're not going to do it. I mean, Watergate break in is a classic example Jose to do is break into a hotel room. He's me and steal some stuff. They couldn't even do that. But you know, Much less orchestrate world domination for the United States. Yeah. Impossible. You just can't get that many people to do those things. And, you know, so that and also Yeah, again, the more elements that come together more people, the bigger the conspiracy, the less likely it is to be true. Very specific targeted things like we want to rig this election or we want to aid that political party. This happened a lot in the 70s 60s and 70s. The CIA was involved in a backing certain fascist dictators over communist dictators and South American countries because the fascists were at least friendlier to us business interests, whereas the communists were just going to nationalise our company, so we don't want to back them. So we were doing things like helping to rig elections and orchestrating the assassination of foreign leaders until I think it was Gerald Ford, who was a Reagan might have been Reagan who passed that law against can assassinate foreign leaders, it was legal before that. I like to tell the story of Operation Northwoods, which was a document given to Kennedy by his Joint Chiefs of Staff. So the highest ranking people in his administration of how to orchestrate a false flag operation to have an excuse to invade Cuba, and topple or assassinate Castro. Now, this all came out in 1997, when there was a tranche of JFK conspiracy related documents released and president john said it actually cover that up this Operation Northwoods document in which they said they were planning on things like Well, let's shoot down an American plane that has American college kids going to Cancun or something, we'll blame it on Castro. And we'll have a US jet to dress up to look like a MiG a Russian MiG, we'll have it buzz, the Miami airport. And they were like a dozen things. We're gonna assassinate Castro with a poisoned cigar. He likes to scuba dive, so we're gonna put poison inside his wetsuit. And on and on, and on. To his credit, Kennedy saw this, and we're not doing any of this, this is insane. We can't do that. He had already experienced the debacle of the Bay of Pigs operation, so, but the fact that top people in US government are actually even thinking about doing something like that. When you hear some nutty, like Alex Jones ranting about false flag operation inside job, that's not totally crazy. You know, we have done a lot of things like that. So there are reasons to distrust. Definitely, there's reasons to distrust the character of, you know, anyone with any amount of power. Right? And that's why one of the key points you made is it's what you really have to consider is the competency. Problem is like, it's not that if you're doubting a conspiracy, it's what I think a lot of people who like conspiracies, what they hear is, oh, well, you just trust the people in power. You just think they're better than they are you think they wouldn't do that even if they could? And that's not really the argument. It's really, yeah, they would probably do pretty horrible things if they could. But it's very difficult. Bill Clinton couldn't even keep a blowjob secret. And he was, you know, the most powerful man in America.

CH 48:13

I'll say there. There was one, you know, sort of conspiracy theory that I encountered recently, many months ago that, that seems pretty compelling to me, because it requires maybe at most two people to keep a secret. And that's I don't know if you are aware of the book and documentary that came out about the Trayvon Martin trial. The George,

Michael Shermer 48:37

I don't know that one.

CH 48:38

Yeah. So it was this...

Michael Shermer 48:42

Know, I know this story. What happened actually, of course, but I don't know about the conspiracy theory around that.

CH 48:47

While it was it, this kooky guy wrote a book and made a documentary. And I just say that because he really is a strange person. Like his, his strangeness just, you know, almost undermines the persuasiveness of his arguments, but basically argues that Trayvon Martin's, the person put on stand as Trayvon Martin's girlfriend was in fact, his girlfriend's half sister, that was coached into giving testimony by the lawyer because the actual girlfriend didn't want to testify. And so this is something that if a friend just said to me at a bar, I would say, okay, you're crazy. And, you know, it really matters the way you encounter something. So I encountered this from Glenn Lowry and John McWhorter, talking about it and sort of being persuaded by it on the basis of the evidence. And I know them to not be the kind of people that just believe nonsense, so I looked at it myself and so I can empathise with the position of someone who believes something to be true. That, you know, even perhaps Wikipedia might say as false and it's worth acknowledging how rarely this happens, right? But I can empathise with the position of being that guy and thinking, you know, something and perhaps being right. And wanting to share that with the people around you. And, and there's a way to do it. But it's tough in the conspiracy theory is the half sister saying what the sister was the other sister was going to say anyway? Or is it? Is it supposed to be a different narrative? Well, so the theory is that Trayvon Martin's actual girlfriend simply did not want to testify. She wanted nothing to do with public spotlight. And so but they wanted, they needed p testimony, to implicate Zimmerman in in a way because there was just no other he was talking to his girlfriend at the time Zimmerman approached him, and they fought and Zimmerman ultimately shot him he was on the phone with his girlfriend at that time, she wanted nothing to do with it for totally understandable reasons.

Michael Shermer 50:55

Yeah, this reminds me a little bit of the OJ case. And because the defense that the defense argument that the police planted evidence, again, was not completely crazy, they have done stuff like that. And there's a the ESPN had a really good documentary series on the background to the OJ trial going all the way back to the 1950s. And blacks move into the Los Angeles area from the south, and the

rampant racism that was there in the police and all the shenanigans that went on 50s 60s into the 70s. And, you know, didn't really start tapering down until the 80s. Such that by early 90s, there probably wasn't as much that much racism, but still in the minds of African Americans living in Los Angeles from where the jury was selected. Yeah, that that, that we they know that happens. Right. And, and so, you know, and again, did they really believe OJ didn't do it? Here? Again, I'd go back to my distinction between different kinds of trues. I think probably they suspect that he did it. I mean, how could you not pretty obvious he did it. But the idea that we're going to say he was not guilty, in a way as we are signaling, we recognise the racist past of the la police. And, and the court system and California and so forth. And so we're gonna, you know, kind of stick it to them that way. It's the different kind of signalling, I guess, which I don't know what you'd call it a virtue signalling that sort of, I guess, morals.

CH 52:26

Yeah, it's making a particular case stand in for a larger argument. So instead of is, did OJ do this particular crime? It's are the police in general racist towards black people in LA in the 90s? And the answer to that question, may very well have been yes. To answer the question of whether the cops in LA in the 90s acted very unethically towards the black community towards black men in particular, and did and were corrupt. The answer to that could 100% have been Yes. And in many ways, probably was, at the same time that OJ Simpson in particular, you know, did kill those two people. But I think some people have trouble sort of decoupling a particular case from a larger issue, right. So it simply becomes a stand in.

Michael Shermer 53:19

Yeah, that's why judges have those very specific instructions. You are not to think about this. You are not to consider that and so on. But of course, they're not an impenetrable barrier they're putting out there. Jurors can do whatever they want in the privacy of their of their rooms when they're talking about these things. Yeah.

CH 53:36

All right. So I want to pivot a little bit and talk about free speech, which is really the main topic of your latest book. Can you talk about what motivated you to write about free speech at this particular time?

Michael Shermer 53:51

Well, I've always been a free speech advocate, you know, politically, I'm largely libertarian leaning, or at least maybe classical liberal is a little softer term, I guess. And I hadn't written any books about free speech and giving the devil is do is really a collection of essays on a variety of topics, but kind of the main theme, if there was one, it would be no free speech, free thought, you know, open inquiry. You know, science is, I'm a science guy, right? So science is based on this very principle of open dialogue, discussion, disputation, argumentation, conferences, peer reviewed journals, you know, you have to talk because it's the only way to know if you've got off the rails, everybody has ideas, and most of them are wrong, including hypotheses, you know, thrown out by scientists, most of them are wrong. That's why science is very conservative in that sense, but the only way to find out is if is to put it out there and see what people say and including your in especially your colleagues. So you end up with this kind of consensus model of how science works. You know, over the years or decades of some particularly complex problem, scientists are talking about studying, researching, debating Usually eventually they

reach some consensus like, yeah, we're pretty sure it's that, that global warming is caused by human activity. And here's what we think is going to happen and so on, they get a consensus, not everybody, you're always gonna find two or 3% Hangouts, Big Bang didn't happen, evolutions, not true, whatever, but they reach a consensus and, and the way that happens, the only way it happens, is again, this kind of open conversation, this dialogue that you absolutely have to have. And actually like the epigram to the moral art captures that nicely to from J. Robert J. Robert Oppenheimer, there must be no barriers to freedom of inquiry, there is no place for dogma in science, the scientist is free, and must be free to ask any question, to doubt any assertion to seek for any evidence to correct any errors. Our political life is also predicated on openness, we know that the only way to avoid errors to detect it, and that the only way to detect it is to be free to enquire. And we know that as long as men are free to ask what they must free to say what they think free to think that they will, freedom can never be lost, and science can never regress. And so the reason for the giving the devil is due at this time in 2020, is that we've seen kind of monsters reversal, on the left my tribe of liberal supporters of free speech, you know, socially liberal, they've gone the other direction. Very censorious. We have to, you know, combat hate speech with censorship laws, and on and on, and it's like, no, that's not the way to do it. It's the opposite thing we should be doing so. And it's gotten worse, in the last year since my book came out, you know, in terms of like discussing the trans movement that's kind of kicked up in the last year and a half or so. Is it really triggered by a social contagion amongst teenage girls on social media and in certain high schools and middle schools? And in these pockets where you know, they kind of feel each other? Or is it really just the real numbers are really that high, and in our oppressive society is as kept them down, which is, these are two hypotheses, but there's only way, one way to find out, you got to do the research and talk about it, publish books and articles and so on. And a lot of people don't they don't think that that's worrisome.

CH 57:15

Yeah. And what's more worrisome is that free speech, I think, with each passing day is becoming encoded as somehow a right wing signaling phrase, which really troubles me, right, like if the person that sticks up for free speech, is going to be read in a room as making a partisan point. That's that that creates a huge problem, because it just means anyone doesn't want to be seen as right wing. But does believe in free speech is no longer gonna feel like it's smart to defend that. And that's, and that's when you get into a situation where, you know, the majority of Americans on both sides of the political spectrum might be pro a certain value, but have the impression that they're in the minority, because they so rarely hear people standing up for free speech. That's when you can just, you know, it doesn't take a huge movement to actually materially change institutions, right? It could take it could be 5% of the country, that's really against free speech. But if the other 95% feel like they're in the minority, or they're in a local minority, and they're the if they just feel like they're the only one in their workplace or their classroom, then that's enough.

Michael Shermer 58:34

That's right. Yeah. I mean, if you walk around travelling, giving talks at college campuses, for example, which before COVID, I was doing maybe a dozen, a year, so you never see riots and cancelled culture and protests and fires. I mean, it is it these bucolic campuses with students holed up in their dorms or just at the Starbucks or whatever. So you know it? No, it's not true that I mean, the availability heuristic, if you watch Fox News, you think, you know, every campus is on fire every week, that's not the case.

But it doesn't have to be a majority, it can just be a few percent. And that so you have two effects, their psychological effects the pluralistic ignorance, or the spiral of silence. When would people think other people think something? And so they keep their mouth shut? Or they think, well, I guess I'm the only one who doesn't believe this, I'll just go along. And everybody else thinks that too. But everybody's afraid to say something when the second thing is in place, which is censorship. Now, in the case of the Nazis, we now know that, you know, they never had a plurality of support from the German people. Most Germans were not Nazi ideologues, at least in the extermination a sense they didn't go that far. But Hitler came to power on a minority position and then immediately, open up started the KL system, the concentration camp system, and started locking up dissenters and then you know, cancelled the free press and just had had state sponsored press. That was it and everybody could say If I opened my mouth, I'm going to dock out. So I'm keeping my mouth shut. And you know, and so on. Well, we don't have that, of course, but almost as bad, at least in people's minds is if I open my mouth, maybe I'll lose my job, maybe I won't get a book contract, maybe I'll never get hired, again, as a screenwriter, maybe I'll lose my job at Google, whatever, I'm just going to keep my mouth shut. And then enough people, the 5% keep, are very boisterous about, you know, if you doubt, the thing I just said about trans, if you don't go along with the only position that they'll accept is real, which is that the trans numbers are much higher and that they've just been oppressed, and there's no social contagion at all. That's the only acceptable position. Now I'm, I'm pretty bulletproof in terms of being cancelled, because I'm older now. And I'm fairly job secure. But if I was a young person and trying to get my first book contract or get a job teaching at a university or whatever, just in programmer at Google or something, I'd keep my mouth shut for sure. It just because you know, the punishment is there. It's not the Gulag, but, but it's pretty serious. Because if you don't have money, you don't have an income stream. And yet you're starting a family or starting a career and you can't get a job, or you just end up in a job that you don't want, that you're not trained for. That's a pretty serious consequences of not being able to voice your opinions. So I think we just have to keep pounding on that. It's not it's not true that Well, back to your, your opening point, the liberal the left argument is that anyone who defends free speech, that's a right wing dog whistle for saying, we want to say racist, trans, misogynistic, bigoted things, without any consequences at all. And we're calling that free speech. Okay, we have to put a stop to that. This is not what's going on.

CH 1:01:49

Right. And the way I can prove it's it, it's not right wing, is that I've been alarmed that there are now some laws intended to be anti woke or anti critical race theory that have been proposed, that have basically, you know, the idea is to ban speech that condemns America is inherently racist, or, and some of the language of the proposed laws is so vague that as to as to condemn or ban, you know, anything, any idea that's called divisive being taught in schools, right, and these, these are laws that are favoured by a lot of people on the right, as a way of pushing back against the encroach of critical race theory into K through 12. Education, which is something I I really worry about as well. But the idea that the response is to, to actually pass a law that bans a whole vague domain of speech. Right? That's absolutely not the answer. If you care about fighting critical race theory, right, that is that is you are becoming what you hate most in that case.

Michael Shermer 1:03:07

Yeah, exactly. No, no, it's, I mean, we we've said a few things about the New York Times and but you know, Fox News, they're just bad. I mean, there is just unwatchable, at least the nighttime the evening entertainer, I don't call them journalists. They're entertainers. It's the entertainment portion of Fox News. You know, the daytime people, they're pretty good at Fox, but again, in any given evening, I'll occasionally toggle back and forth between CNN and Fox. And it's like, they're reporting the same story. And I'm on like two different planets, like what in the world is going on here? They resemble the stories Not at all. Now I know it's the same. So again, you got to go to other sources. And we know it's a problem.

CH 1:03:48

I do think this is a problem that also links back to conspiracy theories is that news has to compete with entertainment. And entertainment has gotten really, really good. And I think part of the appeal of conspiracy theories is that they're much more interesting than the actual news. You know, the actual way.

Michael Shermer 1:04:04

Yes, again, it's a it's a kind of exciting and sexy. It's romantic. Think, you know, there's this cabal of 12 people that are running the world? Oh, my God.

CH 1:04:13

I mean, it sounds like a lot of a lot of great movies.

Michael Shermer 1:04:16

Yes, exactly. Yeah. This passage from QAnon that I sometimes read about, you know, what if you know, have you ever wondered why there's war, why there's poverty, why there's crime? What if I told you, it's one thing that explains it all? What if I told you, you can be involved, it's like, Okay, I get that, you know, it's like the idea that war is caused by these 12 different variables, you have to run these complex regression equations to figure out which is the strongest one, blah, blah, blah, you know, take economics, you have to take it, you know, PhD in economics to understand what the hell is going on. And even they don't know what's going on in the economy. It's easier to think there's these 12 guys called the Illuminati that are doing.

CH 1:04:56

Right. I mean, it sounds like the plot of Lord of the Rings or Star Wars, you know, like, do you Why is the world so miserable? Well, this guy is evil. And now let's put some amazing classical music on in the background and get him you know, like that's, that's what people want the news to be. But unfortunately it's...

Michael Shermer 1:05:12

It's scarier to think that no one's in charge, right?

CH 1:05:16

Yeah, that's very scary. Yeah. No one's in charge. And even the bad guys are incompetent. Right? Even the bad guys aren't in charge. They couldn't be.

Michael Shermer 1:05:27

Right. There's no Dr. Evil.

CH 1:05:30

Well, on that note, can you point my listeners in the direction of where to find your work? Maybe skeptic magazine or elsewhere and your Twitter handle?

Michael Shermer 1:05:41

Yeah, yeah. So Twitter handle @MichaelShermer. Skeptic.com is the web page for the magazine, the society and then Michaelshermer.com for my personal web page and books and so on are just carried on Amazon. I haven't been cancelled on Amazon yet. Although, I've been thinking to see how well these cancelled books are doing. I mean, maybe this is such a bad thing. Some guy that wrote a book critical of the trans movement we were just discussing, Amazon cancelled his book. I think it was called when Harry Became Sally. Anyway, and then the next thing I know, like the next day, the Wall Street Journal publishes his op ed. You know, Amazon won't let you read my book, you know? 2.8 million readers. I'm like, okay, way to go Amazon. You really cancel this guy. No one knows who he is now.

CH 1:06:30

The perennial, the perennial problem of cancellation is backfires. Right? You make people more interested in the thing. Yeah, and the best thing to do...

Michael Shermer 1:06:39

Cancel my book and let's get...

CH 1:06:41

Yeah, yeah, some somebody cancel. What the book is called, The devil... Give The Devil His Due?

Michael Shermer 1:06:48

Giving the Devil his Due. I'm a secret, secret right wing bigot just trying to dog whistle my right wing followers. Okay. Yes. So cancel that book.

CH 1:07:00

Exactly. Exactly. Well, I hope you got cancelled and your sales go up. In the meantime, it's been a great time talking to you.

Michael Shermer 1:07:10

Likewise, Coleman. I'm a longtime admirer of your work, and congratulations on finishing college and can't wait to see what you do next.

CH 1:07:18

Thanks, Michael. All right. Will talk to you later. Yeah. If you appreciate the work I do, the best ways to support me are to subscribe directly through my website, Colemanhughes.org and to subscribe to my YouTube channel so you'll never miss my new content. As always, thanks for your support.