

## **POL S 334 A - Musa al-Gharbi, interviewed by B. Duncan Mönch on Keeping It Civil**

[00:00:00.00] [MUSIC PLAYING]

[00:00:10.86] - One more thing I'll say about the emerging democratic majority thesis-- that, as you alluded to, it has been actually recycled several times before, but the most fascinating thing is it usually becomes popular right before huge democratic losses. So the first time that this theory really started being kicked around was right before Nixon's landslide victory, and then the next time--

[00:00:32.45] - Over McGovern?

[00:00:33.24] - Yeah. And then the next time it became popular was before Reagan's landslide victory. So basically, after Nixon, they thought, OK, well, now the Republicans are wiped out. Ford lost, blah, blah, blah. And so they were like, OK, so the emerging majority is back on track. And then two consecutive landslide victories for Ronald Reagan, and then again, became popular in the post-Obama era.

[00:00:52.80] And what you actually saw, looking at the data over the 10 years since Obama, was that Democrats were losing among basically all demographic groups-- racial, ethnic, economic, et cetera. There was not any group basically from 2008 through '16 that Democrats did better in with every election cycle, but there was a ton of them that they did worse, and there was a ton of them that Republicans consistently improved in.

[00:01:14.76] - Hi. You're listening to Keeping it Civil, a production of the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University. I'm your host, Duncan Moench. In this podcast, I interview scholars, writers, and intellectuals about the American political tradition and the state of intellectual life in the United States.

[00:01:33.45] The point of the podcast is to have an intellectual exchange of views on political, civic, and social issues in American life. Many of the guests on the podcast are part of the school's speaker series, which invites liberal progressives and conservative voices that we feel are important for the advancement of civil and liberal education today.

[00:01:53.88] On today's podcast, I'll be speaking with Musa al-Gharbi. He is the former communications director of Heterodox Academy, and currently a PhD candidate in sociology at Columbia University. He has published widely, both in academic journals. And mainstream media outlets. Most of his work focuses on social psychology, but he is also highly educated in political philosophy.

[00:02:17.91] He is currently working on a book that debunks many contemporary political myths. For instance, many pundits and commentators have claimed that Trump supporters are motivated by racism, but is there good evidence to support this belief? Are the wealthy, highly educated elites of urban areas, who speak so much of race privilege, actually living their lives in

a way that mitigates their quote, unquote, "privilege"? Or perhaps, are they the ones who benefit the most from racial segregation and racial inequality?

[00:02:49.40] Al-Gharbi is full of insight, and really, an impressive amount of data. He also has a remarkable life story that few people know about. I really think you're going to enjoy this one-- Musa-al Gharbi. I want to just talk a little bit about your personal background and the interesting journey that you had-- first, being sort of a public enemy number one of sorts, being blasted on Fox News. And then later, if I'm getting it correct, appearing on Fox News as an actual guest-- an invited guest.

[00:03:20.40] - That's been an interesting journey. So basically, what happened was I published this essay in this journal, Middle East Policy. It's the number one cited journal for Middle East studies. It was a big deal. It was exciting. But then, as you may know, there's sort of a cottage industry of people who-- so for instance, if you're-- a shorthand way of saying it would be something like anti-Muslim Muslims, or people who are ex-Muslims.

[00:03:42.96] So if you want to go on right-leaning media and [INAUDIBLE] say something like, Muslims are horrible-- I would know-- there's this whole kind of cottage industry for this. And so one of the people who's part of this industry tried trolling me on Twitter about my article in Middle East Policy, which was about ISIS. And I pretty much demolished the guy, and it was great.

[00:04:02.45] In the moment, I felt super proud of myself. And part two-- because, as he started losing the empirical argument, he tried shifting to talking about things like liberty and stuff like this. And I'm guessing he assumed that I didn't know a lot about American political theory or something like this, or American history or whatever.

[00:04:18.78] But I actually graduated from one of the top schools in the world for political philosophy, University of Arizona, spearheaded by their Philosophy of Freedom Center. So for political philosophy, it's ranked number one in the world. So I just went on his own home turf there and just demolished him there as well-- really got under his skin.

[00:04:34.38] And looking back on it now, I wish that-- he's not a good actor, but still, I would have tried to spike the ball less or something. But in any case, I really got under his skin.

[00:04:44.99] - But you were still a graduate student, right? Or were you an--

[00:04:48.27] - Yes. Yeah.

[00:04:48.36] - --undergrad at this point? I forget.

[00:04:49.80] - So this was shortly after I got my master's degree, and I was teaching in the School of Government and Public Service--

[00:04:54.90] - At U of A, right?

[00:04:55.19] - --teaching political science courses at University of Arizona. Yeah, and managing an academic consortium that studies Middle East conflict. And so basically, he started this smear campaign to try to get me fired from my positions at University of Arizona, first by--

[00:05:08.04] - And it started to work, or did work or something, right?

[00:05:11.18] - Yeah. So basically, what they did is they took little snippets of things I wrote here and there way out of context, and distorted them, and basically tried to make me seem like I was, I don't know, anti-American, like I hated the troops.

[00:05:25.20] - Like a radical Muslim, or pseudo-radicalized Muslim?

[00:05:27.91] - Yeah.

[00:05:28.41] - Was that kind of the aim that they had?

[00:05:29.89] - So it started in the Washington Free Beacon, and then got picked up by some smaller outlets, but then Fox picked it up. And so on election day 2014, if you would have gone to the Fox News website, the first thing you would have seen as my face-- radical Muslim professor corrupting the youth. And they talked about me on air a couple of times.

[00:05:46.65] It was horrible. All of the universities and institutes at University of Arizona that I was affiliated with got flooded with hate mail, and threats, and stuff like this. There was an article that was written in a journal, the National Security Law Review, that argued that me and other academics like me-- by which they meant left-leaning Muslim, politically quote, "radical"-- could legitimately be considered enemies of the state, and targeted by national security and law enforcement agencies.

[00:06:13.05] That article was retracted, and the guy who wrote it ended up losing his position at West Point. It was a whole thing that was covered in the Washington Post. But still, the fact that-- to have someone in an academic journal basically arguing that the state should kill me for what I allegedly said or something like that was--

[00:06:28.65] - Kill you?

[00:06:29.67] - Yeah, that I could be arrested or murdered, but basically, I can be treated as an enemy of the state and they could waive the normal protocols that you would treat citizens with.

[00:06:39.73] - Jeez.

[00:06:40.17] - So yeah, it was horrible. And I was getting death threats, and harassment, and stuff. And then the university decided not to renew my teaching contract following that, despite the fact that I had glowing teaching evaluations, and I published extensively in the field and all this. And then worse, when I applied to grad school the next time around-- I decided to go back to school from my PhD, and I decided to play it safe the first round because I was kind of frazzled by the whole-- anyway, so I applied to a couple of departments at University of Arizona,

where I had letters of recommendation from the sitting faculty. I had publications in journals in both of the--

[00:07:12.52] - Yeah, which is an outstanding--

[00:07:13.23] - --two disciplines that I applied to.

[00:07:13.83] - That's unusual to have, when you're initially applying for a PhD. It's very rare.

[00:07:18.54] - And I got rejected from both. So it just seemed like I was persona non grata. And in fact, I did find out later that I had been blackballed, at least for hiring as an instructor.

[00:07:25.96] - Well, yeah, it's fairly obvious, under those circumstances. But there's a great deal of irony. If I'm correct, your brother was a decorated service member? Is that right?

[00:07:35.85] - Well, I'm from a military family going back generations. My grandfather fought in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Both of my parents were in the Army. My father was deployed to Desert Storm. I had siblings and cousins who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. My twin brother was killed in Afghanistan in June 2010.

[00:07:51.69] - Your twin?

[00:07:52.29] - Yeah.

[00:07:52.71] - Oh, wow. Gosh.

[00:07:54.12] - And his death was the reason why I started doing work in national security and foreign policy stuff in the first place, to help avoid other families having to suffer from having to go through what my family was going through. And I grew up in a military town and military community, again, so to portray me as somehow being anti-troop or something is not only ludicrous. It's actually repugnant, especially because a lot of the people leveling these kinds of self-righteous claims have never known loss from war or anything like this.

[00:08:20.19] And I realized in the aftermath that part of the reason, though, why so many people were willing to accept this ludicrous view of me that was being put out in the media-- two things-- one, I played my personal life details close to my vest. Even during the scandal, I did. I could have maybe helped defang it by saying, hey, look, I'm from a military family or whatever.

[00:08:38.52] But to me, part of the tension was a lot of them were assuming also that I was an immigrant or something because I'm a brown person with a funny name. So they assume, if you don't like it, go back to your own country, and nonsense like this.

[00:08:49.05] - Well, now, so they're assuming all kinds of things you didn't think. So they were assuming things about your potential immigration background, about your ethnic background, making all kinds of false assumptions.

[00:08:58.98] - So my concern was part of me wanted to correct the record, but then it almost sends a message like, well, I have permission to say the kinds of things that I'm saying because I'm from a military family, and blah, blah. And it suggests that, if I was an immigrant or didn't have a military family, that maybe I wouldn't have the right to say-- or something like this. And I actually disagreed with that, so I didn't want to play that game.

[00:09:17.25] - That's an interesting choice, though. You could have, but you didn't.

[00:09:20.19] - Now, if you go to my website, I do have information-- a little bit of information about what I'm doing, and why, and how I got there. One of the things I've learned, as I've studied a lot more about psychology and cognition, is that it does matter a lot. The messenger matters, in terms of how the message is received. And things like motives and stuff matter as well.

[00:09:38.77] So I do try to just be a little bit more front forward about some of that stuff. So I think that was part of it. But the other part too was I realized that people like me-- by which I mean academic Muslim people of color, et cetera-- don't usually interact with the Fox News crowd. So all they have to go on is what people they trust are telling them.

[00:09:57.94] And if people they trust are telling them, this is what I said and this is what I'm about, for one, most of them haven't read the actual articles that were being misconstrued or whatever. And even if they had, the well had been kind of poison, because if you have a certain frame in your mind of what I'm already arguing, then it can be easy to see what you expect to find.

[00:10:15.08] So what I started doing, after getting attacked by Fox, was reaching out more to the right. And the crazy thing about it, of course, is that it's not like-- so basically, what I started doing is I took the same essays that I would normally publish somewhere, like Salon, or Al Jazeera, or whatever-- and a lot of the reason why I was publishing in those outlets to begin with is I just assumed, in virtue of-- again, in my own mind, when I was thinking, OK, if I'm a black Muslim academic, who would want to hear what I have to say-- I just assumed it would be outlets on the left or left-aligned outlets, or whatever. So those are the only places had ever really tried to publish in in the first place.

[00:10:50.81] - It's interesting, because I had a pretty similar experience at certain points, where I didn't even think of the fact that conservatives would be interested in some of the things I was trying to say.

[00:10:58.56] - Yeah. So I just started taking the articles I normally publish in Al Jazeera, Salon, or any of the left-leaning outside to write for, and I took the exact same arguments. I just changed the framing a little bit to reflect conservative values, and narratives, and frames of reference. And I'm super familiar with them, because I grew up in a conservative--

[00:11:13.01] - Did you just do it as an experiment?

[00:11:15.38] - Around the time, I was reading this work by this guy Dan Kahan at Yale, who does this work on cultural cognition. And one of his findings, and other people who work in this field, is that, if you change the frames of stuff, you can make the same argument, but change their frames, and people will receive it-- they'll be more open to receiving your argument. Because a lot of times, what we're arguing about in conversations is both the actual substantive argument-- the substantive problem, and then how the problem is framed.

[00:11:40.25] A lot of times, we're arguing about both of those things simultaneously. So if you just concede the framing, then it allows you to actually delve into the argument without putting up people's walls and without creating needless controversy. And I'm very familiar with conservative-- because I grew up in a conservative Republican house. Both of the parents who raised me voted for Trump, and--

[00:11:59.33] - And this is in Tucson, right? You were raised outside of Tucson.

[00:12:01.93] - Well, about 70 miles away in a military town called Sierra Vista, Arizona, which is the main intelligence base for the Army. The voting district that I grew up in and lived until I moved to Columbia, basically, went 65-35 for Trump. So it's a decisively red--

[00:12:16.80] - Yeah, so it wasn't hard for you to try and put things into that frame. So fast forward a couple years here, and you're doing, I think, some of the most interesting work on debunking a lot of the myths of Trump's supporters, which I think is pretty ironic, given how things were for you not too long ago. In terms of Trump, what do you think is the biggest thing, the biggest misconception about his supporters that pervades throughout the mainstream media, and even scholarly types?

[00:12:46.79] - Well, I think the biggest mental block that people have is that most scholars, and even most media people, I would say, they can't understand how anyone who's morally decent, rational, or intelligent, or informed, or whatever could even conceivably vote for Trump. So because they don't understand how anyone could reasonably vote for Trump, then they assume that people who vote for Trump must be motivated by some kind of defect-- either some intellectual defect, or some character defect, or moral defect.

[00:13:17.30] - They're a basket of deplorables.

[00:13:19.16] - Yes. And you see this. There's the whole genre of literature that basically sets out to prove that Trump voters are racist, or sexist, or authoritarian. And there's actual studies that are designed like this. What best explains why someone would vote for Trump? Is it that they're more racist, sexist, ignorant, authoritarian? All negative things.

[00:13:35.71] - Yeah, they start from that place, So. There's a lot of confirmation bias from the beginning.

[00:13:39.14] - Yeah, it's a prejudicial study design. The options are never like, oh, because they love their family, or things like this-- they support their country. We would never tolerate a

design, if you flip it-- why would people vote for Hillary Clinton? Is it that they're communist sympathizers, or they hate America, or--

[00:13:54.66] - Right.

[00:13:55.53] - If a study was ever designed like that, people would automatically flag on the play-- foul. It's a prejudicial study design. But somehow, when you flip it to talk about Trump voters-- and this is actually a bigger problem in social research in general that's just especially pronounced for research on Trump, because Trump elicits such strong passions from social scientists, and humanities people, and journalists.

[00:14:17.90] - But this kind of stuff has been going on for quite a while. When people call it Trump derangement syndrome-- but there was definitely George W Bush derangement syndrome, and probably Ronald Reagan derangement syndrome also. So I think maybe it's advanced, but it's probably going on for quite a while, don't you think?

[00:14:32.61] - I think it's a broader problem, and it's a problem that doesn't just tie out to political research. Social researchers usually start from the position that their own positions-- their political positions, their moral positions, or whatever-- are correct, both morally correct and empirically correct-- intellectually correct. And so basically, anything that deviates from their own position they view as deviance to be explained, and usually explained, again, by appeal to some negative trait.

[00:14:58.97] So for instance, there are a number of policy positions for which the general public is far removed from most academics. So technically, the norm is the position that is not the one that the academics hold, and the academics are the ones who are deviant from what the public norm is. But that's never the way that they approach their research. Because they assume that their positions are correct-- again, both factually and morally correct-- then anything that deviates, that's different from--

[00:15:23.83] - Well, they're also assuming that they're normal, right? And I think you see this--

[00:15:26.29] - Yeah.

[00:15:26.77] - --not just in scholarly research, but especially in terms of mainstream left establishment Democrat type media, for lack of a better descriptor. They assume that, even though they're both-- almost everybody in that world is trapped between three cities-- they're trapped between New York, DC, and possibly LA-- usually, just in Acela corridor between DC and New York.

[00:15:51.25] They assume everybody has a similar value system and a similar experience to them, so they often don't understand-- well, how could anyone possibly vote for Trump over Hillary Clinton? How could anyone possibly vote for George W bush over John Kerry? This is an absurdity. This is how they think. And then they get incredibly surprised, when the people who they've never met and don't talk to think differently than them.

[00:16:15.70] - This is one thing that-- again, that was a culture shock for me because, up until basically August of 2016, I had been living in a place that, again, went like 65-35 Trump-- a decisively Republican, conservative place. And I moved to a place that was a 95-5 Clinton district. And in fact, it actually shocks me that there are 5% of the population in my district that voted for Trump. I'm intensely curious as to who those people are. [INAUDIBLE]

[00:16:40.39] - But you're in Morningside Heights, I would assume, near Columbia-- somewhere around there, right?

[00:16:44.11] - Yeah. And actually, one thing that I've remarked to people is that I can understand how the bubble thing happens. That seems like it's a real thing. So for instance, whenever I walk-- say if I want to go to West Side Market, which is a couple blocks from my house. On any given walk, probably a good 10%, 15% of the people you'll see will be Asian or East Asian, which is about three times the base rate in the general population.

[00:17:06.14] You'll see a large share of African-Americans and Hispanics. You'll see a Sikh, a bunch of covered ladies, a trans person, a gay couple. And so if this is your version of America-- the America that I experience, when I walk from my apartment to West Side Market-- I can see how it would be literally inconceivable for a lot of those people that someone like Trump could win or have appeal, or something. But there's this whole other America.

[00:17:30.56] - Right.

[00:17:31.21] - And this is the America that I was raised in, and it's very different. And there's sort of a mutual antipathy between the America that I came from and the America that I'm living in now. Both of them sort of disdain one another, for different reasons.

[00:17:44.83] - Yeah, neither one really understands the other one. But it does go back to something I think is a real theme throughout a lot of your work and a lot of your research, is misconceptions about diversity. A lot of people think-- and you hear this term all the time-- we want the staff, or we want these positions to look more like America.

[00:18:04.40] But what do we mean, when we say, look more like America? Because the actual demographics aren't what most people think they are. And they especially aren't what people think they are, in terms of voters.

[00:18:16.61] - And one of the things that I focused on a lot recently is-- I'll just talk for a little bit about institutions of higher learning to make this problem more tractable and to help people [INAUDIBLE] intuitions a little bit. So within institutions of higher learning, there's a desire often to increase the number of people from underrepresented and historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups, for instance.

[00:18:39.07] But one of the problems, or one of the things that has been undermining our ability to actually effectively increase those numbers, has been the fact that a lot of these institutions of higher learning are actually somewhat parochial towards socially conservative or religious perspectives.



[00:18:57.90] A lot of people don't see why this would be a problem, because for instance, in their minds, they think, well, African-Americans vote something like nine to one Democrats, and Hispanics vote something like two to one, roughly, Democrat, over the last several elections. So they assume that blacks and Hispanics are overwhelmingly liberal, because they vote Democrat. And that's not the case. In fact, we know that, on average, blacks and Hispanics tend to be more socially conservative and more religious than whites on average.

[00:19:24.58] - And they less identify as liberal, right?

[00:19:26.67] - Yes, yes.

[00:19:27.09] - They less self-identify as liberals.

[00:19:28.63] - Yes. They're much less likely to self-identify as liberal, as compared to whites. So if we create an environment which is hostile towards socially conservative or religious views, that's going to disproportionately affect African-Americans and Hispanics. And similarly, actually, immigrants and people from other countries tend to be also more socially conservative and more religious, and even religious in different ways than we tend to be in the United States and Western Europe.

[00:19:50.95] So the sort of intellectual, or I guess ideological climate that we've created in some of these institutions, for the sake sometimes-- for the sake of trying to help people from disadvantaged groups, or trying to be allies or champions for people from disadvantaged groups-- actually makes the climate kind of hostile towards those very people [INAUDIBLE]

[00:20:09.42] - Well, but then they hire people-- and this could be reflective in politics also-- who are, if not quite liberal, very liberal. At least on the American perspective, their politics would lean heavily to the left. And then people, whether in higher ed or in actual political parties, see those people as reflecting their communities, which is actually not true at all.

[00:20:33.16] So someone will be brought in under this guise of expanding the diversity of viewpoint, because there's this assumption that ethnic diversity equals viewpoint diversity, but it's hardly really the case-- at least in terms of how it's being applied in this specific person said to represent those minority groups.

[00:20:54.57] - Well, it's certainly the case, for instance, that a number of the prominent, say, black-- I'll stick with black intellectuals for right now. So a number of the prominent black intellectuals and pundits you see aren't necessarily representative of the view most African-Americans. That's true. So for instance, the views of Coates, Acela Ta-Nehisi, the Atlantic columnist, are radically out of touch with most African-Americans. So if you read Coates and you're like, this is the authoritative account of what blacks feel or think, then that is just incorrect.

[00:21:24.93] - Dramatically so, isn't it?

[00:21:26.78] - Yeah, and that's on average. But then another thing to underscore is that the African-American population in America is about the size of the total population of Canada. So we would never look at Canada and think that whole country of people has one unified view of anything--

[00:21:41.27] - Right.

[00:21:41.52] - --but for African-Americans, for some reason, consistently do. And actually, this issue of non-representativeness has been a concern of mine from the beginning.

[00:21:50.94] - Oh, interesting.

[00:21:51.51] - When I started research, I was studying conflict in the Middle East. And so for instance, one thing that I noticed, with regards to the Civil War in Syria-- and also, actually, with regards to the war in Iraq-- for the war in Iraq, there was this assumption that we would be welcomed as liberators. And one of the reasons why a lot of policymakers in the Bush administration thought this is because they basically pulled together as many people as they could find who were from Iraq living in the United States and asked them, what do you think about overthrowing Saddam Hussein?

[00:22:18.63] Do you think that most of the public would support it? And they were like, yeah, no, it's great. We should totally do it, and everyone will love you, and it'll be great. And the problem with this is that--

[00:22:26.88] - Well, yeah. So this is how you think you can install [INAUDIBLE], or whatever his name was, and it's going to take hold and work just fine.

[00:22:33.85] - And so the problem is that the expatriates that you have in the United States tend not to be representative of the countries that they're coming from. People aren't usually expatriates in their country because they fit in, and are perfectly normal, and represent the basic position of everyone else. If you're part of the baseline population, in terms of your norms, and views, and behaviors, you're not the kind of person who tends to be an expatriate, actually.

[00:22:56.88] So expatriates are, on average, not the same as the general population. And the longer that they've remained out of the country, the bigger that gulf becomes. And their systematic [? varies, ?] too. So for instance, the Iranian American population we have, a lot of them came to America after the Shah was overthrown. And America welcomed a lot of Iranian refugees at that time, in part because of the role that we played in creating this political crisis that they found themselves in.

[00:23:22.62] So we welcomed a lot of Iranian people who fled the Islamic Revolution. And so if you ask a lot of Iranians in the United States now, who came to America under those circumstances, do you think Iranians support the ayatollahs or something, they'll be like, no, they all hate it, blah, blah, blah, because they hate it [INAUDIBLE]

[00:23:40.14] But this doesn't necessarily represent the view most Iranians. And so we actually know from a lot of polling from people in Iran, for instance, that a lot of them are very skeptical of some of their political leaders, like Ahmadinejad [INAUDIBLE] Hassan Rouhani, or whatever. Those political leaders tend to be the main focus of Iranians' ire, not the actual religious establishment.

[00:23:59.34] Even the protests-- like the Green protests, et cetera, they had in Iran-- were against the political leaders. Most of them were not calling for the actual religious establishment to be overthrown or something like this. But if the only Iranians that you have to talk to understand public perceptions in Iran are the ones who happened to be in the United States-- if those are the only ones you're looking at, or consulting, or whatever, then you're going to have a very distorted view about how Iranians feel and think.

[00:24:24.05] - Well, I think this is an enormous problem just in general with the left. So I don't know if this is a poll you've referenced somewhere in your work, but I've seen a reference in other people's work that, when you poll most black people, they don't think that race is actually a major impediment in their advancement, whereas if you poll, most white people-- I don't know if the number is most, but it's dramatically higher than-- or at least significantly higher than it is for black people.

[00:24:49.89] So white people say race is an impediment to the advancement of black people, but black people actually say that less. And I think there's something interesting going on here, where the people that are said to be offering diverse viewpoints that are brought in under the guise of expanding diversity are actually ending up mimicking quote, unquote, "white viewpoints," which are dramatically more liberal, as polls show, really creating this weird echo chamber that's actually far from diverse, but executed in the name of diversity. Does that make sense?

[00:25:23.82] - So what the polling does show is that, among highly educated whites, there's been this dramatic shift on racial attitudes that started in basically 2015-ish. So basically, in response to Trump, highly educated whites' views on racial issues shifted hugely, to the point where now, highly educated whites are more quote, "woke" on racial issues than the average black or Hispanic by a large percentage, or by a significant percentage.

[00:25:52.07] For instance, I wrote this paper recently, called Race in the Race for the White House, On Social Research in the Age of Trump, that highlighted how a lot of the literature that was intended to prove Trump voters are quote, "racist" suffers from things like, again, presidential studies, design confirmation bias, et cetera. One of the studies that I cited in that paper, or that I critiqued in that paper, was this.

[00:26:14.21] So basically, what he did is he developed a symbolic racism scale. And there are problems with that construct, but we'll bracket that. So he developed this symbolic racism scale to measure Republican and Democrat endorsement of symbolic racism, looking over time from 1988 to 2016. What his study showed is that the gap between Democrats and Republicans was larger in 2016 than it had ever been, going all the way back to '88.

[00:26:37.49] And so on the basis of that, he argued that race must have been a particularly salient factor in this election, relative to other elections. Now, that inference is fine, but then he took it a step further and said, therefore, this proves Trump voters must have been driven by race. But the problem with that second inference is that his own data showed that Trump voters were less likely to endorse racist attitudes between 2012 and 2016. In other words, Trump voters were less--

[00:27:04.49] - They were less likely than their Democratic counterparts, or Hillary-supported counterparts.

[00:27:08.87] - No, no. So Trump voters were "less racist," quote, than Romney voters is what his data show.

[00:27:14.03] - Oh.

[00:27:14.24] - And the reason why the gap was bigger was because Democrat endorsement of symbolic racism or whatever plummeted to the lowest level that it had ever been, going back to '88. So it was lower than it was when there was an actual black candidate on the ballot from their own party, Barack Obama. In fact, when Obama was elected Democrat endorsement of racism actually went up.

[00:27:33.77] That's also interesting. It was, curiously, not discussed in his study. But in any case, so he took this effect that was driven 100% by Democrats, and used it to impute something about Republicans in defiance of his own data. So that was the problem. But then the interesting phenomenon-- which I wish she could have explored, and didn't-- is that you saw this huge effect, this huge movement on racial attitudes, but it wasn't among Republicans.

[00:27:56.72] It was among Democrats. And so why is that? What's driving that? That was totally ignored. But then what we've seen in a lot of polling since then as well is this major shifting and public attitude among left-leaning people, and especially among highly educated people, to the point, again, where now they're far more aggressive in a lot of racially egalitarian views than most blacks and Hispanics.

[00:28:16.46] - How much of this, though, relates to this concept of an emerging Democratic majority, which has been purported at many different points in history, but certainly has taken on kind of a life of its own over the last 15 years, where Democrats think that, because many minorities, as you just mentioned earlier, tend to more often vote for Democrats-- that because those are the populations that are increasing, relative to the white population, that this means that they're destined to win from this point forward? But you've done a lot of work to point out that this really isn't the case, if you look more deeply into the nitty-gritty of who is actually voting.

[00:29:00.59] - And actually I think-- So there's this whole sense of inevitability about Trump's defeats and Clinton's loss. And actually, I think this is one of the reasons-- one, why people couldn't see Trump coming, or couldn't-- and then also, why they reacted so forcefully to Trump actually winning. Why it was so traumatic for a lot of people is because it seems like a

repudiation of this notion that they're on the right side of history, and that history is going their direction.

[00:29:24.98] If someone like Jeb Bush had beat Hillary Clinton, that's kind of a minor setback, but it's not really a refutation of their whole world view. But for someone like Trump to win, that's a different-- but anyway--

[00:29:36.17] - Yeah, he's almost like a caricature they created in their own nightmares.

[00:29:39.65] - Yes, absolutely. And one more thing I'll say about the emerging Democratic majority thesis, as you alluded to, it has been actually recycled several times before. But the most fascinating thing is it usually becomes popular right before huge Democratic losses. So the first time that this theory really started being kicked around was right before Nixon's landslide victory.

[00:30:02.63] - Over McGovern?

[00:30:03.70] - Yeah. And then the next time it became popular was before Reagan's landslide victory. So basically, after Nixon, they thought, OK, well, now the Republicans are wiped out. Ford lost, blah, blah, blah. And so they were like, OK, so the emerging majority is back on track. And then two consecutive landslide victories for Ronald Reagan, and then, again, that became popular in the post-Obama era.

[00:30:23.33] And what you actually saw, looking at the data over the 10 years since Obama, was that Democrats were losing among basically all demographic groups-- racial, ethnic, economic, et cetera. There was not any group, basically, from 2008 through '16 that Democrats did better in with every election cycle, but there was a ton of them that they did worse, and there was a ton of them that Republicans consistently improved in.

[00:30:45.20] - So what do you attribute this to? It's amazing that people miss that element so frequently, given how often you hear this kind of talk in the quote, unquote, "mainstream media," and certainly and scholarly circles also. But what do you attribute it to? When I say it, I don't mean that the ignorance of those facts. That seems fairly obvious, I think, more-- why are Democrats losing so many demographic categories?

[00:31:11.66] - And I'll add, you saw a partial reversal of this in 2018. So one thing that's interesting about 2018 is that Trump held his margins with blacks and Hispanics. Almost all of the attrition that he had-- that Republicans experienced from 2016 to 2018 was loss of highly educated suburban white voters. So as far as the minority vote is concerned, there actually wasn't a big shift from 2016 to 2018.

[00:31:33.92] But as far as why it is that Democrats have been losing with a lot of different demographic groups, I think part of it is that there's a sense with a lot of, for instance, black voters that Democrats basically take them for granted. And that's not a crazy sentiment. But the Democrats don't really deliver. So they come around and ask for your vote every few years and

say, if we don't win, then Trump's going to take us back to the 1950s or something. So vote for me.

[00:32:01.01] But they're not really concerned about improving things. To the extent that they're concerned, it's a purely emotional or intellectual-- they're not doing anything substantive. And actually, I think this is a broader key, both to why Trump won and to why Democrats saw this kind of attrition. So basically, when Obama ran on this platform of hope, and change, and of really shaking up the system and making-- and you saw this big appetite in 2008 from a large swath of the American public, that this is what they wanted.

[00:32:28.43] They wanted someone who was going to come in there and bring change to the system. But I think what happened is that the change that was delivered was nowhere near as dramatic as what people were hoping for. And this is partly-- maybe they just had unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved. Maybe Obama oversold what it was capable. Whatever-- we can bracket that.

[00:32:46.49] But the point is that they wanted change. They felt like they didn't get the change they wanted. So you saw this in 2016 on both sides of the aisle. So on the Republican side, the Republicans put up what was the strongest bench-- in their own narratives, the strongest bench of Republican nominees that they've had in years. You had popular sitting governors. You had young people, and minorities. And Trump decimated them-- decimated all of them. And on the Democratic side, you had a Jewish socialist from an obscure state who had no money, or organization, or name recognition, or whatever-- went all the way to the end--

[00:33:17.23] - But was insanely popular.

[00:33:18.56] - Went all the way to the end of the finish line with Hillary Clinton, who had total support from the party apparatus, who had one of the most formidable political machines that had been assembled in modern history. And he took her all the way to the end of the nomination.

[00:33:30.99] - You're listening to Keeping it Civil. I'm Duncan Moench, and today, I'm speaking with Musa al-Gharbi, social psychologist at Columbia University.

[00:33:41.40] - I'm Paul Carrese, director of the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University. We launched Keeping it Civil, because we believe in the power of intellectual dialogue to both renew our civic life and remind us of the value of liberal arts learning. At the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership, we are restoring space for civil discourse across divergent views on human, civic, and academic issues.

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[00:34:50.91] - Welcome back. You're listening to Keeping it Civil. Let's continue the conversation with Musa al-Gharbi.

[00:34:57.54] - So what you saw on both sides of the aisle was that people were hungry, desperate for someone who was going to really, fundamentally change the status quo.

[00:35:06.00] - Well, sure. It was a populist moment, I think, without a doubt. And it would have been interesting to see two populists facing off to see what the end result would have been there, except where we were denied that chance.

[00:35:17.10] - And actually, this is one of the things that I've always found troubling and perplexing about why there was such unanimous support behind Hillary Clinton throughout the primary process-- for instance, is that, in a cycle where large portions of the American public would have been perfectly happy to just march through Washington DC and New York City and just burn it all down, to nominate someone like Hillary Clinton, it's hard to imagine a more perfect embodiment--

[00:35:41.31] - Embodiment-- she's the total embodiment of the status quo.

[00:35:43.56] - Of the status quo.

[00:35:44.47] - Yeah.

[00:35:44.85] - Yes. And even her campaign messaging was basically, I'm not Trump. There have been studies that showed Hillary Clinton ran one of the least substantial political campaigns in modern political history. Her whole message was basically, I'm not Trump. And some of the messaging she used too-- she was portraying Trump as a threat to the prevailing system, as a threat to that prevailing norms that governed us. And it's like, are you trying to write his political messaging? This is what people want.

[00:36:12.85] - Yeah. It was amazing how much they played into his hands. And you're seeing Biden fixing to do the same thing, more or less, just almost entirely running on an anti-Trump campaign-- which is exactly what John Kerry did in 2004. Basically, his entire campaign was, I'm not George Bush. But one of things I think is interesting here, in terms of the demographics that we were just alluding to-- so many people fleeing the Democratic Party that they don't realize it's actually happened-- is couldn't a lot of it be that very many people-- and this includes minorities-- studies back this up.

[00:36:44.55] There was a study done was released last fall-- I think it was actually done in part by Heterodox Academy, which you're involved with-- where it showed that large, large majorities of Americans of all demographics dislike PC culture and quote, unquote "woke culture." And in fact, minorities disliked PC culture at a much higher rate than white people. And

so how much of the backlash to Hillary and the support for Trump is taken up and driven by that sentiment maybe even alone?

[00:37:16.23] - Well, OK, so the study you're referring to was done by an organization called More in Common. And they actually do a bunch of pretty cool research. So Heterodox Academy featured the study on our blog, and what they found is that, when you looked at who it was that actually supported quote, "PC culture," it tended to be highly educated urban liberal whites, and that minorities, in general, did not support it. So yes, I do think that a backlash or a pushback against overreach by the left on a lot of these issues--

[00:37:44.91] - Maybe primarily social issues, don't you think?

[00:37:47.67] - So I think, for one, there's sort of an overreach, legislatively and whatever. But I think, actually, almost a bigger problem for a lot of people is, one, they felt like they were being ignored basically by most policymakers and the public. But then also, there was this sense of disdain, and again, the imputation of racism, or sexism, or whatever. So if you disagree with me about this policy issue, it must be because you're sexist, or racist, or stupid, or something like that.

[00:38:13.23] - Or homophobic, or transphobic, or whatever.

[00:38:15.54] - Exactly. It can't be that we have good faith reasonable disagreements-- that this is a complicated issue, or anything like that. It's no, you're an evil person-- so pushback against that. And what you started seeing in a lot of circles-- especially among people who had been the targets of this language-- is they eventually reached the point, for a lot of them anyway, where they were like, look, basically, I don't really care about that.

[00:38:36.99] Those charges don't affect me anymore. So for instance, as an analog, in universities, a number of Republican and conservative groups invited people like Richard Spencer to campus. So Richard Spencer is-- of course, he's basically a neo-Nazi. But I can understand why it became popular to invite-- Richard Spencer, I don't think, has anything important or useful to contribute to any intellectual pursuits or atmosphere. I don't think people should invite him to campus, but I can see why it would be tempting to do that. And it's this.

[00:39:05.73] - Well, it's just razzing the left.

[00:39:07.42] - Yes. If you invite someone like Condoleezza Rice, or George Bush, or Paul Wolfowitz, or someone like that to your university and people are calling you and them Nazis-- if someone would call Donald Rumsfeld a Nazi-- at some point, eventually, it's like, OK, well I'll invite an actual Nazi and see how you like it, or something like that.

[00:39:25.74] And you saw this with Trump too, where a lot of Americans, including Trump voters, found a lot of his rhetoric distasteful. But at the same time, they enjoyed the reaction. They clearly seemed to enjoy the reaction that these statements elicited from liberals, and the media, and academics, et cetera, et cetera. Even though they personally found the sentiments distasteful, they really enjoyed the reaction that he was eliciting from--



[00:39:48.66] - They enjoyed the effect, not necessarily the message.

[00:39:51.58] - So for instance, that study that I cited in my "Race and the Race for the White House" paper showed, for instance, that Trump voters were less racist than Romney voters. There's other similar studies, when you look at the shift on attitudes about race and stuff, that show similar things. In fact, there's a study by Diana Mutz, who was trying to argue that status threat, rather than economic concerns, explains why people voted for Trump.

[00:40:11.94] But her own data showed that, actually, Republican voters grew warmer towards immigrants from 2012 to 2016. So Trump voters were more supportive of immigration than Romney voters were. And so again, the appeal of some of Trump's rhetoric on immigration isn't necessarily because these voters hate immigrants, or blah, blah, blah.

[00:40:30.75] The issue is just part of the appeal, when Trump says something-- says something about immigrants, and everyone in the left-- the media, academia, [INAUDIBLE]-- they get all riled up and they clutch their pearls, that's what's appealing, rather than the actual substance of what he's saying.

[00:40:46.50] - Well, I think there's something interesting going on there, don't you think? I don't know if you've ever read Walter Ben Michaels, but he's a pretty interesting heterodox thinker from the left. And one of things he's pointed out, I think, in different parts of his work is that really, in the post-LBJ iteration of the laughter-- or post-New Left would probably be more accurate, from an intellectual history standpoint-- it's really the Democratic Party that represents the values of social elites.

[00:41:15.78] And a lot of the Republican Party actually purposely speaks to the values of poor and working class people. So ironically, it is this party that is generally said to favor, economically, the interests primarily of the rich that actually speaks to the social values and the social interests of the poor and the working class. And it's amazing that this kind of thing is just lost completely on the left-- obviously, completely lost on people in scholarly circles.

[00:41:46.02] But it seems completely lost on people in actual political activism circles, and it definitely seems lost-- and I can speak to this personally, having worked in left-wing media-- in the types of people who work those jobs in New York and Washington DC. They seem to completely misunderstand how working class and poor people-- their social values. So there's a really hidden class element here. Are you seeing something similar?

[00:42:12.45] - I think there's a patronizing element to it. So what a lot of social elites, including elites in the media and academia, feel is that they understand what people's interests are, what their interests should be. Like, you are as rational and informed as I am-- if you had the information that I have about what the world is like and what your situation is like-- this is what you should support, or whatever.

[00:42:35.26] So I think a lot of them start from this position, saying, this is what, say, people of color, or poor people, or whatever-- this is the kinds of policies that they should support. And I

think that, in the first instance, that's what they're concerned about. They actually don't necessarily even care that much about what the actual people think.

[00:42:51.09] - Well, you just said it. That's the problem, though. They don't care. It's not lost on people, when you don't care what they actually think.

[00:43:00.66] - I think that's the initial move, but then eventually, people lose sight of the fact-- I think a number of them lose sight of the fact-- they assume that, because this is what people should think-- given their race, or gender, or class, or whatever-- that of course, most people in this do think that way, even if they don't-- demonstrably, they don't.

[00:43:18.09] And what they do is they find some people who are exemplars from those groups, who do think that way, and they elevate those people. So even if most black people don't support the overwhelming narratives on race that are popular in the media or academia, they'll find some people who do, and elevate those people, and refer to those people or whatever, and use those people on their statements, when they're trying to argue their position on race. So they can say, look, here's a black person who agrees with me as well. Here's Coates arguing this.

[00:43:46.88] - Well, and it just furthers this echo chamber that they're in, which furthers their ignorance of how somebody like Trump and genuine populist sentiment-- at least in terms of social sentiment, religious sentiment-- is actually growing throughout the country. I want to kind of pivot, because we don't have too much time left, to a similar idea.

[00:44:05.90] You sent me this paper, which hopefully, we can talk about-- I know that it's under review-- but where you talk about the incredible blind spots that people have in these highly urban, highly wealthy areas. New York is obviously a great example, but it's not just New York. It's spread throughout the country.

[00:44:23.69] We're, in general, experiencing this kind of intense reurbanization, where cities or real estate prices are dramatically going up, and they're filled with mostly educated, or if not mostly highly educated people, who speak only to each other. And it's very common in these areas for people to be very quote, unquote "woke," and to be favorable towards anti-racist activism. But you argue that it is these very people in these very areas who actually are the ones perpetuating racial inequality more than maybe anybody else.

[00:45:03.47] - What inspired me to think about this issue of who benefits the most from systemic inequality and who's most responsible for perpetuating it was that, when I moved to New York, one of the first things that I recognized is that there is a pretty severe racialized caste system here that I think a lot of people who have lived here for a long time are sort of blind to. But when you look at who's the security guards, and the janitors, and the people who-- it's overwhelmingly minorities who are doing all these jobs.

[00:45:30.10] - All of the service positions.

[00:45:31.49] - Who's selling you stuff in the store, et cetera, et cetera? It's all minorities providing all these goods and services for the disproportionately white professional class to do

their thing. And this is not the case in a lot of other parts of the country. Where I was growing up in-- for instance, in Arizona-- in most other parts of the country, it's likely that the person providing the goods and the person buying the goods are the same race-- white. You don't see this kind of racialized caste system in Idaho.

[00:45:54.08] - But don't you think that's part of why they don't understand the rest of the country, though? Because they don't understand that there are poor white people, and there are poor white people trapped in horrible jobs working at Walmart, or CVS, or whatever else? They don't see any of those people in the highly urban areas like New York-- highly wealthy, highly urban, highly educated.

[00:46:12.41] - Actually, so that's interesting. I think there's maybe an element there, where most of the white people that you would encounter-- say, that I would encounter in my day-to-day experience in the Upper West Side are going to be professional class whites. That seems true. So yeah, if this is your only experience of white people or the whites that you encounter, when you're hanging out on the Upper West Side, then yeah, I can see how you would associate--

[00:46:32.53] - Well, let me flesh out the example for you. So I was once having a discussion about this exact kind of thing with somebody who was from Washington DC, which, in general, is a pretty wealthy area. Obviously, there's certain spots in certain places-- but certainly, for her experience, fairly privileged.

[00:46:47.17] And I pointed out to her that most poor people in the United States are white. And literally, her response was, well, where are they? Where are they? She'd never encountered any of these people. And I think, if you've grown up in DC, New York, maybe even Chicago-- probably less so in Chicago-- certainly LA, you have no idea that there's just this incredible large swath of very poor white people. You don't encounter.

[00:47:12.65] - The plurality of the people who use food stamps, who are on welfare, et cetera, are white as well. And this is another thing that's lost in the conversation. A lot of people associate these programs with minorities. And this is true actually on both sides of the political spectrum. They associate these programs with minorities. But in fact, a plurality of the beneficiaries are white.

[00:47:29.27] So one thing that I do to sort of-- it's counterintuitive to understand that, perhaps, the primary beneficiaries of systemic racism are upper class, relatively well-off whites who live in urban areas, who tend to be highly educated and liberal. But here's a thought experiment that I put in the paper, that's good for pumping this intuition.

[00:47:47.09] So imagine that you're 6 inches taller than the national average. This would give you a lot of extra unearned-- just purely unearned benefits over others who are average height or below average height. So for instance, we know from a lot of studies that taller people-- you would have a competitive advantage in sports. Women prefer taller people, so you'd have an advantage on the dating market. Tall people tend to live longer and earn more money, et cetera.

[00:48:09.02] - They tend to advance further, don't they too? Don't they tend to be picked for leadership positions, or am I wrong on that?

[00:48:14.57] - Absolutely. And even in things like student valuations, taller people are perceived as being more authoritative. You can go on and on. But if you are 6 inches taller than the national average, and you live in a community where just about everyone else there is also 6 inches taller than the national average, then you wouldn't have any competitive advantage over most other people in your day-to-day life.

[00:48:34.15] - Right. So if you're tall in Holland, it's not an advantage, because everyone's tall in Holland.

[00:48:38.04] - Yeah. You wouldn't have an advantage in dating, or sports, or the job market, or whatever-- for the most part. It's true that, if someone who was average height or below average height moved into your community, you would have an advantage over them. And even in that situation, it's better to be 6 inches taller than the national average than to not be 6 inches taller than the national average, because you don't want to be the only one in your community who's not taller than the average.

[00:48:59.11] - Yeah.

[00:48:59.49] - But still, in your day-to-day, relative to your circumstances, you're actually average. And so when you ask yourself, how would you benefit the most from being 6 inches taller than the national average, it would be to live in a community where everyone else was average or shorter than average. That's how you would get the most out of your earned benefit if your height.

[00:49:17.82] And the same thing goes with other unearned advantages, like the advantages related to race. And actually, on top of that, racial privilege is also kind of intersectional. So we know from a number of studies, for instance, that to be black is worse than to be white, on average, in a number of important metrics. But if you're black and poor, the challenges are much more severe than if you're relatively well-off and you're black.

[00:49:39.61] - Sure. The stigma is much greater that you have to fight off, and the barriers, just in general-- community, culturally, et cetera.

[00:49:46.62] - So not only is racial advantage context-dependent, but it's also intersectional. But then when you flip that, to look at privilege, instead of disadvantage, and you ask, OK, so who are the whites who would have the most white privilege, it would be whites who are relatively well-off and live in areas with large concentrations of minorities.

[00:50:03.18] - Minorities who they don't interact with. Isn't that part of what you're getting after? One of the things that I found, when I lived in New York, is that, just as you were saying, everything is so incredibly segregated. And yes, you're surrounded by lots of people of color, but you don't interact with them, unless they're part of your highly educated circles.

[00:50:21.39] People who are part of the often transient upper middle class wealthy elites don't exactly interact with people from the projects. Those two groups don't ever talk to each other.

[00:50:33.79] - They don't talk to each other. You do interact with them, but you interact with them--

[00:50:36.60] [INTERPOSING VOICES]

[00:50:36.78] - On the subway or something, or when they deliver your food.

[00:50:39.90] - And this is one of the things I show in the paper, is that not only do relatively well-off whites who live in these major urban areas, who trend overwhelmingly left-- not only do they have more white privilege than most whites, on average, but they use that privilege on a scale that other whites in other parts of the country can't dream of.

[00:50:56.46] So one example that I cite is think about this sort of lean-in version of feminism. Some people have pointed out-- Saskia Sassen, for instance-- a sociologist at Columbia-- pointed out highly educated women, especially in the middle and upper classes, they've seen major gains in the professional sector. But this hasn't come about because there's been some major change in gender roles.

[00:51:15.75] So it's not like men have taken on a reciprocally larger share of domestic responsibilities or something like this. Instead, native-born, relatively well-off white women have been quote, "freed up," mostly because other women-- typically women of color, often immigrants, usually paid below market wages for their services-- fulfill that traditionally quote, "female" roles within the house.

[00:51:37.02] - Well, also in very unstable jobs without benefits, right?

[00:51:40.17] - Yes, yes. And so it's other women who are caring for your children-- nannies, et cetera-- other women who are preparing and serving meals for you, either at restaurants or at your house-- other women who are sometimes cleaning the house or attending to the sick and the elderly, et cetera. So all of the traditional women's work is still being done by women, just women of color, instead of white women.

[00:51:58.54] So is that a feminist victory? And you can go on and on down the list, when you look at how these relatively well-off people rely on things like delivery services or rides share apps. So for instance, there's some of these elite goods that relatively well-off urban people really love. Really popular, for instance, are small batch high-quality artisanal goods that are sold in these trendy boutique--

[00:52:22.74] - Boutique-type stuff.

[00:52:23.82] - And the thing about that is, as Sassen and others have pointed out, most of these goods are produced in basically urban sweatshops, where, again, they're working under horrible conditions-- few benefits. But what they see is-- on the tag is American-made, and premium, and

whatever. And they assume that it's some other latte-sipping white young person who's stitching this in their free time.

[00:52:42.69] - They assume that it's maybe union-made--

[00:52:44.46] - Exactly.

[00:52:44.97] - --in some very highly-regulated decent work setting.

[00:52:49.71] - Instead, it's like urban sweatshops that are making these, and mostly people of color and immigrants who are working in them. And similarly, with the restaurants that serve high-quality, organic, free-range, ethically-sourced ingredients, et cetera, et cetera--

[00:53:01.54] - Well, sure. Yeah. It's probably only still mostly illegal immigrants picking those crops.

[00:53:05.94] - Well, and then because the ingredients are so expensive themselves to procure, one thing that a lot of these establishments do in order to keep the prices affordable for upper middle class people is that they basically stiff the people who were working the back of the house jobs-- so the people who are the cooks, et cetera, et cetera-- who are, again, disproportionately immigrants and minorities.

[00:53:24.90] Or delivery services-- places like Manhattan, we order stuff all the time, because most people don't have cars and whatever. So basically, you either have to just only buy what you can carry, or you have to make multiple trips or whatever. So a lot of people in Manhattan just order everything. You order your groceries. You order your dinner.

[00:53:41.16] - Oh, yeah.

[00:53:41.43] - You order--

[00:53:41.72] - I remember.

[00:53:42.28] - --whatever, whatever and just delivered to your house cheaply, relatively quickly.

[00:53:45.32] - So let me jump in here, Musa. This the last thing, just to push back on you a little bit. And I think your ideas here are very interesting, in terms of how these kind of blind spots perpetuate racial inequality, because people just are not aware of the fact that they're the biggest beneficiaries. And so they go on social media and kind of huff and puff about things, and they think that that's enough to offset the pretty stark realities that they're living.

[00:54:09.24] But let me leave you with one last question. It seems to me, though, that you could make the same argument for class inequality. And if anything, a lot of this is really just class inequality, not necessarily race inequality, because a lot of the jobs that you're talking about-- ride share drivers, delivery people-- yeah, that's not as common in the middle of the country as it is in urban areas, but it's certainly coming there, and it's growing.

[00:54:33.12] And there's more than enough poverty to go around. And the people who are doing that kind of work in the middle of the country, those people are white and suffering just as much. So couldn't you make that same argument, but just turn the words around and say class inequality, rather than racial inequality?

[00:54:51.21] - No, and here's why. So again, I do think it is important to attend to class, and there are a number of white people who are struggling. But what I'm talking about in the paper is what's called systemic inequality or whatever. So why is it the case in New York that it's not what you would expect, if it was just purely a matter of class or something like this-- it was maybe a sort of random, or somewhat random distribution along racial lines of who's fulfilling these roles and et cetera.

[00:55:14.49] But instead, you see a very systematic and stark trend along racial lines, where you have a certain class that's the managerial class, and then a certain group of people who are serving class. And it's something very similar to a caste system and a lot of these major urban cities. So I do think that there's an important specifically racial component to sort of tease out there.

[00:55:34.68] But that said, I do think that, in a lot of other areas of the country-- the areas where-- other than the places where most American wealth is being concentrated today-- once you step out of those areas, the challenges are different and the realities are different. And it's not the case, again, in Idaho, or Oklahoma, or somewhere like that, that you see this racialized caste system.

[00:55:54.27] And there, are the main struggle, I would say, is probably more class-based than race. So I guess the point is that there are different problems in different places that probably require different priorities and different solutions, or whatever.

[00:56:05.21] - But don't you think that's part of why people are talking past each other a lot of times, is that people in the middle of the country, they don't see any of that world that you just described, and vice versa is also true?

[00:56:15.69] - Absolutely. I think people in North Dakota don't see a sort of racialized caste system that I see every day, when I'm walking around New York, so it's hard for them to-- yeah, so I think when they hear stuff about systemic inequality, it doesn't seem real in the way that it seems real, when you're sort of in this milieu here, and vice versa. As you noted, I think, when you're living in this milieu here, it's hard to really take seriously the idea that there are many, many, many whites all across the country who are suffering.

[00:56:42.75] - Well, I think we probably need to end it there to let the next person come through. Hopefully, at some point, maybe we can talk again, Musa. I really enjoyed this, and you've really had such a remarkable journey. I literally have like 10 pages of notes left, if not 20 pages, that I wanted to hit you with. But maybe we can do it again sometime.

[00:56:59.92] - Sure, that'd be great.

[00:57:01.27] - You've been listening to Keeping it Civil, a production of the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University. If you'd like to learn more about our classes or events, or the requirements for a major or minor at the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership, go to [scetl.asu.edu](http://scetl.asu.edu) to learn. This podcast was produced by Duncan Moench, with audio production assistance from Central Sound at Arizona PBS. Thanks for listening.