

Speaker 1 ([00:02](#)):

Okay, go for it.

Michael Poliakoff ([00:03](#)):

Welcome to Higher Ed Now, ACTA's podcast. I'm Michael Poliakoff, the president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni. With me today I'm delighted to introduce Paul Levy, a member of ACTA's board of directors and the creator of the Levy Forum for Open Discourse at the Palm Beach Synagogue and the founder of the investment firm, JLL Partners. His commitment to open discourse is a matter of record in the matter of Amy Wax which spurred him to resign his position on the University of Pennsylvania board of trustees and to tell the world about it in The Wall Street Journal.

([00:50](#)):

It's a great honor to introduce Professor Glenn Loury, who in a few hours will be speaking at the Palm Beach Synagogue on what has become of the partnership between Blacks and Jews. Dr. Loury is the Merton P. Stoltz Professor of the Social Sciences in the Department of Economics at Brown University. He is one of the nation's leading social critics on topics of racial inequality, the Black family, affirmative action, and identity politics. Dr. Loury's podcast, The Glenn Show, is one of the nation's most vibrant forums for fearless discussion of the urgent issues of our times, and one of my deeds as the president of ACTA was to gift every member of our board of directors with a subscription to The Glenn Show, and I'm rather confident that most of them listen to it.

([01:44](#)):

We're grateful to him as well for delivering a passionate tribute speech to Professor John McWhorter when we presented the Merrill Prize to John. It is the only time in my memory when the audience rose in a standing ovation for the tribute speech as well as Professor McWhorter's superb acceptance speech. He's a prolific author, four books, countless technical papers in economic theory as well as incisive social and political analysis. I am holding a long-awaited book four of his published works in its pre-publication version which is titled Late Admissions: Confessions of a Black Conservative, which Norton will release May 14. Am I correct, May 14?

Glenn Loury ([02:36](#)):

That's correct.

Michael Poliakoff ([02:36](#)):

It is a monument to the self-examining mind, I'm channeling Socrates, the unexamined life is not worth living, and if you're a regular listener to the Higher Ed Now podcast, we will be talking about the book for a subsequent podcast. We'll keep the remarks embargoed until May 14th and release them concurrently with the official publication date. So please watch for that in May. Dr. Loury, may I call you Glenn?

Glenn Loury ([03:08](#)):

Sure, Michael.

Michael Poliakoff ([03:09](#)):

Okay, Glenn. Great. You're in the company of two Jewish conservatives in this conversation on higher education, and a big question is what do we mean when we say conservative, but I actually want to begin by contrasting conservative versus progressive approaches to higher education. So let me start with the question, what are we buying now in higher education with both public and private dollars? We are at the top of the OECD charts for expenditure. I think we're edged out by Luxembourg, but otherwise we're at the top. Are we getting value, and if not, why not?

Glenn Loury ([03:51](#)):

Oh, that's a big question. There's reason to be concerned about the value we're getting. I think what we ought to be getting is an exploration of the intellectual, artistic, cultural inheritance that we are fortunate to be able to enjoy exploring in the sciences and literature and history and the arts, in the social sciences, what thinking people have come to understand about the human condition. That's what we ought to be getting. The students are various and diverse and they have varied interest. There's no one-size-fits-all formula, but serious depth of exploration of the inherited intellectual bequest from our forebears should be what we're getting.

([04:53](#)):

I think too often what we get instead is a catering to the identity-driven ideas that students come into the college with where they seek to be reminded of who they are and where we as institutions cater to that quest on the student's part to have reaffirmed for themselves what it is that they think about their own identities. They want to be recognized, they want to be affirmed, as I say, and I think we cater overly much to that.

([05:39](#)):

I suppose there's also a more prosaic, political economy kind of argument that you can make. We are providers of a service and they are consumers who pay for the service being provided, and we want to, each of us, these individual institutions competing with one another, want to come out on top. We want kids to want to come and their parents to want to invest in them at our institutions, and so we perhaps neglect sometimes our intellectual mission in the service of this market competition dynamic, the cafeteria matters, the swimming pool matters, the sports teams matter, the dormitory quality matters, and so on.

([06:34](#)):

You're president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, I don't have to tell you that we've become administratively top-heavy responding to one or another regulatory mandate or mission that the universities take on to themselves. So looking again, as an economist might look at the allocation of resources, perhaps we're investing too much in assistant deans of this and associate provost of that and not enough in the hardcore, instructional mission that I tried to describe earlier.

Michael Poliakoff ([07:09](#)):

Your educational trajectory, which you talk about in the book, spoiler alert, goes from what seems to be a very rich experience at Southeast Junior College in Chicago all the way through the trajectory of Northwestern, MIT, Harvard, and a number of other prestigious universities. I guess the question I want to ask, and of course Paul here was a trustee at University of Pennsylvania, are we walking towards 1637 in Holland when tulip bulbs are no longer worth a year's wages? Are we overvaluing something and undervaluing, for that matter, the community college efficiency and effectiveness?

Glenn Loury ([08:04](#)):

I don't know that I have anything insightful to say about that. I get you. I can understand the concern. It's true, when I left the community college in 1970 after two years, I had gotten a pretty decent public education in Chicago on the South Side. There was the German language, there was accounting, there was calculus. The school provided a wonderful service to those of us who couldn't afford to pay more than a couple hundred dollars a semester, and I don't know that that's true anymore. I don't want to just baldly declare it's not true, but I would have my doubts that the same kind of experience is possible.

([08:56](#)):

I was discovered at the Southeast Junior College by a retired engineer who was teaching the math course that I was taking, and he saw my talent and immediately called up the recruiters at Northwestern

University and said, "I've got this kid here on the South Side who's really crackerjack smart. You ought to take a look at him." And the next thing you knew, I was out there in Evanston, Illinois at the elite Harvard of the Midwest as they like to think of themselves, and the rest is history, so to speak.

[\(09:32\)](#):

I was fortunate, and in fact, I'd say I was fortunate in my primary and secondary education. I was just asked by a friend who runs a charter school in New York City, what books did you read in high school that had the most impact on you, and I told him about my senior year year-long English class which was devoted to Shakespeare. We read Hamlet, we read Othello, we read Macbeth, we read Julius and Caesar, we read Romeo and Juliet, we read Midsummer Night's Dream, we read the Tempest, All's Well That Ends Well. We read that in a public school in Chicago in 1964, 1965. I read all of those Shakespeare plays in one year.

[\(10:16\)](#):

Iambic pentameter may have lived forever, but I'm just saying I don't know that that's happening anywhere. It's certainly not in an inner city school like the one I went to which had a racially mixed but economically undistinguished student body, South Side of Chicago, people living in bungalows and two-flat and three-flat apartment buildings and so on. But I had teachers who were dedicated and I had a very solid foundation, and no, I don't know that that's happening much anymore.

Michael Poliakoff [\(10:48\)](#):

I want to turn to you, Paul. You said something to me once that by the time you got to Lehigh University on a scholarship, everything was easy because of the education you'd gotten in New York City public schools. I thought maybe we should for a moment, even though this is Higher Ed Now, turn to that platform on which higher education has to rest. Can you talk a little bit about what happened in your schools, and then, Glenn, let's maybe continue a little bit of the conversation about the experience you had? By the way, I was very, very pleased on The Glenn show to hear you evoke the image of Odysseus tied to the mast listening, not listening to the sirens with... Or actually he was listening. It was his crew that had wax in their ears, yeah.

Glenn Loury [\(11:42\)](#):

They had wax in their ears, yeah.

Michael Poliakoff [\(11:43\)](#):

These things are just so evocative. I feel bad for the generation that doesn't get the experience of these archetypal images. But let's go back to New York City.

Paul Levy [\(11:56\)](#):

Well, what Professor Loury has just said resonates entirely because I was a New York City public school product. I am a product of it, as is my sister. She went on to become a doctor at Mass General and elsewhere, and I had the career that I've had, and was remarkably well-equipped. And why? I guess I was bright enough to take in what was offered, but what was offered was the canon. We had a good, solid, basic education that basically touched every base from geography to state capitals, to vocabulary, to spelling bees, to math, to calculus. All of this was happening at the high school level. Our teachers were serious people. They expected us to be serious people. They treated us as serious people. They were demanding and they had the ability to teach and they had the ability to discern what should be explored and shouldn't be, and so I was lucky.

[\(13:01\)](#):

One day they told me I was going to Bronx science. I don't even remember having taken the test for it, but we were always taking tests in those days, Iowa skills, whatever, everything. You were tested up the wazoo. Lo and behold, I went there and it was a group of economically diverse, somewhat racially mixed, but it was all merit driven, so anybody who was there was there because they deserved to be. There was no such thing as getting an edge or getting help or getting pushed over the finish line by somebody who wanted to help. So that's what happened and it was just, it was wonderful.

(13:39):

I attribute the decline, and I've actually learned a bit about community colleges along the way from a career work standpoint, some things I've been involved in, if there's a quick answer, it's that the unions came into New York and Al Shanker just completely ruined everything. Focus became more on what the teachers got as opposed to what they taught, to what they were entitled to as opposed to what they were giving. We also benefited from what was, I guess on a real economic level, the way capital and people were allocated. Coming out of World War II, there weren't that many Rosie the Riveters. A lot of very bright women in particular had stayed home. They were smart. They'd gone to college. Then the question was what were they going to do, and they wound up teaching. So the workforce was just really very able people. And so somewhere along the line, those people moved on, as is always the case, and they were succeeded by people who were more interested in what they could get than what they could give, and I think that made a huge difference.

(14:57):

I have an anecdote which I have to pass on that our good friend Heather McDonald was relating to me several years ago that in talking to Joel Klein, who was a well-respected chancellor of the New York City school system under Bloomberg, a very able person and well-educated person himself, he was bragging that they'd gotten the SAT scores, which by the way, Dartmouth has just reinstated.

Michael Poliakoff (15:28):

Yes, yes.

Glenn Loury (15:28):

I noticed.

Paul Levy (15:29):

They'd gotten the SAT scores of their teachers up to an average of 1,000, which meant 500 [inaudible 00:15:38] which is an abominable score. So if that's the average, think about the quality of people entering the profession.

(15:47):

So what happened, I don't know. I think it's a concatenation of events that came together in a bad way, and they're not going to be easily changed. I might add, along the way, as I said, sorry to be so wordy, but in terms of community colleges, yeah, they were really good. America got obsessed with you got to go to college, and I think that pushed a lot of people into deeper water than they could swim in comfortably, number one. Number two, the community colleges were good, but what's happened now is they've been taken over, I think, by unions. The people who teach there are not up to par and what they're teaching is not trades so to speak. I don't call accounting a trade, but you learned hard knowledge that you could take and use elsewhere.

(16:42):

What's going on now, and Amy, in fact, Wax talked about this, people are graduating from these community colleges with, quote, "degrees in sociology" and things that have absolutely no real economic benefit to the student. When they go out into the workplace, they're not bringing skills that are readily

translatable into a job. So I think to put that all together, there's a lot of wood to chop here to get things back on line.

Glenn Loury ([17:13](#)):

Can I add something, Michael?

Michael Poliakoff ([17:15](#)):

Please.

Glenn Loury ([17:15](#)):

Well, you know I'm a professor, so I think about, well, what are the books, and Fred Siegel's book, the Future Once Happened Here comes to mind. It is a lament about the very degradation that Paul was just describing in New York City. The Future Once Happened Here, a very evocative title. But the other thing I wanted to mention is an economist named Robert Cherry, who is now emeritus from Brooklyn College where he taught for many, many years, who has been on a crusade. He has a book out, I don't recall the name of it, but anyone could find it easily, Bob Cherry, where he talks about the ineffectiveness of this idea that everybody's got to go to college and everybody's got to get a college degree, and about how the community colleges, instead of bringing in people and then putting them in remedial classes for English and mathematics and such ought to be so configured as to teach them serviceable skills or partner with industry where they can learn to do something that is actually valued in the marketplace, get a certificate.

([18:32](#)):

A guy who's not reading that well but could learn how to weld or do some other kind of a task can get a certificate indicating that he has accomplished that, and he can stack the certificate. So he can, two or three or four different kinds of skills that he can be certified, and that would be a more... Anyway, that would be a more effective way of using that time and money that now goes down the drain because he sits in an English class or a history class and he doesn't know what's going on.

Michael Poliakoff ([19:05](#)):

It's been a remarkable development. Most recently, the governor of Pennsylvania declared by fiat that a great number of jobs in Pennsylvania state government would no longer require a baccalaureate degree. Pennsylvania's not the only state that's done that, but the downside of that is what an indictment of the baccalaureate degree that used to be a certain guarantor of some real skills, of a certain intellectual agility, ability to be able to move with different challenges. Clearly not, and hence the idea of people developing skills that they can market and use for family-sustaining wages makes a great deal of sense.

Paul Levy ([19:58](#)):

Well, society is producing knowledge at record paces, but it's going deep more than wide I think in some respects. If you go and look at the course offering book at Amherst College, it is literally 50% larger than it was 20 years ago. What are the new extra courses, the added courses? They are not about biotech. They're not about all of these incredible computer innovations and whatnot. They're sociology. There's the studies of this, the studies of that. They're soft. They're not focused. They're the kind of studies where people can, if you have a sweet tongue and a quick pen, you can get by, but it doesn't mean you know much that's useful, and I think there's a real problem. It's just been this proliferation of, I don't know what the word is, proliferation of...

Michael Poliakoff ([21:05](#)):

The easy courses. That brings me to the question that I've been very eager to ask. I know woke is a term that gets a bit overused but it is descriptive, and of course we didn't coin that term. It was one that was very popular among the, dare I say, wokesters and it's run rampant in the humanities. Princeton's classics major without Latin or Greek, it is just one of the more absurd examples and also the social sciences. But particularly, Professor Loury, I wanted to get your take, I remember you saying something on The Glenn Show about this, that even a discipline that ought to be mathematically rigorous like economics and of course mathematics and natural science, even these seem to be rather susceptible to the incursion.

Glenn Loury ([22:04](#)):

Yes. The politicization, the desire in the faculty, and to some degree among the students as well, to have reaffirmed their political commitments that they come in with to stand on the right side of history, as opposed to confronting the reality of the fact that it's awfully hard to know what the right side of history is. We're not teaching them how to think as much as teaching them what to think or they're anticipating that they're going to be told what they already think is the right answer to these unfathomable questions. So yeah, there's an issue.

Michael Poliakoff ([22:52](#)):

And that rather brings us to a couple of key points. Paul, you alluded to this, SATs being dropped right and left, Dartmouth interestingly is the first of the Ivies to restore the SAT, and a real aversion to quantifiable nationally normed metrics, and that rather leads into another issue which seems to be a war on merit or at least merit as we can understand it. I recognize that there's nuance in the word merit, but something seems very wrong with this picture.

([23:35](#)):

Since we're sharing personal stories, I think she'll forgive me, my daughter was a natural to get into Thomas Jefferson School of Science and Technology. It's a magnet school. It was a test in school. It's rare that she's ever met a math test that she didn't like. And then the superintendent decided that there were too many Asians, and as it turns out, our daughter is adopted from Vietnam, and they went to a more holistic method. Well, she didn't get in, and she's in a very good school now in the BASIS Academy, but something seems very wrong with this picture. I wanted to invite both of you to comment on this, the aversion to having at least some measure of quantifiable nationally normed evidence and the whole understanding of what we mean when we say merit.

Glenn Loury ([24:36](#)):

Well, we know why it's happening. It's happening because different population groups in terms of race and ethnicity on average perform differently on these metrics. So employing the metric reveals the disparity in performance which is a politically undesirable thing to do. If I'm selecting based upon the metric, I'm going to have some population groups that are underrepresented. The Blacks are not going to do so well on average if I hew to the metric. So I find a way of not doing that in the interest of promoting diversity.

([25:22](#)):

I could comment. I mean this is what's happening. It seems to me, just as a matter of description, as a matter of evaluation, this is a disaster. First of all, it's a disaster for the country. We're in the 21st century. The world is being remade every decade. We face implacable foes in terms of global competition. Those people, and you know who I'm talking about, are not playing around. They're serious about what's going on. We need to husband our human resources in a way that is effective in meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

([26:05](#)):

This idea that the Asian kids are scoring high on the test, they're the model minority, they're somehow an affront to or a challenge to the kind of equitable order that we want to foster in the country, that's madness. I mean, I could say it here before I give a talk at the synagogue, that's what they said about the Jews 75 years ago. I mean, think if one hadn't allowed those talented individuals the opportunity to fully develop their human potential what the loss would be to the society, so that, but I'd also say there's nothing good about this for the people who are the supposed beneficiaries of it either because at the end of the day, the standard, the metric, the test is the instrument that's telling us what's being accomplished in terms of the human development of people.

(27:02):

You get rid of the test, it doesn't change the fact that people don't know the material that the test might've revealed they didn't know. That was what I was going to use, I say this as a kid coming off of the Black South Side of Chicago, to show you that I actually measured up. I was going to use the objective meritocratic standards to show you that I was fit. Now you take it away. You patronize me. You pat me on the head. You reveal a kind of racist lack of confidence in my capacity to perform, and if not today, then tomorrow or to next week or next year. Let me face the challenge. Don't play with me. Give me the real deal, I'll measure up, and we'll move on. So that's a personal opinion, but I think there's warrant for it.

Paul Levy (27:55):

Well, I think that's a powerful statement of exactly what the problem is. Let me turn it around though because I keep working on this thought and getting nowhere. What can one do, if anything, to advance the cause of Black participation at the elite levels that we're sort of talking about? Not exclusively, but is there something that can be done? Maybe it's grade school education. I don't know what it is.

Glenn Loury (28:40):

Well, that's what I was going to gesture at, but the honest answer for me is that I don't know. I mean you could improve the schools. My former student and colleague, Roland Fryer, the economist at Harvard, has done very good work, some of it he began under the Bloomberg administration in New York City when Joel Klein, who's been mentioned, was superintendent of schools there. Roland has done a lot of research on what kinds of interventions in public schools might be most effective at promoting kids' learning, and I won't try to describe his research program in full, but suffice it to say it's rigorous, it's quantitative, it's controlled experiment-guided gold standard of social science inference formulated. He in effect test out some of the pedagogic devices used by the best of the charter schools in a public school setting and shows that longer school day, high expectations, tutoring, and that kind of thing can be effective. So there's that.

(29:56):

I think there's also giving parents more options to choose and allowing market forces of competition to work in attracting or failing to attract the attention of the clients here who are the families, the students and their parents, amongst the alternative service providers. So the public school system and the public school teachers union is one source of supply, but it's not the only game in town. To the extent that our public policies encourage the expansion of the choices that parents have and to the extent that parents are themselves encouraged and prepared to take responsibility, more responsibility for the education of their children, I think there's some reason to think there could be benefits in that regard as well. But there's no magic bullet.

Paul Levy (30:57):

Professor, I became aware of your work and thought through the Amy Wax controversy, and I did listen to the podcast when you asked her what I call the famous question at this point, which was a very benign question, how have your affirmative, I don't remember if you said Black students or minorities or affirmative action, but how have your affirmative action students performed, which seemed to me like a

perfectly normal question that one would ask somebody in the context of this discussion. She said what she said which was they hadn't done very well. For the most part, they were in the bottom of the class, and that, as you may recall, set off the explosions, nuclear bomb, and the rest, as they say, is sort of history. But was she on base in responding like that or... I couldn't tell what you thought of her response.

Glenn Loury ([32:01](#)):

Well, if you go into the archive of The Daily Pennsylvania, which is the student newspaper there at Penn, you'll find me with a letter that I put up at the newspaper just after this controversy broke. Amy came on my podcast. She said what you said she said, that on the whole the Black kids weren't doing that well. They tend to cluster toward the bottom of her classes, civil procedure, if I'm not mistaken, which is essential in a law school, this is something that people have to master, and the firestorm broke. She's a racist now for saying that. Her dean calls her, in effect, a liar, although he won't share the data with us that would've proven that she's a liar which is interesting. But was she off base? Well, I don't think so, and I said so in my letter.

([32:57](#)):

Now you say something controversial and then the winds blow in your face. I mean, so if you don't want the wind to blow, maybe you ought to think twice about speaking your mind in public. But in terms of both the facts of the matter as far as I know, she hasn't been shown to have misstated the case, and in terms of the logic of the matter, at some level, how could it be otherwise? What I mean, before I get into trouble, is you're using metrics, like the LSAT, the law school aptitude test, or do they call it admissions test, Law School Admissions Test I think is what they call it, and what courses did you take in college, what grades did you get, what are in the letters of recommendation people write on your behalf, so you're using metrics. The metrics are demonstrably correlated with performance after admission. There are the studies, many of them, that show at least for first year grades in law school there's a non-trivial correlation between performance on these metrics, like the tests, and performance after admission.

([34:08](#)):

You use different cutoffs under your affirmative action program for one population than the other. The Black kids, if they're at the 70th percentile of the population distribution of performance on the LSAT, got a pretty good chance of getting in. If you're a white kid, you got to be at the 90th percentile. I make those numbers up, but they're roughly accurate. Now that's a fair difference in average performance on the metric between the racially defined populations. Now you put them in the classroom, they confront the material and they perform in a manner that is on average consistent with what the metrics predicts that they would perform. So you're going to get differences in the performance if you have differences in the criteria that you use to select the kids. There can be no surprise in that. It's only a question of how much. So no, I don't think that was or should have been a firing offense on Professor Wax's part.

Michael Poliakoff ([35:09](#)):

Well, that case is now sub judice, if you can call that faculty committee a judge. Do you have any updates on that, Paul? This will be-

Paul Levy ([35:21](#)):

No, actually they did vote, if that's the word, to sanction her and discipline her. She already lost the right to teach her first year civil procedure class, but they've held it's, quote, "on appeal" to the faculty senate or the higher body in the faculty senate, and they haven't done anything, and clearly they haven't done anything because of everything that's swamped the university lately, what with the president and everything else. To me, the fact that they've held off on final adjudication just goes back to the basic problem we have. There's speech that is permitted however offensive, and then there's speech that's not

permitted which often is less offensive. That a sitting Penn, a professor today could draw anti-Semitic cartoons of Jews drinking the blood of who knows who, this is a new... You may not have seen this.

Glenn Loury ([36:35](#)):

[inaudible 00:36:35]. I haven't seen the cartoon.

Paul Levy ([36:36](#)):

Oh, I can show it to you. Yeah, it's a great one. But that person, I think properly so, is not being punished because now they've awakened to the joys of the First Amendment, whereas Amy has tread on a racially charged ground and she's still in their sights. So Penn can't figure out what it is, what it wants to be, what it believes in, and that's really the thing that got them and the presidents of the three schools in most difficulty, I think. They don't know what they think or they don't know how they want to prioritize it.

Michael Poliakoff ([37:18](#)):

I thought it might be useful, if we're not exhausting you, Professor Loury, you've been really generous with your time, to move on to that issue of where are the borders, if they exist at all. In your book, again, minor spoiler alert, you talk about your disappointment and rage when Ray Kelly was shouted down at Brown, and of course Ray Kelly is sweet and gentle compared to some of the figures that could be invited, Richard Spencer, or in the case of Columbia that did invite Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and at least in my mind, Lee Bollinger handled that one rather masterfully. Are there any borders? Do you have any guidance? Paul, any guidance on that?

Glenn Loury ([38:15](#)):

I don't know if I have anything wise to say here, I mean prudence. The Kelly incident really rubbed me the wrong way. I was at Brown, when was this, maybe 2014, 2013, so it's been a while. This is the commissioner of police in the city of New York. He's been appointed by a duly elected mayor. Michael Bloomberg was elected three times to the mayoralty of this city, and he has the responsibility of overseeing the securing of public safety in the city of 8 million people. He has an idea about how to do that. I can't remember what word he uses for racial profiling, it's something other than racial profiling, but the idea is engage people on the streets to try to see what's in their pockets if they look suspicious in order to... Consistent with the First Amendment. The courts are going to have their say about this. I'm not a lawyer, so I'll just stop with that. But he was up there to defend his view about how to police the city.

([39:27](#)):

I was in the room when this incident happened, when the hecklers vetoed him giving his speech. I was sitting in the front row because I'd come late to the auditorium and the only seats left were one or two that had been set aside for the police officers who had come out to honor their providence and Rhode Island state troopers and all that. So I was sitting there amongst these guys, and I could hear what Ray Kelly was getting ready to say before the hecklers heckled him down, and he was getting ready to say, "I'm coming to you from a crime scene where there was a homicide and I had to comfort the grieving mother of some kid who had been killed. This is what we're up against. This is what I'm trying to do." That's what he was going to say.

([40:10](#)):

Now one could disagree or agree with his particular techniques but clearly this is a first order problem, and the solution to it is not at all obvious. This is worth talking about. What are we here for at the university if not to talk about this kind of problem? Hear from him, allow him to hear our rebuttal, listen carefully to what he might have to say. Let evidence, argument, reasoning be the guide, and be better for it after the end of the 90 minutes than we were before it started because we'll know more about a hard

problem. That didn't happen, and then in the aftermath of that our president, Christina Paxson, appointed a faculty committee to overview the controversy. They issued a report, and the report basically endorsed this idea that the speech was harmful to students because they felt threatened by the environment created, police officers sitting up in front, commissioner police defending the preemptive, I can't again remember the exact word-

Paul Levy ([41:20](#)):

You're not referring to stop and frisk, are you?

Michael Poliakoff ([41:21](#)):

Stop and frisk.

Glenn Loury ([41:21](#)):

Yeah, I'm referring to the stop and frisk.

Paul Levy ([41:23](#)):

Okay, all right. Yeah.

Glenn Loury ([41:23](#)):

But he had another word for it.

Paul Levy ([41:24](#)):

He had another word, okay.

Glenn Loury ([41:28](#)):

I didn't use the phrase stop and frisk. That's the best phrase he used, but he has... Anyway. They say, "Well, we have our commitment to open discourse, but we also have to be concerned about the environment we create for our charges, and certain kinds of speech can be harmful or perceived to be harmful to students and we need to take that into account." There was a town hall meeting that President Paxson convened where faculty and students were invited to come together, this was after dinner, eight o'clock in a big auditorium somewhere, and share with each other how we were feeling about all these matters. My colleague in political science, Marion Orr, an African American as it happened, who was responsible for inviting Ray Kelly said the following, he said, "Listen, if you all have a list of people that I'm not supposed to invite, it'd be really helpful if you could share that list with me in advance." And I thought, "Oh my god, what is happening to my institution?"

Paul Levy ([42:38](#)):

But let me compliment you, you have a way of saying some of these things which is very even-handed, and I think it's very helpful. Just the idea of having a discussion over 90 minutes trying to solve a problem or understand it and listening to what people have to say is really what the entire debate is about, and that's over. It really is over because the idea that an individual who's old enough, presumably mature enough to be away from home, go to a place as esteemed as Brown, all right, and isn't comfortable hearing from a respected member of the law enforcement world is an unthinkable comment. It's unthinkable. Well, who are these people? Maybe we should talk about that. What has happened to the spine of the people who show up at these schools? You meet them more than I would, I'm curious.

Glenn Loury ([43:48](#)):

Yeah. Well, the youngsters are subject to a variety of enthusiasms, and they certainly think at the age of 19 or 22 that they've got it all figured out and they know where the right side of history is. They know what a racist cop looks like when they see a racist cop and they're prepared to shout him down. One maybe doesn't approve of that, but one can kind of understand it. They're 19, 20, 21 years old. They're full of beans. They think they know. I was one of them when the Vietnam War was raging in my youth, and I was quite sure I knew what the right side of history was. The faculty is another matter though.

(44:29):

I remember saying to the administrator who oversaw the dispelling of the crowd, she basically called the whole thing off, Kelly left in a huff and the students disassembled, I said to her, "This is a horrible day for our university. This is a tragedy for our university." I thought that my faculty were going to say the same thing, that the faculty committee was going to say as a first order statement, "This must never happen again," and they didn't. So one of my colleagues, weaponizing free speech, you're weaponizing free... You got these bad ideas that you're prepared to loose upon our students, justifying that by your weaponization of free speech, and that was Orwellian.

Michael Poliakoff (45:24):

Let me ask a really radical question. I'm only in the academy for a tiny bit. I teach one adjunct course at night at George Mason which has been wonderful. You're a full-fledged citizen, now about to become emeritus. How are we going to replace in the academy people like you? And of course Harvey Mansfield is now emeritus, and my mentor, Donald Kagan, has died, may he rest in peace. How's this going to happen? I don't think it's going to happen through the normal hiring process because we've basically lost not just our voting majority but even the possibility of standing up for heterodoxy. Do you have any thoughts on that as we look grimly into the future of the academy?

Glenn Loury (46:20):

I'm going to opt out, say it's above my pay grade. I mean there are movements afoot. Politicians are trying to exert some influence over the way in which their public state universities are governed and how faculties are constituted. There is academic freedom and all of that. On the other hand, these are taxpayers funds. And so there's a conundrum there about where to draw a line about what kind of influence and how much. There are certain initiatives, I'm an advisor to the University of Austin which is this new university that is getting started. That's where I last saw Ayaan Hirsi Ali speak. We mentioned her earlier in our conversation and she was spellbinding and very motivating and her vision about what we, and we few, we hardy few, manning the barricades, defending civilization against the barbarians at the gates needed to do. So there're ideas and institutional innovation afoot.

(47:33):

But this is a slow-moving, it's a self-reproducing thing, the faculties. People stay forever. There's no mandatory retirement. The margin in any given year, even in a decade of innovation of new people coming on is going to be a relatively small percentage of the total mass, and it's going to be hard to change.

Michael Poliakoff (47:59):

It is a worry for all of us. Paul, unless you have any other questions that we should ask right away, I'm just going to thank you, Professor Loury, Glenn, for being with us and sharing these ideas and more to come. I don't want to exhaust you. You're about to give an address to the Palm Beach Synagogue. I think we've got 550 registered. We were all really excited to do that. For those who want to hear the part of the conversation that we're going to record now about Late Admissions: Confessions of a Black Conservative, tune in right after May 14. Thank you for being with us.

This transcript was exported on Feb 15, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

Glenn Loury ([48:44](#)):
My pleasure, Michael.