



Library podcast

A. Scott Bullitt Lecture in American History presents Michael Eric Dyson

[00:00:05] Welcome to The Seattle Public Library's podcasts of author readings and library events. Library podcasts are brought to you by The Seattle Public Library and Foundation. To learn more about our programs and podcasts, visit our web site at www.spl.org. To learn how you can help the library foundation support The Seattle Public Library go to foundation.spl.org

[00:00:35] I am jealous. Rat Belmonte one of the associate ministers of Mount Zion Baptist Church and on behalf of the congregation. The Reverend Dr. Samuel Berry McKinney who is pastor emeritus of this church. You are welcomed here. The only thing that we want to remind you of is this is the house of God. And so we would ask that you would respect it in that regard. Thank you for coming. And at this time I would like to introduce Stesha Brandon from The Seattle Public Library.

[00:01:20] Good evening I'm Stesha Brandon. I'm the Literature and Humanities Program Manager at The Seattle Public Library and I'm so delighted to see you all here tonight. Be A. Scott Bullitt lecturer in American history is made possible by a generous gift from the late Priscilla Bullitt Collins in honor of her father A. Scott Bullitt. Tonight's event is also supported by The Seattle Public Library Foundation. Private gifts to the foundation from thousands of donors throughout the city help the library provide free programs and services that touch the lives of everyone in our community so to library foundation donors here with us tonight. We say thank you very much for your support. We're also grateful to the Seattle Times for their generous promotional support for library programs and to our wonderful program partners. Northwest African-American museum and Elliott Bay Book Company. The format of tonight's event will be a lecture presented by Dr. Dyson after which Dr. Dyson will take your questions. Now I am delighted to welcome Dr. Mildred L.A. from northwest to African-American museum to the podium. Dr. Lee is currently the interim executive director at Northwest African-American museum but has served as the president of Seattle Central Community College from 2003 to 2010 and served on the boards of Seattle Central Community College Foundation. Puget Sound advocates for retirement action and Rotary Club a federal way as well as volunteering her time with a number of civic organizations including the links Inc. And the sound transit citizen oversight panel. Here to introduce Dr. Michael Eric Dyson.

[00:02:43] Please help me welcome Dr. Mildred Olay.

[00:02:54] Good evening. What a privilege for me to stand here tonight to introduce someone that I've admired for a long time and to see him in person was quite a thrill. I know you've come to hear him tonight so I'm going to briefly remind you of things about him the speaker here tonight is not a stranger to anyone to the nation in the realm of higher education or any other realm in this country. We have heard his intellectual discourse on television radio book discussions and any political commentary that he gets a microphone to speak. He is one of the nation's most influential and renowned public intellectuals. I have said he can get more five syllable words in a sentence that turns out to be a paragraph than any one that we know. Dr. Dyson is a Georgetown University sociology professor and his pioneering scholarship has had a profound effect on American ideas on many social issues. He is an American Book Award recipient. He has authored or edited at least 18 books. He was also a radio commentator on NPR for the Michael Dyson Show and CNN as a political analyst. Just turn in to any of those and you'll see it tonight. Dr. Dyson will present a talk titled Martin Luther King Junior an African-American leadership in the 21st century. I know you can hardly wait. I can't. So let's please give Dr. Dyson a Seattle welcome.

[00:05:11] With no right.

[00:05:40] Thank you so very kindly thank Dr. Lee for that very gracious introduction and for the wonderful opportunity to be here at this his this historic church. I want to thank Dr. Beaumont for extending greetings in the name of the leadership of this great church and the Reverend Samuel McKinney who is the Emeritus pastor of this extraordinary institution a man of a long time commitment to the struggle for freedom and determination for black people and other peoples of the world. So this is a great great opportunity to be here tonight in this hallowed place and to be here at the invitation of an institution devoted to literacy

[00:06:47] And the Seattle library. I got a chance earlier today to do. A conversation with Mr. Ross there. Representing the library and it's always good to be back in the library despite the fact that I still owe finds and I hope none of those librarians are here tonight to assign those fines to me. It would be kind of tough but. It's always great to be here in Seattle where people seem to have sent even your football team seems to have since and I have so many people that I know and love from here. Kevin and Deborah Baker They are educational consultants both for Baker consultants and for King County dear friends who are committed to righteous living in the application of real insight to. The conditions of our youth in particular. And then Jennifer Wiley Dr. Jennifer Wiley who's the principal of Franklin High School you all know that great high school. And I've spoken there on many an occasion and for graduation and other events and it's a real honor to have them here today. She does incredible work committed to our children and the multicultural education challenging the premises of a narrow understanding of America.

[00:08:34] I want all of them to stand up you can see them I don't know the doctor Eddie Ray make it here tonight.

[00:08:51] He's not here but I know he's from here. And in the end. Oh Miss Angeles my daughter is my daughter and I'm so proud of them I know Dr. Andrea rye is their mother and Angela's mother and Dr. Rice's wife and I know it's her birthday so I want to send her a birthday shout out and

[00:09:18] Mr Rye is a strong strong civil rights leader in this area and has taken a stand in so many instances for that which is right in his daughter named after Angela Davis.

[00:09:32] All right.

[00:09:35] And she continues to hold high that banner of excellence. And as as her second Daddy after her daddy and I'm so proud of her for being brilliant and committed and beautiful inside and out and I know Laura Ellen McKinney is the daughter of this church a great writer and a wonderful woman.

[00:10:05] And I don't know if she made it but that's a great great.

[00:10:08] Oh there she is.

[00:10:08] I'm looking right at it and say so good to see you here. And please give my greetings to the great patriarch.

[00:10:21] Now tonight what I want to do is to reflect briefly on this subject of Martin Luther King Junior and black leadership in the 21st century. And having been asked to address this topic is especially important and I think timely in this day and age with the resurgence of yet again another generation of black leadership and the necessity of having the moral and political insight of black people at this particular time. It was Martin Luther King Junior who said that it may be the negro who will inject new meanings to the veins of Western civilization and at some points he held that

[00:11:15] Black people then called Negroes would maybe even help save American society.

[00:11:23] You know that need is ever more present than now.

[00:11:27] I don't know when it was Martin Luther King Junior was an extraordinary man.

[00:11:39] He did not come out of nowhere he came out of a tradition not from some zoos his head was he born thrust into existence fully formed he matured in the womb of a loving black family and then a family that saw several generations of ministers in their particular stead.

[00:12:11] And it may not be popular these days for leaders who were black ministers to emerge but it is still necessary to remind ourselves that despite its flaws the black church is still the heartbeat of black America. It ain't a perfect institution but then what is heard a man great minister William Augustus Jones who like the minister Carlyle Mani the Southern minister of whom somebody said He's got a voice like God's just deeper and that was true of William Augustus Jones and he said that

when people told him the church was full of hypocrites he said there's always room for one more the churches like Noah's Ark. The late great Robert McAfee Brown the theologian said if it wasn't for the storm on the outside you couldn't stand the stink on the inside.

[00:13:22] So the church is imperfect. And yet the black church has been the site for such liberation and emancipation and desire to challenge the forces of white supremacy social injustice economic inequality and increasingly to challenge its own homophobia and its own sexism.

[00:13:42] That in turn to the broader society and model a shifted paradigm of what true leadership is all about.

[00:13:51] And so the black church deuces black ministers men and women who have taken leadership positions in history the freest institution still in black America is the black church. Say what we want to say and got to be dependent upon the dominant society to sanction or support what we say at its best.

[00:14:18] Some of us been bought off commodified seduced tricked bamboozled hoodwinked and so the black church remains a free place where we can speak our minds where the will of black people can be articulated where the desire for emancipation and freedom can be shared where our criticism of the dominant society can be heard where our children can be educated where our people in our society and our neighborhoods can meet and greet and love and marry and and embrace one another and love each other and a place where the womb of our new born imagination can gestate a place where we can feel the utter intimacy of our unqualified love for each other.

[00:15:15] Our unapologetic expression of identification with each other and to tell the truth as best we can and we know that if we can take those kind of things for granted in this place it ain't normal across the board.

[00:15:34] However in Martin Luther King Junior grew up in the black church as he said he was the son of a preacher the grandson of the preacher and the great grandson of a preacher.

[00:15:49] And so he said he didn't have any choice he guessed even though initially he wanted nothing to do with the church. It was too emotional preaching he heard was too steeped in cathartic expression as opposed to analytical depth and so he wanted nothing to do with it. Went to Morehouse at 15 an early admission program are Benjamin large Jimmy's figured out a way to replenish the diminishing numbers of black people who could attend college and therefore that black male college of Morehouse might have to shut because of the depletion of those numbers in War War Two when he came up with the ideal of early admission for bright students and King and later Maynard Jackson entered at the age of 15. Mr. Jackson of course became the first black mayor of Atlanta Georgia. And so Dr. King then Martin Luther King Junior named Michael at birth went to Morehouse at 15 was a C student studied sociology studied theology and then at 19 graduated went to Crozier Theological Seminary and then on to Boston University. But he didn't think that the ministry was the outlet for him it wasn't intellectual enough and then he met Benjamin Elijah Mays at Morehouse and he saw you

could be smart and intelligent and reflective and engage with the world and still be a minister and so he was converted so to speak. Even though he rigorously maintained his liberal theological criteria and never became a fundamentalist in his beliefs those who believe in God gave us the word and every bit of it should be literally respected. Then he was not a Biblical literalists sorry if that offends your feelings.

[00:17:55] He denied the bodily resurrection of Jesus at 14 that didn't mean he wasn't a believer he was a strong believer he just didn't believe in stuff you said he had to believe in in order for him to be a believer.

[00:18:10] It is interesting to me that so many black folk can be biblical literalists when you couldn't read the Bible for 150 years. What you being literal about

[00:18:24] And so Dr. King came out of the black church the black church with its empathy for the vulnerable the black church with its desire to see justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream but not the heart of the black church the heart of the black church was about priestly care but the margins were about prophetic articulation like most churches black churches were concerned about marrying and burying and meeting the needs of the community and a small slither became much more progressive and incited social rebellion and engaged in either arguments against slavery or active rebellion against the institution of slavery. Net net Turner Denmark V.C. and Gabriel Prosser were ministers who took it to heart that they must oppose enslavement but the masses of black folk in churches like the masses of black folk now

[00:19:21] Wasn't necessarily involved in that. That ain't what the church supposed to be. We comes here to talk about Jesus. That's most churches.

[00:19:34] That's Joel Osteen to call away too.

[00:19:40] They day no different than the other churches like we got except of course that both of them got mon Negro members then most black megachurches and yet they have the unabashed temerity to support a vicious bigot at the highest level.

[00:20:01] And and and they members I know it's their members they members who are black ain't got nothing to say about it. No no.

[00:20:11] That he should open up his doors Dawn of courage came he said nobody asked him Jesus did two thousand years ago treat strangers like your brothers and sisters you never know when you entertaining angels unawares you don't know.

[00:20:32] And so and so the black church has had its arguments.

[00:20:36] Martin Luther King Junior had to leave the Baptist who were National Baptist to help start the Progressive National Baptist course.

[00:20:46] There was an internal argument internal system between the progressive moment which was a margin and the broad conservatism of the dominant body. Still that today and so came was from a marginal position within the black church. King was from the prophetic roots of the black church and from from the prophetic margin of the black church because the margins always determined so much anyhow.

[00:21:18] Right.

[00:21:18] Jesus got twelve disciples of women twelve thousand take a few people to change stuff don't take the one to mess it up.

[00:21:35] I digress.

[00:21:38] In the deal of life we all have tunnel parts.

[00:21:46] So Martin Luther King Junior born as an heir and legacy of the black church Daddy a preacher then becomes converted because he sees Benjamin Elijah Mays at Morehouse goes on the Crows theological seminary writes a dissertation comparing the conceptions of God of Henry Nelson Wiseman and Paul till Hilary Nelson Wiseman was a person unless who believe that God intervenes on the activities of human history. Paul truly believed that God was the principal the ground of being of one's own existence. There was not an existential involvement in terms of a personal diety imposing his or her will upon the flow of history. And so King was trying to resolve that tension by looking at those competing schematics and theology theological understandings of the world. And while he's finishing just this dissertation he goes on to take a little small pastor at down south he came from Atlanta went up north to get educated took some classes at University Pennsylvania as well and over at Harvard and went down South while he was writing his dissertation to take a small pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church then the rest is history.

[00:22:59] We know what that is.

[00:23:01] Rosa Parks being inspired by Emmett Till and his death.

[00:23:09] Was an activist seeking an opportunity to exploit the crevices and cracks in the infrastructure of segregation and Jim Crow to make sure it could be challenged she wouldn't just tire because their feet hurt her. That kind of sexist canard like she just stumbled on greatness.

[00:23:29] She's like a forest gump.

[00:23:33] Life is like a box of chocolates. No that was intentionality that was on purpose. Rosa Parks was an anti rape activists. Rosa Parks was a woman who was engaged in sustained social activism. She went just tired that day and her feet were so tired and she didn't want to get up. She was looking for the opportunity to tell America that this was wrong and to test the durability of Jim Crow and the

segregationists and apartheid ethos and so inspired by Emmett Till. She stayed on that bus got arrested. Claudette Colvin had tried to do it before but she was cussing and pregnant no harm and being pregnant. S Sarah Palin. See black folks show up pregnant. That ain't the problem. The problem is the hypocritical double standards of a white supremacist society that would damn her and beat her down while they're engaging in rapacious sexuality that exploded the bodies of black women. So in plus Claudia cousin. That's how some of us feel she was speaking for us anyhow.

[00:25:02] Even Christians want to cuss sometimes call on the name of the Lord in multiple formats and so she challenged the legitimacy of apartheid and the vigor and vitality and validity of Jim Crow and then emerged a young leader and he was a compromise leader.

[00:25:29] The older established leadership in Montgomery had been bickering over who would be the leader who don't take the lead E.D. Nixon then part of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters powerful activists right.

[00:25:47] And Mrs. Parks work with him and when the bus boycott went down when they first conceived the idea of that Negro ministers were dragging their feet.

[00:25:57] Well now I know and what we gonna do.

[00:26:01] He said you take them nickels and dimes of these washer women in your congregation but you can't stand up for them when it comes down to the time they need you. You got your Cadillacs Oh nice and shiny and you got your personages littered with your own wealth and you can't stand up for these black women and so he shamed them and they got involved black women went to work because they always do.

[00:26:35] They were using a mimeograph machine. Robbers and you don't even know what a mimeograph machine is.

[00:26:40] Yeah. Don't don't don't be fake. You don't even know what that is.

[00:26:45] Is that like Tinder to you swipe left. You gotta have some ain't gonna stencil No. What a barrel. Mostly Silver I think and then you think you take the paper down and he goes down and you run it off and then you're running out.

[00:27:04] It ain't even the Xerox machine dog that a mimeograph. That's hard work. You was trying to do something. That's that's that's that's on purpose.

[00:27:15] She went there and got those fliers out because black women always get into gear when it's time to work. She was a professor there to Alabama State College and so they start spreading the word and then Martin Luther King Junior was the was the concession of the compromise candidate.

[00:27:33] The people that were there the NWFP all of the leaders and who's newest guy in town. Where is this little minister here. He just came here named Martin Luther King Junior.

[00:27:41] He was the compromise leader. That's how our history works. You ain't got time to get prepared to my black.

[00:27:50] Martin Luther King in the 21st century leadership.

[00:27:52] We got to always be ready. Right. He was studying all that study came for a purpose. Then he got thrust into leadership. He said the battering rams of historical necessity have pushed me into position. He was alluding to Reinhold Niebuhr the great theologian. So he said the battering rams of historical necessity put me in position. I went looking for this it just came upon me. And so they put him into a leadership position. He starts courting all the great philosophers and theologians and he can preach and he's eloquent and it ain't no time to get ready when you in the midst of the battle

[00:28:26] You always should be being prepared. You don't know what opportunity you gonna get. You don't know when you go have to talk speak think act devise an appeal to the knowledge you build be faithful during the period when you don't know what you're gonna do with what you get.

[00:28:48] So all that learning was for a reason somewhere i read of the freedom of speech. Then he starts speaking and talking and people start hearing the magical encounter Tory power of his rhetorical fuse to loud being directed against vicious white supremacy this small man his wife some 5 7 2 2 short. I don't want no shorts short man I try to judge Justice I'm just saying he wouldn't six 10 but his theology was like a giant and he had to gift the GAB he got Halla he talked to a co writer I've met my Waterloo like Napoleon he's bidden game at Coretta Scott King he got bars I don't know what you're heard about me but I'm a straight up guy im a public intellectual with moral principles that's what King was and so King got involved with the movement thrust into his leadership then they came up with a plan all together and they stayed off those buses more than 365

[00:30:10] Days and they showed white brothers and sisters that they were serious and they changed that city and they changed the law and they changed America Martin Luther King Junior went on to even greater fame after the bus boycott he got lost for a little bit then the Freedom Rides came along trying to figure out his way and path what would he do now that he was a nationally regarded leader but how would he sees national leadership. How would he be thrust into it even further. And then the students came along because the young people always come along to listen to what they are doing. Freedom Riders came along and then they began to act. Begin to protest in ways that people didn't think they should.

[00:30:51] Protests don't take a knee you ever think.

[00:30:59] There was a period when white people said oh yes that's the appropriate way to protest a no appropriate way. Because they never an appropriate time because it's never appropriate to issue. Man speaking to me because he was respectful of

[00:31:22] Veterans who said they got a problem with it and they said one of them hey boy you're played in the league also veteran why don't you just take a knee to show respect and reverence and they man at that they made at what you do they mattered who you ese hands up they shoot your hands down they shoot you run they shoot you don't run they shoot you.

[00:31:44] Speak up their culture don't speak up they shoot you. It's not what you tell it's who you are.

[00:32:01] Jerry Jones don't mind employing a domestic abuser or you can beat a woman and be in the league.

[00:32:08] You can you can knock them out and be in the league. You can be violent against women and be in the league. You can wait women and be in the league but Don don't ever. Demand respect as a black person in America. The

[00:32:23] Black people. Oh no. You're a thug. You're a criminal. You will not be employed. You are persona non grata. You can ask favorable how to be free

[00:32:51] If the people you trying to protest got appropriate rules for you to protest be skeptical.

[00:33:00] If Fox trying to tell to hand how to be free beware.

[00:33:09] So Martin Luther King Junior joined with the Freedom Riders John Lewis and many others white brothers and sisters coming from the north down south.

[00:33:20] Chaney Schwerner and Goodman two Jews and a black man went down to Mississippi Lorraine Hansberry at a fund raiser in her Harlem home to buy the station wagon in which they were murdered. And so Martin Luther King Junior was thrust into national leadership again. He began to articulate the values and visions and virtues of black protest to show it wasn't just him he was no solo act to say no John Wayne story. This is a collective enterprise of many people. King is the most prominent but not the only one. Ella Baker and Joanne Robinson and Rosa Parks and Angela Davis and James Baldwin and James Farmer and Malcolm mix and Elijah Muhammad and Joe. The names go on and married church to rail and Mary McLeod Bethune and on and on and on but Martin Luther King Junior became the face of that movement a humble man in many regards a man of extraordinary intelligence. And if we want to talk about black leadership in the 21st century we've had to accentuate his level of preparation. You got to know what you're talking about. No just do it cause it's popular you get pushed along and now you're standing up and then know what you're talking about. And no harm and get no education no a lot of people talk against it. Well you ain't got to be educated.

[00:34:50] Try you ain't got had hoped he'd get one then say that I'm more impressed when you got one. Hey I've got a cold. You don't need them right.

[00:35:05] But you ain't got it. That's different. We paid a price to get it. Now when you get it we want you to do some with it.

[00:35:12] Yo MBA yo B.A. Yo peace deal E.D. Deo NFL we want you to do some with it.

[00:35:24] But be prepared as much as you can. That means young people go to class.

[00:35:29] People be skipping my class go into the movement.

[00:35:32] You ain't got no none eyes and you shouldn't be an activist already but I'm saying study first or at the same time please know what you doing. Please be informed of its history. Don't just keep repeating stuff because you don't know that there's some folks who came before you who say it's some similar stuff. Know what they say. So you can be armed. Black Lives Matter is important snicker was a version before then right. Ella Baker said you should have a movement that doesn't have one appointed leader but multiple sites of opposition. GRAEME BLACK LIVES MATTER is so important but they have to dance. They had antecedents and you should know them even as you understand how beautiful and brilliant black lives matter has been in challenging some old fogleyism and so Martin Luther King Junior was prepared and we should be prepared to study even when they were part of the movement. They had to study the 10 principles of nonviolence they had to know what would they were go do they have to practice you talking about practice not to gain but practice. Shout out to the NBA fans who know Allen Iverson. Don't worry I know you don't know. I got little nuggets along the way for various constituencies. Not the game practice. So. So you got to practice.

[00:36:51] Dr. King said somebody calling you a nigger you got to know what that feels like. I got to put you right there so you can take the heat when you're trying to oppose the vicious dictates of apartheid in America. But you got to be prepared. You got to it. You got to read in some folk be asking me Young for why you use them big words that I don't understand.

[00:37:12] Look it up Negro what do you mean like that.

[00:37:17] And but what what are you talking about. My mama told me you don't understand. Look it up. Go to the library. What some people say. What Eliza Barrett. You better go and pick him up. I was in the lab today.

[00:37:33] I love that library. I love the smell of books. I can read Kindle but I. I like to touch books. I like to. I like to feel the pepper risks. I like to see the fraying decay pages yellowed by years of repeated action. I like to see books that I live in.

[00:37:55] I like to browse looking for one thing and discover something altogether different. Like some of y'all found yo me you looking for one thing and discovered something else. I wasn't even looking you up. Looking at one o eight point seven one seventy six point two.

[00:38:16] That ain't that local dial on your station for our indie music could be social science or philosophy. You looking at one thing and found something else. And so the beauty of that knowledge is that you've got to study my Bible tells me to show yourself approved a work person the work man and work woman approve. But but but you got study so you can be informed about. What what came before you.

[00:38:45] What you're about to do what you're about to embark on the intelligence of those who preceded you and their stratagems and their activism you ought to know that I tell them kids you've got to come to class they're and you've got to study and when I got you in that class I argue with you and argue with myself and I want you to argue with me so we can come up with some serious sense so we can look at what we're looking at and look at the historical trajectory and the moral deposits made by preceding figures who have given us a sense of inspiration or to study the analytical prism through which they view the landscape of American life study is important I'm teaching the class now on black writers own whiteness as a seminar and in a sociology class on B and C. Don't judge me. Don't judge an you know people think well we're gonna go open in just third you know

[00:39:53] That ain't what we doing we study in serious intersectional feminism we're studying conceptions of black identity we're studying when she went to the Super Bowl like dressed like a black panther to challenge white supremacy at its heart that's what we studying then we get some I've been dreaming okay maybe his drinking my last the glass by less than the last surf board that's where another constituency that has nothing to do with most of you they said I got 20 minutes left I'm lying they say at five but I might take about 10.

[00:40:36] Don't get mad. Can I give 10 more minutes. Can I had it.

[00:40:40] Then I will get to my boy. Oh that's so ridiculous. I'm so ridiculous.

[00:40:46] I'm going to take 15 to him. Thank you. So what's interesting. Right. We can have fewer questions and then we can engage. Here's the point about Dr. King.

[00:40:53] Not only was he prepared but he was courageous. Some of us ain't even courageous

[00:41:05] And in order to be courageous you just got to be human and it don't mean you ain't scared. It means despite being scared you do what you gotta do right. I mean Dr. King dealt with it by gallows humor.

[00:41:26] In the midst Can you imagine every day of his life somebody trying to kill him. He wasn't trying to steal none from nobody he wouldn't try and take things from people that didn't belong. Damn

[00:41:41] He said I'm tired of marching for something that should have been mine at birth but he had to keep on doing it.

[00:41:53] And all the white brothers and sisters who say now why can't you be like Dr. King.

[00:42:00] Oh you don't know what you really say.

[00:42:04] You know what they think is be nice.

[00:42:07] Sit down Biyombo another constituency but this man every day of his life the society that now has a national holiday for him after considerable strategy and coercion from his widow to Stevie Wonder to John Conyers and to conscientious Americans Ronald Reagan when he signed the legislation said we don't know if he's a communist but I guess we'll know in 20 some odd years.

[00:42:40] Now there you go again.

[00:42:44] Every day of his life the white America that now loves to call his name to be insulted if you're white here and you didn't mean to I understand and you know I don't know what I'm talking about I ain't on my yell but really of sorta kinda maybe in the sense that the nation is us and our will is articulated here even if we disagree.

[00:43:10] And so many white people wanted to stop him in his tracks every day of his life without bodyguards. He went on the front line and he told the truth to America. He was courageous not a president in the White House even the first black president who had bodyguards but couldn't always tell the truth to white America. And so and so here he did daily what what is so impossible for most most of us to imagine at the end of his life. He didn't like to be in a room that had no windows that had windows because he wondered who would kill him. He had horrible cases of hiccups bouts where he hit up so bad and then he got up and spoke flawlessly and sat back down in the hiccup. His doctor had prescribed him medicine for clinical depression. And yet those pills stopped working so they recommended drink for the liquor everything I mean a gin. Don't judge him.

[00:44:14] What did you do to him to make him and his body react so violently when they did an autopsy of his body. They said this 39 year old man had the heart of a 65 year old man. The stress was so deep. Don't romanticize what he did and don't let yourself off the hook.

[00:44:31] Every day of his life he stood against the forces and powers and principalities and spoke truth. He had more than a dream. He had an understanding of the nightmare that black people had to endure and he stood for them. He stood against the war in Vietnam when it wasn't popular. He was courageous. We had the first black president an extraordinary man. But but but at some levels body guards and secret service defending you and used people can't tell white America the truth.

[00:45:06] I know why you want to get elected I get that didn't you want to get re-elected I got that but after you get re-elected what you do in this.

[00:45:15] And I love Obama. I love I love I wish he was back now.

[00:45:22] Somebody who knows more than 25 words somebody who doesn't stand every morning to excrete the feces of moral depravity in a nation he has turned into a psychic commode through tweets Piggly said you question this man who had the job before you his intelligence and his American citizenship.

[00:46:00] You said he wasn't basically even worthy of being president because you and your birther ideology denied him legitimacy as a human being.

[00:46:12] And America turned around and elected that man president. So in think in case you think you ain't complicit in that your silence. We are.

[00:46:22] And so and so what I want to say to you then is that this man was courageous I think. But one more point live after this. But this man was courageous said things that should be said. I know we defend Obama my God.

[00:46:34] White people would have beat him up had he talked about race they beat him up anyway if they go and beat you up say what you got to say.

[00:46:43] I wish Obama would've come out to White House some time just mad his anger translator. You don't mind do you.

[00:46:53] He up there that last speech the one before the last one he gave state of the Union and he says I have no more races to run into white. And then the Republicans started clapping. Yes yes of course. He said that's because I can beat it twice already. I mean what you all right. He was nice would it. Can you imagine. He said look I don't show twice what you want for me. I wish they came out to White House and terry cloth robe was a Magic Johnson pull up socks and a gold grill in his mouth and a skull cap all. This White House living in public housing

[00:48:04] Finally just my last point. You've got to tell the truth.

[00:48:11] Be prepared. Be courageous and be truthful. Most white folks don't want to hear the truth. Start there. OK. How good they are.

[00:48:21] Beautiful lovely young and old tonight here they want to hear it but most of white America can't hear it the collective entity known as White America.

[00:48:34] And there is resentment feel your blood now boiling in your veins when I dare with unmitigated this maybe temerity when I dare collect you as a group.

[00:48:46] Wait a minute he's not looking at me as an individual. Welcome to the.

[00:48:54] Will we be known about what that is. But you don't be and then. But how dare I lump you together as White America. How dare you. There are strata and divisions that constitute the

enormous and fecund difference in divergence that we are. As America we're not white under one rubric. I get it but I'm saying you constitute such a political force white America doesn't really have the trolls cause cause you know here's a president talking about he wants to be politically incorrect most white people can't take the politically incorrect truth of black America. Trust me it would hurt your feelings.

[00:49:34] You can't even take the stuff we've been saying. Nicely white here is white in a sense white anger go Copernican ain't doing Cameron again doing nothing but taking a knee and you act like he is a fag.

[00:49:54] He called the cracker rock prissy out that right wing big autocracy that rules and reigns and tyrannized as so much of the imagination of white brothers and sisters many white Americans can't hear the truth. The truth is that that white privilege operates in so many different ways. One of the privileges is not to understand you got privilege and to be mad at it and one of those privileges is to deny your innocence and another

[00:50:31] Form of their privileges is to not to understand that you will do it on a daily basis and that even though you work out a lot of people work hard but they can get where you at the same people who benefited from affirmative action in World War 2 the G.I. Bill gave your points on a test to go to school money for a house and access to education that's affirmative action Doc Reid Ira Katz Nelson's book When Affirmative Action was white.

[00:51:04] So many white Americans came here that how dare you. They get up in the room they leave I go Good give lectures and I'm a funny Negro. I say things to try to make white people feel a little bit better. I try to give the castor oil with honey self-deprecating humor and they still be mad because I have called whiteness with my own imagination what it is to even say white is to offend some people to be caught by a group name is to offend so politically incorrect speech you ain't trying to hear that because you can't even stand the rappers we get.

[00:51:40] And then when Eminem gives it to you you think that's the first time a rapper say it's I'm smart.

[00:51:47] I love Eminem but are you kidding me. Why you've been homie Jeezy and Nas and Tupac. To Fox said just the other day I got lynched by some crooked cops. And to this day they're saying cops on the beat get major pay but when I get my check they take in tax out so we pay the cops not the blacks out.

[00:52:10] Most have said you can laugh and criticize Michael Jackson if you want to. Woody Allen molested and married his stepdaughter. Same as kicking dirt on Michael's name show Woody Ensign. Yet the playoff game. Now sit back and think about that would they get the team get the same treatment if the name was Woody black. OJ acquitted by a jury of his peers they've been messing with their brother for the last 20 years. Is it fair is it equals a justice at right. Do we do the same thing as the defendants face as white white boys doing as well as success.

[00:52:32] I start doing it well a suspect they say they want you successful but then they make it stressful. You start keeping pace.

[00:52:38] They start changing up the tempo Where you been and so it's hard for white brothers and sisters to hear the truth.

[00:52:50] The unmitigated truth as we see it doesn't mean we're perfect. It just means we got a perspective that a lot of white folk don't want to hear Obama understood that therefore he went about systematically trying to obscure that truth and at the same time simultaneously insulting black people unnecessarily and got time to break dead now tell the truth we've got to tell the truth how we as black people have been complicit in forms of oppression to

[00:53:18] Same black folk read the Bible about what white folks can say into us I'm almost done turn around and then beat up on gay people.

[00:53:28] What's he doing down. I ain't been to no black church.

[00:53:31] It turns out Gates has only funny money.

[00:53:40] They don't want his change.

[00:53:42] Bring them big bills in what way.

[00:53:46] What is the homophobia. Black people about homophobia is across the board. We ain't the most homophobic but it is striking that we are homophobic. We we know when I was growing up we knew who was gay in the choir. We knew we weren't putting him out because we didn't want to let Noel song leader no dog.

[00:54:07] I'm not saying straight people came saying I'm just saying I'm just saying we knew who the gay ushers were who the gay preachers are you gonna be retroactively homophobic when you discover somebody is gay.

[00:54:23] Had I known you were gay I would have turned down the gift you gave me that got me through college. How ignorant is that. You read in the same Bible you go on quote the Bible you're quoting the Bible you quoting the Bible

[00:54:41] To justify and legitimate gay people being damned by God and at the same time you have no sense of irony about rejecting it when it says you ought to be a slave and trying to send nobody out.

[00:54:58] But I'm just saying we get so wrapped up with black people you so deeply ensconced in the literary literal interpretation of a Bible you say. So you want to say but that's what the words say the word says slaves obey your master children obey your

[00:55:14] Parents and and women obey your husband. And if you that one dude you've got it made you a slave master a husband and a daddy. That patriarchal lands distort the Bible open it up.

[00:55:36] So I'm saying if you gonna be black are you gonna be mad at gay people or women it's still some people think women should preach. If it weren't for the women you wouldn't even know who Jesus is

[00:55:47] You and him know I'm almost done.

[00:55:51] You wouldn't even know because the women were hard to cross.

[00:55:55] The men were like Look I don't even know him. Oh no hey you know that dude. I think he's Puerto Rican fighting keys.

[00:56:07] We don't cut him off for one for the women. You wouldn't even know nothing about the word because they stuck around

[00:56:24] You like Jesus met the woman at the well ask for some water.

[00:56:28] He ain't giving no theological lesson but you know what no black woman because he said we're your husband. You know the six of us say you tell me you Jesus

[00:56:40] What did they get you.

[00:56:41] I've been looking for him for 50 I'm almost done.

[00:56:55] Be prepared be courageous be truthful and as I finish you and I together must understand that we must be loving know what I mean by that and I'm done.

[00:57:18] Levin don't mean that you soft that means that you understand that you flow we flow they flow we all flow.

[00:57:27] But at the same time let's not draw no false equivalencies between people to be loving don't mean to be blind or incapable of understanding it simply means we will use the force of righteousness to overcome evil.

[00:57:41] Now when you've got a guy trying to make a false equivalence between tiki torch carrying will cough young cough white young man and skipper and Black Lives Matter. You trippin. You're

dumb. You're proud to be unmolested by enlightened men. Here's a guy who has to grab it bragging about grabbing. A woman. Harvey Weinstein by himself Weinstein name by himself.

[00:58:11] We got a predator in the White House 40 women got cases on him of accusing him. Then he tried to fall back on rap music to justify it.

[00:58:22] Well that's the rapper we don't grab big he said.

[00:58:28] Some say that X makes the sex pick a killer. Make me look you from your deck to your back DNA. He said if it's all right with you we're loving. I'm.

[00:58:40] I'm loosely quoting their.

[00:58:47] But he's asking permission if it's all right with you.

[00:58:54] Here.

[00:58:54] Grab an. Learn something from black men. You ain't got to grab it. Call it

[00:59:06] Sorry. Some stereotypes. Yes a real fear. Okay.

[00:59:20] I'm in church. That's where it started. That's why we line each other. I'm in church a lot of kids. And going on in church deacon board and elders and preachers. Don't make me tell the truth up in here tonight.

[00:59:35] Don't you act shocked Bellamy and by saying this we have to be loving because love is the force that will transform us. Love is the power that will enable us to come together to challenge the oppression we see and that love finally will be the force to transform not only black leadership for the 21st century but to make America great again.

[01:00:08] How do we want to make it great again.

[01:00:12] That is the camera in it. I love you brother. I don't know if you like standard a word. Rolling up on me like that's. So

[01:00:33] Here we are make America great again win not win white supremacy rule not win. No black folk were on TV no Latinos were on TV no Asian brothers and sisters on TV no people representing themselves as agents of their own desire. Being excluded from school being locked out of opportunities that's not when America was great. Make a Graham

[01:00:56] What do what did Langston Hughes say America never was America to me so make it great again like the founding fathers dreamt it.

[01:01:04] Never been the case we've got to keep striving for it.

[01:01:08] The Founding Mothers The Founding Brothers the founding enslaved and as and therefore we must all come together to make America great. We have to be willing to be self-critical self sacrificial to understand that this nation is great when all of us join together.

[01:01:24] E pluribus unum out of many one. And if we all come together in a multicultural multiracial multi generational multi gendered multi sexual democracy then America will be great again for the first time.

[01:01:40] And when is a great again for the first time we can truly sing the national anthem and stand up and wave that flag.

[01:02:27] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.