

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

Hi guys, it's Barry with a really exciting announcement for you.

As listeners of the show will know, one of the reasons that this exists in the first place is to embody and promote honest, frank conversations and good faith debates, both of which feel increasingly rare in our polarized country.

That is why I'm so excited to announce that the Free Press, along with FIRE, the nation's leading defender of free speech rights, are hosting a live debate on a very sexy and contentious subject on Wednesday, September 13th at 7 p.m. at the historic Ace Theatre in downtown Los Angeles.

The proposition? The sexual revolution has failed.

Arguing for the proposition is co-host of the podcast Redscare, Anacachian, and author of the case against the sexual revolution, Louise Perry.

They're going to be facing off against musician and producer Grimes, and writer and co-host of the podcast A Special Place in Hell, Sarah Hader.

I'm going to be the moderator, and I couldn't be more excited.

This is going to be an amazing night.

It's a chance to meet other people in the real world

who also like thinking for themselves and who listen to this show.

You can get your tickets now by going to [thefp.com backslash debates](https://thefp.com/backslash/debates).

Again, that's [thefp.com slash debates](https://thefp.com/slash/debates).

I can't wait to meet some of you guys in person.

And now, here's the show.

I'm Barry Weiss, and this is Honestly.

If you've been listening to this show for the past few months, maybe even since the 2022 midterms, the red wave that wasn't, you probably think I sound like something of a broken record when it comes to my advice for politicians today.

Again and again, I've bored myself by saying on this show the following thing.

Elections right now are Republicans to lose.

Biden's approval numbers are low.

They're like 40%, which is lower than every president at this stage of their term over the last 75 years, other than Jimmy Carter, of course, who went on to lose his bid for a second term anyway.

And Biden's not the only problem.

People are looking at the state of blue cities in this country, and they're alarmed by what they're seeing.

So given all this, it seems to me that what Republicans need to do is just stand still and be normal.

Talk about education, talk about crime, talk about the economy, and you'll win.

Instead, the GOP these days often seems more focused on books about gay penguins with two moms and Bud Light.

So when former Texas congressman Will Hurd announced he was running for president last month, I thought, here it is, at long last a normal Republican.

And not just normal, one with a really impressive pedigree and reputation.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

Here's a Republican who hasn't been to need to Trump,  
a Republican who's dedicated his life to national service,  
one who is sensible, sober, and respected for his bipartisanship.  
The kind of candidate that might set your heart aflutter  
if you count yourself among the legions of the sane in this country.  
So why is Will Hurd polling at 0.1%?

Has my advice over the last few months been totally misguided?  
Is the Republican Party or the country just too far changed at this point  
for someone like Will Hurd to catch fire?

On today's episode, I ask him.

Hurd spent nearly a decade as an undercover operative for the CIA,  
in other words, as a spy, in places like Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India  
during the height of the war on terror.

In 2010, he left the agency to start his political career,  
and in 2014, he was elected to Congress in Texas.

For three consecutive terms, Hurd represented one of Texas's most sprawling districts,  
a district that happens to be two-thirds Latino,  
and covers much of the border with Mexico.

In a profile I've heard in the Atlantic last year,  
appropriately titled Revenge of the Normal Republicans,  
the reporter, Tim Alberta, wrote this.

Will Hurd knows that a leader can't emerge without a movement,  
and a movement manifests only with the inspiration of a leader.

He knows also that some people view him as uniquely qualified to meet this moment,  
a young, robust, eloquent man of mixed race, and complete devotion to country.

Someone whose life is a testament to nuance and empathy and reconciliation.

What Hurd doesn't know is whether America is ready to buy what he's selling.

On today's episode, are Republicans and Americans  
ready to buy what Will Hurd is selling, or has that ship simply sailed?

That and more after the break.

Stay with us.

You hear that sound?

That's the sound of a sale you're missing out on,  
because you're not selling on Shopify.

And what does it sound like with Shopify?

That's much better.

Shopify is the commerce platform that's revolutionizing millions of businesses worldwide,  
no matter what you're selling.

And I have been to the ends of the internet,  
so I actually don't want to know what you're selling.

Shopify is the only tool you need to start,  
run, and grow your business without the struggle.

Shopify puts you in control of every sales channel,

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

whether you use its in-person POS system, or its all-in-one e-commerce platform.

No matter how big you want your business to grow,  
Shopify gives you everything you need to take control  
and to take your business to the next level.

Sign up for a \$1 per month trial period at [Shopify.com](https://Shopify.com) slash honestly, all lowercase.

That's [Shopify.com](https://Shopify.com) slash honestly to take your business to the next level today.

[Shopify.com](https://Shopify.com) slash honestly.

Will Hurd, welcome to Honestly.

Oh my god, I'm so excited to be here.

Thanks for having me on.

So excited to have you.

I'm sure the question that most people ask you these days,  
and I see you've been making the rounds on cable,  
is why are you running for president?

Which I will get to, and mine is a little bit more like,

why the hell in God's name are you running for president as a sane person?

But I wanted to start with what seems like the origins of your political journey,  
and that takes us back to 2008 in Afghanistan.

Tell us what you were doing there, and what happened there that so stuck with you  
and eventually propelled you into a career in politics.

I remember that day like it was yesterday.

I was the head of the undercover operations at our station in Kabul, Afghanistan,  
and at 3 a.m. that morning, a bomb went off in front of our embassy, killed some of our local guards,  
took out a section of our protective wall,

and my unit was responsible for trying to figure out what happened,

and we conducted a couple dozen operations in a very short period of time.

That night, we had a Hipsi Codell,

the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Congressional Delegation.

These are the people that oversee our intelligence services,

and our standard operating procedure was business casual, I'm in tactical gear,

when I was overseas I had a long bushy beard, it's funny, all my political team always asked me,  
do you have pictures from your time in the CIA?

And I'm like, I don't think people want to see me looking like a Taliban, you know.

And I go into this briefing, and I overhear one of these members of Congress say,  
is the CIA going to cut this briefing short so we can get to the bazaar to buy rugs?

I'm annoyed, but we get in the briefing.

And the senior most people in this group who had been on the House Permanent Select Committee  
for Intelligence for over six years asked a question, again, this is 2008,

why was Iran not supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan the way Iran was supporting other  
groups in Iraq? Now, for your sophisticated audience and listeners, you know, they know  
that's a pretty crummy question, but I start explaining the Sunni-Shia divide,

and he raises his hand and he says, Will, what's the difference between a Sunni and a Shia?

And I'm thinking this guy's getting ready to make a really inappropriate joke,

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

and who am I to deny him this opportunity?

And I said, I don't know, Congressman, what's the difference?

And I'm getting ready to go.

His face goes bright red, didn't know that difference in Islam.

And for me, it's okay for my big brother to not know that difference, because he sells cable in our hometown of San Antonio.

But for an individual who is making decisions on sending our brothers and sisters and spouses to places like Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, unacceptable, for someone who's making decisions on how to spend billions of our hard-earned taxpayer dollars, unacceptable.

And I literally, at that moment, we're in a skiff, which is a secure environment.

I push my chair back. I walk out of the skiff.

And I call this dude who, a year and a half earlier, had put the idea in my head to run for Congress.

And right then and there, I decided to move back to my hometown and run for Congress.

So that's how I got involved in politics.

It started with me getting pissed off.

What did that moment, Will, reveal to you about the people who were running the country that you had spent at this point years risking your life in service for?

So I joined the CIA right after undergrad.

I started when I was 22.

I did two years at what I used to call the super secret CIA training facility called The Farm.

Now it's on Google Maps.

I wish that was a joke.

I did two years in India, two years in Pakistan.

I did some interagency work for two years in New York City working with NYPD and customs.

And then I did the year and a half in Afghanistan.

And my friends and I, we put ourselves in harm's way.

We were shot at, blown up.

People tried to chase us.

People tried to overrun the embassies we were at.

And for me, these elected officials were countering what my friends and colleagues and I were putting ourselves in harm's way in order to protect.

I was frustrated by that.

And my mother, may she rest in peace,

always said, you're either part of the problem or part of the solution.

And I left a job that I really loved and I left a job that I was really good at

in order to do something that folks thought I had absolutely no chance in accomplishing.

A lot of people look back at that time in American history,

I mean recent American history and look especially at those wars that you were involved in Iraq, Afghanistan, and they have come away with a very particular takeaway, which is those wars were a mistake.

They are completely disenchanted with American foreign policy and they're extremely disenchanted with institutions like the CIA.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

How did your service in the CIA, especially during those wars, change or inform your worldview and politics?

I was in on September 11th.

So let me go back even further, August of 2001.

I was working with the folks in the Counterterrorism Center.

In August of 2001, folks involved in counterterrorism knew and understand who Al Qaeda was and who Osama bin Laden was.

He had not become a household name.

So on September 11th, when the second plane hit the World Trade Center, all of us involved knew exactly what it was because in August, people were sleeping in their cars, people were sleeping at their desks because they're like something's going on that we can't determine.

Something big is possibly going to happen.

We can't figure it out.

This is when that phrase chatter, intelligence chatter came into our lexicon.

And Will, how old were you at the time?

I was 23.

So this is like your first job?

This is my first job.

This is my first.

Right.

Now, my first job technically was selling beauty products from my mom and dad who had a beauty supply.

So we can get in that another time.

But this was the first job out of undergrad.

And so on September 11th, the second plane hit, we all knew this was the thing.

On September 12th, I was the fourth employee in the unit that ended up prosecuting the war in Afghanistan.

At that time, the number of real threats to our homeland was significant.

Nobody on September 12th would have said that it would be more than 20 years and we would not suffer a similar attack on our homeland because of the number of threats.

And the reason we haven't is because the men and women in our diplomatic corps, our intelligence services, federal law enforcement, and military were operating as if it was September 12th.

So that is the organization's understanding.

Now, when it comes to mistakes made in Afghanistan, mistakes made in Iraq, these were political decisions that were bad decisions in Afghanistan.

We should not have pulled out.

We had such a small footprint that we could have continued to allow the country to grow and ultimately support themselves.

Millions of girls and women were able to go to school in Afghanistan because of our support.

And ultimately, when we left, the only people that were protesting were those girls and women that we helped be able to get in the school.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

So mistakes were made.

There's no question about it.

But ultimately, the United States of America has created an international order that benefits us. And when we don't protect that international order, that hurts us.

Okay, I want to get to your views about foreign policy in a little bit and how they diverge from what I think is becoming the consensus view among the GOP, which is a much more isolationist position.

I want to give listeners a little bit more of a sense of your story.

So you have this sort of pivotal moment in 2008 with these moronic members of Congress.

You decide you're going to run for office.

In 2010, you leave the CIA after nearly a decade and you decide to run in Texas.

You lose that time.

But then you run again in 2014.

And this time you win, defeating the incumbent.

How did a black Republican win in a two-thirds Latino district in Texas?

Why do you think you won that race?

Real simple.

I showed up.

So the first race in 2010, I moved back to my hometown that I hadn't lived in in 15 years.

This was a district that was 29 counties, two time zones, 820 miles of the border.

It took 10 and a half hours to drive across the district at 80 miles an hour,

which was the speed limit in most of the district.

And when I showed up in 2009 to the GOP headquarters in San Antonio, Texas,

this striking woman approaches me and says, excuse me, sir, are you lost?

I said, no, ma'am, I'm here to run for Congress.

And she literally pats me on my shoulder and says, that's nice and walks away.

And now that woman ended up becoming my wife and one of my most important political supporters at the time.

But I won the first round.

I won by 900 votes against a self-under.

And I lost a runoff by 700 votes, which is not a lot of votes.

And one, because I made a tactical error.

And that tactical error was the way you win campaigns is you ID your voters, turn them out.

That's it.

That's the formula.

ID your voters, turn them out.

But you got to know who your voters are.

You got to have the mechanics in order to turn them out.

And I thought I wasn't going to run again.

And in 2014, I did.

And I won despite the Tea Party supported the other guy.

He was a former member of Congress.

He was a very rich guy, self-under.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

The country club Republicans were supporting my opponent.  
At this point, Ted Cruz was at the height of his power.  
He was supporting my opponent.  
And we still won.  
Because I showed up to places that people didn't expect me.  
I talked about shit.  
They cared.  
Pardon my language.  
I talked about things they cared about.  
And that's why I won.  
And then I won reelection because all those things I said I was going to do in that first election, I talked about in my second election to say, hey, here's what we did about it, right?  
So show up, talk about things people care about.  
And here's what I've learned.  
There is way more unites us than divides us as a country.  
And we are better together.  
And when you focus on that, people appreciate it.  
Because ultimately, if every Republican in my district voted for me, I would still lose.  
I had to get independence.  
I had to get Democrats.  
And this was a seat that went back and forth Republican Democrat for a decade.  
And I was the first to hold it for multiple cycles.  
OK, so you're elected in 2014, again in 2016, again in 2018.  
And during those seven years in office, you have a reputation as a workhorse, as a moderate, and as someone who is deeply committed to bipartisanship, which I want to talk about a little more later.  
So if we kind of step back and we look at your life, right, you're the recipient of a full scholarship to Texas A&M, where you were also elected president of the student body.  
You have almost a decade in the CIA.  
You have seven years in Congress.  
You work across the aisle.  
You almost have like a caricature of the kind of pedigree and character that we think of as being a winning candidate.  
So on the one hand, I look at that and say, of course, Will Hurd is going to run for president.  
But this is 2023.  
And we have left the world of textbook candidates very far behind.  
The world we live in is one in which Trump, despite three indictments so far and two impeachments, is polling today at 53%.  
And Will Hurd, the guy with that pedigree I just mentioned, you're at 0.1%.  
There are eight candidates between you and Donald Trump.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

So I guess the obvious question here is, what is your strategy for winning the Republican primary? Sure. I have gotten 1% in two national polls and one state poll. I'm only one poll away from hitting that. And I recognize the poll position that Donald Trump is in. Donald Trump is running for president in order to stay out of prison. And the country needs someone who's going to articulate a vision and who's not afraid of Donald Trump. And when you look at some of the things that I've said, Donald Trump reacts because he doesn't want my brand of conservatism to start growing. So we live in complicated times and we need common sense. And the number of people that dislike Donald Trump is greater than the number of people that do. And it's about activating them and getting them to turn out to vote. It's also when you look at a place like New Hampshire, 40% of the electorate in New Hampshire are unaffiliated. So they're registered as neither Republican or Democrat. These are folks that are going to vote in the Republican primary and they're not going to do what Democrats did in Pennsylvania and vote for the biggest nut so that the Democrat had a better choice. Unaffiliated voters in New Hampshire are going to vote for who they think the best candidate is. So presidential election is not one election. It's 57 different elections. And when you look state by state, the polling is a little bit different. And we always know that the closer you get to an election, the race tightens up. Donald Trump's going to get 30% of the Republican primary vote solid no matter what happens. But just because he has this overwhelming advantage doesn't mean all of us should throw up our hands and give in. I'm a startup. I'm living off the land and the way startups work and you know something about this, product market fit. It is knowing who your customers are and who your customers aren't and building so that you can scale. So my goal is, yes, I need to get that 1% and one more national poll so I can get on the debate stage. I'm not at 40,000 donors, but I'm really close. And I hope, you know, folks that are listening to you want to see someone like me on the debate stage and go to [herd4america.com](http://herd4america.com) and donate at least \$1



## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

to have my views and my perspective on that stage.

And then you start grinding in a place like New Hampshire in those early states.

It's hard.

It's hard, but America deserves a sane conservative party and I'm going to fight for it.

Okay, talk about startups and sort of finding the product market fit.

Who is the market, right?

The New York Times wrote a profile of you titled

On the Road with Will Heard,

the bipartisan candidate in search of a base.

I thought it was a good headline because, you know, who is the Will Heard base?

I know a lot of people who are probably listening to this saying, never heard of this guy.

He sounds great.

You know, what does the Will Heard voter look like?

Who is your base?

Because the typical conventional wisdom is, you know, someone with your kind of message could maybe win in a general,

but in a primary, you need to appeal to sort of like the hardcore and that's just not your message.

So who is the Will Heard voter?

So only 23% of Americans vote in primaries.

That's split halfway down Republicans and Democrats.

The other 77% are sick and tired of the options.

They think everybody is a bunch of jokers and they don't participate.

So a Will Heard voter is someone who is disaffected with both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party and want to see something different

and who have maybe almost given up and said, you know, I'm sick and tired of everyone.

Within the Republican Party,

it's the classic folks that are not going to vote for Donald Trump, that are not going to vote for a clone of Donald Trump.

And then there's another group of people that voted for Donald Trump twice who liked Donald Trump, but who recognizes he has way too much baggage and that if he's the GOP nominee, we're willingly giving four years to Joe Biden.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

And within that group of people,  
folks that understand America's role  
in the rest of the world still matters.  
And then broader the people that believe  
in personal responsibility, that believe in service.  
The fact that I'm the only candidate  
who has actually served in a conflict zone  
and who's been shot at or blown up.  
You know, this used to be normal.  
Everybody used to have that.  
The fact that I'm the last one  
on both the Republican and Democratic side  
is pretty shocking.  
So that is who those voters are.  
And here's what's going to happen.  
I was block walking into Hampshire last weekend  
and somebody asked me, they're like,  
is Donald Trump running again?  
What?  
This is a true story.  
Did this person not have an internet connection?  
This is a person who worked in tech.  
His wife works in tech.  
He had three little kids.  
I caught them on the way to the pool.  
It was a beautiful day outside  
and he's not following politics like it's a sport.  
So ultimately, with Ron DeSantis faltering,  
if your name is not Donald Trump on the Republican side,  
your chances are almost about equal  
because people are looking for  
who can they potentially merge their support to.  
Right.  
They need to get behind someone that's not Trump  
and your bet is that it should be you.  
100%.  
Your idealistic position is that people want sanity.  
They want normalcy.  
They want to not follow politics  
like it's blood sport and get their life back.  
And they want politics to be boring again  
so that they can focus on what matters in their life.  
Your slogan or one of your slogans

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

is we need to speak to the middle, not the edges.  
And I guess I wonder when I hear that,  
if that's actually true,  
because as much as I want to believe that that's true,  
I see people lusting after the extremes,  
lusting after the sort of hard stuff being turned off  
by even the word moderate.  
So like, what are you seeing in your experience  
that actually makes you think that that's true  
of what Americans want right now?  
Because that's how a black Republican got elected  
in a 72% Latino district, right?  
I've seen it on the ground.  
I've seen it in places that would never have believed,  
let alone see a black person, let alone a black Republican.  
And so when I'm out on the stump, right,  
when I'm out in places,  
it has gone from people not recognizing me  
to then people would walk by and whisper,  
good luck.  
And then now I'm on the plane and people stop  
and be like, hey, herd, we're behind you 100%,  
stick it to the man, right?  
And so on the ground, it is a different reflection  
than what you see in social media,  
what you see in cable news.  
And that's the thesis that we're testing.  
It's hard.  
Let me make this very clear.  
What I'm talking about doing is freaking hard.  
And it's changing people and it's getting people to say,  
hey, let's get back to that point  
when we believe in something bigger than ourselves.  
Because ultimately the reason we have to get our act together  
is I want to see this experiment last for another 247 years.  
We are dealing with a number of generational defining challenges  
that we're not prepared to deal with today.  
And this is not about the United States of America  
recognizing our best selves.  
We're in a race.  
We're in a new Cold War with the Chinese government.  
And this means we got to get our act together  
on artificial intelligence, quantum computing,

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

synthetic biology, dealing with the potential de-dialogization around the world.  
Our kids are having terrible scores.  
All of these things ultimately matter.  
Well, you're not just a moderate.  
You're also an unusually bipartisan lawmaker, which is the times put it in the understatement of the century puts you at odds with the party's current mood.  
When you were a congressman in DC, you hired multiple Democrats for key positions in your office.  
That's not all.  
You've supported legislation to end the 2019 government shutdown.  
You supported legislation to protect gay Americans from discrimination and to establish a national museum of the American Latino.  
You've also done things in recent years like attend a protest in Houston after the killing of George Floyd.  
You live streamed a road trip and town hall with Texas Democrat Beto O'Rourke.  
Maybe one of the most lightning rod Democrats that there are in the national stage.  
So given all of that and given many of your sort of positions on the specific issues, I want to ask, why are you a Republican?  
Why not a third party or why not a moderate Democrat?  
So I'm a Republican because I believe that America deserves a sane Republican party.  
I'm a Republican because I believe in a strong foreign policy.  
I believe that everybody should have equal opportunity.  
I believe that freedom leads to growth.  
Growth leads to progress.  
I believe these things.  
Now, I will recognize that there's a significant number of elected officials within my party that are counter to me, but I look at when people say the Republican party, what do they mean?  
Do they mean who is the avatar for the Republican party?  
And right now, that's probably Donald Trump.  
Do they mean the majority of the elected officials on the national level that reflect that?  
Do they mean whoever is the head of the RNC?  
For me, the Republican party is defined by people who are willing to vote for a Republican.  
And when you take that broad view, you get a different perspective.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

And so those are the kinds of folks that I'm activating.  
Those are the kinds of folks that I'm standing up for.  
Look, I was in Iowa a couple of weeks ago,  
and the press made a thing because I got booed for saying that.  
I saw that.  
Yeah, I said Donald Trump is not running for president  
to make America great again.  
Donald Trump is not running for president  
to represent the people that voted for him in 2016 and 2020.  
Donald Trump is running for president to stay out of prison.  
And look, I knew that was going to elicit booze,  
but there was applause in the crowd as well, too.  
And there were more people that set their hands in their lap  
that knew what I was saying was right.  
And we got to have people that are willing to be honest  
and speak the truth, even when it's uncomfortable  
or potentially unpopular.  
And so that's why I'm going to stay and defend  
and talk about the Republican party that I want to see  
and the Republican party I want to help envision  
by winning elections.  
And there's enough people out there.  
But why is saving the Republican party  
more important than winning?  
In other words, everything you just said,  
I could easily imagine someone like Governor Josh Shapiro  
in Pennsylvania saying,  
and given how unfavorable Biden's ratings are,  
why not run as a Democrat?  
I would have different issues and criticisms  
of being part of the Democratic party, right?  
I would still get attacked by the extreme edge.  
And so for me, this is the party I understand.  
This is the party I know.  
This is the party I grew up in.  
My 90-year-old black father always says,  
he's been a Republican since Lincoln freed us.  
So this is, for me, the vehicle by which  
I can continue to serve my country.  
And that's a decision I made.  
Okay, let's talk about your Trump strategy.  
While some candidates in the race  
are trying to sort of sidestep Trump,

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

pretend he's not really there,  
others like the vague Ramaswamy we just had on the podcast  
are defending Trump, even trying to out-Trump Trump.  
But very few are willing to attack him.  
You've been one of them.  
You've said, you just quoted what you said in Iowa,  
you've said Trump is a threat to national security,  
full stop period.  
You've called him a, quote,  
lawless, selfish, failed politician.  
You said a few days ago that you're the only Republican candidate  
that hasn't bent a knee to Trump.  
I would argue that Chris Christie  
is sort of doing something similar,  
and he's tied with the Santas right now in New Hampshire.  
And so the argument that I think most political strategists  
looking at this race would make is there's a slot for one anti-Trumper.  
There's a slot for one non-Trump person to go head to head with him.  
And if Chris Christie is sort of being that person,  
why is it going to be you instead of him?  
Sure. Well, first off, right,  
my argument that I've been that way since 2015,  
we all know that Chris Christie bent a knee to Donald Trump  
and was one of the first early on that gave him credibility.  
And he's addressed that and talked about that.  
I'm okay with a diversity of ideas  
and having a competition of ideas and having many voices.  
The governor of New Hampshire, Chris Anunu, said,  
by winter, there needs to be a consolidation of candidates.  
And I think that's accurate, and I think that's valid.  
So let's go out there and let's make some noise.  
Let's have some conversations.  
Let's do things differently.  
Let's have a strategy that hasn't been seen before.  
Let's ensure that product market works.  
And let's start growing the brand.  
My goal is not to peak next week.  
My goal is to peak between Thanksgiving and Christmas.  
That's the time necessary to build the organization  
and take the message to those voters.  
So look, I wish there was more people  
that were willing to criticize Donald Trump.  
I'm not a political scientist,

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

but I have a run and won a lot of elections.  
I've never heard of anybody winning an election  
by kissing the butt of their opponent or licking his boots.  
And so the fact that others in this race are doing that  
is mind-boggling to me.  
Oh, and by the way, clones don't win,  
especially when the original is in the race.  
So the strategy is not be afraid of Donald Trump,  
but also articulate a vision for the future.  
And here's the thing that makes me different.  
I have real-world experience on the front lines  
in the global war on terrorism.  
I understand our adversaries in a way that others don't.  
I have experience in almost every single domestic issue  
in my time in Congress,  
and then now I have experience in technology.  
I help build a cybersecurity company.  
I've been on the board  
of one of the most important AI companies in the world.  
I've been helping technology companies grow  
in markets they haven't been in before.  
So that mix of national security, domestic insights,  
and understanding of technology,  
there's nobody else in this race that is willing to do that.  
So that's the message that we're going to take to the streets.  
Okay, we're two weeks out from the first Republican debate.  
It's August 23rd.  
You still haven't qualified.  
You need 40,000 individual donors.  
How close are you?  
I'm real close based on our projections.  
We're going to hit it a few days before the actual debate,  
but we can't take our foot off the gas.  
I've been in the race at least amount of time.  
I have the lowest name ID,  
and I have the least amount of resources.  
But we are plugging away because this has to be done,  
and it's resonating with people.  
This is why I need people to go on to [herd4america.com](http://herd4america.com),  
give at least \$1 in order to make sure a person like me  
is on the debate stage so we can show that contrast.  
And then we go from there.  
Okay, but Will, on top of the need for 40,000 individual donors,

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

which hopefully you'll get to,  
you also won't sign the debate pledge.  
And correct me if I'm wrong,  
but I think it stipulates that every Republican on the debate stage  
has to pledge that they will support the ultimate Republican nominee.  
And you refuse because you're not going to pledge to vote for Donald Trump.  
So it sounds like even if you do get the donations,  
you still won't be on the debate stage.  
So help me understand what the path forward is for you  
because in order to get the name recognition,  
people have to see you.  
Sure. So first off, the debate pledge was created by Donald Trump  
in order to try to force fealty to him.  
And now he is some question about whether Donald Trump  
is going to participate in the debate.  
We haven't seen the actual pledge that hasn't been released  
and the RNC is calling it now a defeat Joe Biden pledge.  
And so the question becomes,  
let's force the debate about whether everyone's going to sign that or not  
and make sure that I'm on that stage.  
Because as of today, I think only one candidate has officially signed  
whatever the thing is that the RNC wants you to sign.  
So you don't really need to sign it to get on the debate stage.  
This might take away from what you're saying.  
Well, we're going to press the issue.  
Let's just put it that way.  
And this is why one of the reasons we need to hit all those requirements  
in order to force this.  
And the thing that I've learned,  
a lot of people that are part of the RNC are frustrated with this  
because this has never been done before.  
And ultimately, it was done at the request of Donald Trump.  
And now Donald Trump, he may or may not participate in the debate.  
And so there's a lot of questions about what's going to happen.  
I'm going to focus on what I can control.  
That is making sure we hit one more polling threshold  
and hit the individual donor before we get to that point.  
After the break,  
Will Hurd explains that computers and democracies have at least one thing in common.  
When they start to stall, it's time for a reboot.  
We'll be right back.  
This show is sponsored by BetterHelp.  
Sometimes we're faced with tough choices, and the path isn't always clear.



## **[Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President**

Whether you're dealing with decisions about your career, your relationships, or your next move, therapy can help you stay connected to what you value most so you can move forward with confidence and ease.

BetterHelp Therapy is entirely online, and it's designed to be convenient, flexible, and suited to your schedule.

To start, you fill out a brief questionnaire which matches you with a licensed person if it doesn't work out, you can switch therapists at any time for no additional charge.

Let therapy be your map with BetterHelp.

Visit [betterhelp.com slash honestly](https://www.betterhelp.com/honestly) today to get 10% off your first month.

That's BetterHelp, B-E-T-T-E-R-H-E-L-P dot com slash honestly.

If you want to get exactly your idea of a fun Saturday night, you need Indeed.

Indeed is the hiring partner you can count on to attract, interview, and hire all in one place.

Indeed is the only job site where you're guaranteed to find quality applications that meet your must-have requirements, or else you don't pay.

Instead of spending hours on multiple job sites,

hoping to find candidates with the right skills,

use Indeed to help you find talent quick

through tools such as instant match, assessments, and virtual interviews.

When you pay to post a job, instant match immediately shows you candidates whose resumes fit your description so you can hire faster.

You only pay for the applications that meet your hiring criteria.

Join more than three million businesses worldwide already using Indeed to hire great talent fast.

Start hiring now with a limited-time \$75 sponsored job credit to upgrade your post at [indeed.com slash honestly](https://www.indeed.com/honestly).

It's good for a limited time.

Visit [indeed.com slash honestly](https://www.indeed.com/honestly) and tell them you heard about it on the podcast.

[Indeed.com slash honestly](https://www.indeed.com/honestly).

Terms and conditions apply.

Cost per application pricing not available for everyone.

One of the ways that I sort of break down the Republican primary right now is into two buckets.

Those candidates who believe that we need reform

and the candidates who believe we need revolt.

A Nikki Haley and a Chris Christie would be reformers.

A Vivek Ramaswamy would be a revolt.

You, though, have a different R-word, one that is encapsulated in the title of your book, which is reboot, an American reboot.

What does an American reboot look like?

And what is it about a reboot that will be more successful than reform or revolt?

It's about getting back to those timeless principles that have got us to where we are today.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

When your computer's not doing something right,  
what do you do?

You reboot it.

You don't put a new operating system on it.

You make sure it gets back to its fresh instance of its operating system.

And that's what I talked about with an American reboot.

And it begins with this notion that way more unites us and divides us.

And I can go through so many issues that are super contentious,  
whether it's immigration, gun violence,

and talk about there is a place where 80% of Americans want to see things get done.

When you look at why people are frustrated with our institutions,

it's because our institutions are not providing a service that they say they're supposed to provide.

Let's take something as basic in the government.

Why does it take months to get your passport renewed?

That's something that should take minutes.

Why does it take a veteran months to get access to an appointment at the VA?

And then how are we going to tackle something like artificial intelligence,

which is going to upend every single industry, not in 10 years, but in two or three years?

So to me, the reboot is getting back to equal opportunity.

It's getting back to protecting people's individual rights to be themselves.

It's getting back to local control.

I don't want Joe Biden or Ron DeSantis telling people what they're supposed to be doing in Florida.  
Let the local entities be able to do that.

So those are those principles that are going to help us achieve our limitless potential.

Part of the reboot that you've talked about is making the GOP as you've put it look like America.

What do you mean by that?

Donald Trump is a loser.

The last time he won anything was in 2016.

He lost a house in 2018.

He lost a White House in the Senate in 2020.

And he prevented a red wave that everybody thought was going to happen from materializing in 2022.

Why was that?

Because he failed to grow the Republican Party into the three largest growing groups of voters.

Women with a college degree in the suburbs, black and brown communities,  
and people in the age of 35.

And so if the GOP doesn't start attracting voters from those groups,  
and it's real simple, right?

It's real simple.

Don't be a jerk, right?

Don't be a homophobe.

Don't be a racist.

Don't be all these things we learned when we were kids.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

And so that's what I'm talking about and making sure that we're more interested in fighting war criminals like Vladimir Putin than fighting my friends in the LGBTQ community. If we do that, we have a real opportunity because guess what? Independence and Democrats are sick and tired of where the Democratic Party is going. And that's the opportunity for us is to grow a party and to have not just win for two years, but to win for 12, 16 years, and have conservative thought and government for a long time. You're one of only 31 Republican black congressmen in American history. During your time in office, you were the only black Republican on the House floor. Why aren't there more black Republicans? Why aren't there more black Republican leaders? I mean, I have my answers, but I'm curious what yours are. It's coming, right? You know, you have now in the House, I think there's five or six, right? Hell is. So maybe I don't even know them all, right? If it wasn't for a guy like JC Watts, you wouldn't have Tim Scott. If you didn't have Tim Scott, you wouldn't have Mia Love from Utah. So part of this is we've been growing, and this is where I give Kevin McCarthy credit of working with candidates to ensure that they have the resources and the organization and the infrastructure in order to be competitive. And so I think there is a real opportunity, especially in the black community, because the Democratic Party has ignored the black community for a long time and taken them for granted. And so guess what? Black folks care about the same thing, putting food on the table, the roof over the head, and taking care of their kids and making sure that they can grow their business, that they have access to good-paying jobs, that they're getting educated. Like one of the issues on education, the school choice issue, is something that Republicans, this is the thing, it's a winning issue, right? Texas has done a longitudinal study on, I know you're familiar with it, a 20-year study showed that black and brown kids in charter schools, the achievement gap was eliminated with their white counterparts. That's why you have Democrat elected officials in places like Houston and Dallas that are super supportive of this. So let's focus on those kinds of things, and that makes this almost unstoppable in November if we're growing the brand in the largest growing groups of voters. You've written about your experience growing up with a black father and a white mother in San Antonio, Texas, and about some of the hate and bigotry you experienced as a result of that. And I guess I just wanted to ask how you think about the fact that many people associate your party with some of its racist and bigoted fringes, with people like Marjorie Taylor Greene and Steve King. And does it ever make you uncomfortable to sort of be swept up with that brand? Look, I'm the baby of three, and my parents met in LA and moved to San Antonio, Texas in 1971.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

They got married in 1970, moved to San Antonio in 1971.

And when it was time for them to buy a home, my dad was a traveling salesman.

He sold notions.

That's like an old-timey word for like threads and buttons and zippers and stuff like that.

We call it schmatas in the Jewish community, yes.

And so I'm gonna tell my dad that.

I'm gonna be like, dad, you know you were a schmatas salesman.

He's in the schmatas business, yeah, exactly.

And so my mom would go look at our house and they're like, oh, this is a great place.

And then she was like, okay, I gotta bring my husband by on the weekend to come see it.

And my dad would show up and they're like, ah, sorry, y'all.

We just sold that house, right?

And we lost my mother this year.

But the house my father still lives in, my mom and dad living for all of my life, was the only house that would sell to an interracial couple.

It wasn't where the best schools, it was basically in the boonies back then.

But guess what?

That didn't impact me.

I had a house filled with love.

I had amazing older brother and older sister, two parents that cared about me.

And 35 years later, their youngest son ended up representing that area, right?

That's what's amazing about America and how far we have come.

The super majority of the Republican party are not those things, are not racist, misogynist, all that stuff.

Folks like to put that label.

And it's because there are high profile people that do dumb things, right?

There's no question about that.

But when you take that definition of the party as people that will vote for a Republican, it looks very different.

And so it requires us that are running for office or that are in office

to make sure when somebody does something that is against the values and the ethos of the party, we need to speak up and not be afraid.

And so that's how I've always tried to be.

Will, you've said you want to reboot the Republican party in four ways.

One, you say the GOP needs to accept the fact that the 2020 election wasn't stolen.

It was lost.

Can't believe you have to say that.

Two, you say the party needs to stop peddling conspiracy theories like those that led to January 6th, which you call both an insurrection and an actual assault on democracy fomented by Donald Trump.

Three, you write that the GOP needs to broaden family values from its historical views on religion, marriage, and family structure to everyday issues faced by American families.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

And last, you say, quote, the Republican party must realign our actions based on our principles. Freedom enables opportunity.

Opportunity allows for growth and growth leads to progress.

I hear those four points and I am nodding along in agreement.

But how are you going to convince Republicans?

Almost a third of Americans believe that the 2020 election was stolen.

Many of your colleagues in Congress don't believe that the president was responsible in any way for January 6th.

And many of them just don't think that these are important things.

They're focused instead on issues like fighting Disney,

if you're Ron DeSantis or Drag Queen Brunches.

How do you convince people of these four points?

And that's why we lost to a dude who campaigned from his basement.

That's why when people were predicting,

Kevin McCarthy was going to have a plus 40 majority in the House and it came down to five.

It's because of those issues that we're not reasoning.

Let's just take this recent election in Ohio.

Most people in Ohio thought they were changing the state constitution

that for any future change you'd have to have 60% vote rather than just 50%.

And part of this was around an upcoming bill to codify abortion rights in Ohio.

And folks said this was going to pass and conservatives were super excited and it got trounced, right?

Like it was overwhelmingly beaten back and nobody expected it.

Nobody saw it coming.

And so part of this is the disconnect between the people we talk to in social media, traditional media, and even non-traditional media and where real people actually are.

And so how am I going to do that?

How am I going to take those four issues?

It's show up where people really are,

whether it's knocking on their door, talking on great podcasts,

on showing up in places they haven't been.

It's just harder to do than it has been in the past

because there's so many different channels that people are consuming information.

And so it's the ability to scale to those folks.

But here's the deal.

When you sit and talk to people and I tell people this,

nobody, those with tomato at me and says, oh, you're absolutely wrong.

Nobody says that.

Everybody shakes their head and they say, I agree with you.

But how are you going to get the next person?

I'm going to get the next person the same way I got you, right?

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

And that's talking to them and making sure my actions are reflective of my words.

The audio and the video have to match.

And so that's what we're going to do.

And the real question, and I will give this, is can I pull it off in time by winter, right?

And that's why I hope your listeners are going to help juice me too.

All right.

You say you're running on a platform, Will, of pragmatic idealism.

What the hell is that?

It sounds like an oxymoron to me.

Pragmatists are the opposite of idealists, at least in my experience.

So the idealism is how do we achieve the greatest outcome for the most people possible?

And pragmatism is to get to that point, you got to accept where you are today, right?

And so it's being harsh and honest about knowing where you stand, right?

Let's take me, for example, I know I'm a dark horse, right?

It's like I would be crazy if I came in here and said, oh, this is going to be easy.

It's going to be a slam dunk.

No, it's not.

Like me being a pragmatist is saying I'm a dark horse.

However, the idealist piece is that I know people want something different.

Two thirds of Americans do not want either Joe Biden or Donald Trump on the ballot.

Working down even further, it's seven out of 10 Democrats don't want Joe Biden.

Six out of 10 Republicans don't want Donald Trump, right?

Nobody wants this rematch from hell to actually happen.

And so that requires us to do something about it.

Here's the other thing I know.

People want to understand what should we be doing in Ukraine and how does it affect me?

65% of Americans think that AI is going to take their job, right?

And so the idealism is we can have unprecedented peace at a time.

That the Chinese government is trying to surpass us as a global superpower.

We can have safe communities at a time when half of our teenagers are afraid of getting shot in school.

We can have world-class education at a time that our kids have the worst scores in math, science, and reading in this century.

We can have a thriving economy at a time when new technologies like artificial intelligence are going to up in every industry.

That's what we're trying to get to, right?

And we got to accept where we are.

All right, let's talk about the issues.

Okay, let's go through your platform.

Let's start with foreign policy, which is kind of your bread and butter.

When you were in the CIA, one of your responsibilities as we learned was sort of briefing members of Congress on foreign intelligence.

And you said this experience taught you that they are, quote, morons.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

What are the most moronic people and ideas right now when it comes to foreign policy?

That Vladimir Putin is our friend and someone that we should support, right?

Donald Trump says that.

Ron DeSantis says that.

A lot of conservative media outlets support that.

It's absolutely ridiculous.

And here's why.

We have built an international order that benefits us.

If we do not support and defend the Ukrainians, then all of that will come crumbling down.

For 5% of the DoD budget, we are able to dismantle the entire Russian military without sending our son, daughters, and spouses.

If Ukraine does not beat the Russians, and when I say beat the Russians, for me, the goal is to push the Russians out of all of Ukraine.

Period, full stop.

I disagree with Joe Biden.

I disagree with Anthony Blinken.

They think it goes back to the way things were in February 22 when Russia invaded this most recent time.

No, push them back.

Give them the equipment they need to establish no-fly zones.

Give them the equipment that they need to attack the Russians in Russia.

And that is how we prevent this war from becoming a forever war.

And as soon as Ukraine wins, bring them into NATO.

Because if Ukraine fails, Eastern Europe is going to go back into the domain of the Russians.

Western Europe is going to say, hey, we can't trust America,

and they're going to start dealing more with the Chinese.

The fact that the French president Macron could this summer be in Beijing,

speaking to an American journalist, and say, hey, America, don't make France choose between the United States and China because you're not going to like the option,

when that's France saying that, that is a problem.

So to me on foreign policy, this notion that Vladimir Putin is a good guy or a friend or an ally is absolutely insane.

I want you to still man their position for me.

Why do these people believe, many of them very smart,

that the cause of Ukraine is not something that's worth billions of dollars of U.S. support?

Their argument is that money should be spent in other ways because that money is going there.

We can't secure the border.

We can't deal with fentanyl.

And they think Vladimir Putin doesn't care about America.

They think Vladimir Putin is a regional thug that is only interested in his own part of the world, and that he has no ability to hurt our economy, to hurt our way of life.

That level of ignorance is one of the things that I think undergirds their belief in saying we shouldn't be doing anything with Ukraine.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

I think the other thing they would say is that many of the people in your party who are saying we shouldn't be so involved in Ukraine are also hawks on China.

In other words, they say this war is distracting us from the true threat, which is, as you put it earlier in the conversation, the Cold War with China.

But you say that's foolish.

That's not seeing the connection, that to not have a muscular support of Ukraine has downstream effects on our policy vis-à-vis China, right?

100% because guess what?

The Chinese are watching this saying, number one, going heavy.

They think the Russians didn't go in heavy enough.

Two, saber-rattle because that's going to get the Americans scared, threaten to use nuclear weapons because America's going to worry about escalation, right?

And I put that in quotes.

Three, if you talk about, hey, this is just a local issue.

Why should anybody care about Taiwan, right?

You're going to see that level of rhetoric, the way that you've seen the Russians push these disinformation themes within conservative media to say that Vladimir Putin is an okay guy and that Zelensky is a Nazi, right?

Zelensky is not a Nazi.

Let me make sure that's very clear, right?

So absolutely, you're right.

These are all interconnected.

Oh, and by the way, the fact that Israel today is playing footsies with the Chinese in order to help the Chinese broker a peace deal with Saudi Arabia should have us scared.

The fact that the rest of the Western Hemisphere couldn't care that Cuba has allowed China to increase its footprint, we should be worried about that.

The fact that the Mexican government basically invaded an American company in order to allow the Chinese to have access to a deep sea port in the Gulf of Mexico, all of these things matter.

Niger matters because it was the last African country that has fallen that was part of this counterinsurgency because guess what?

Terrorism still exists.

We have to be able to do all these things and in the end, it goes back to after World War II, the United States of America built an international order that benefits us.

Can I tell us a quick CIA story?

Please.

I'm in Pakistan.

It's about, I think, 07.

Earthquake happens.

90,000 people kill.

Our ambassador, the US ambassador at the time, says, hey, well, go up to where it happened.



## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

It was a place called Muzafrabad and see how we can help the Pakistani people.

They needed an airlift.

Muzafrabad was about 14,000 feet and there was villages even further up.

They needed an airlift.

So I get about 21 Chernobyl helicopters to start directing this airlift to make sure we're taking these people that are suffering from the after effects of an earthquake to safety.

Gotta report that one village had been without food, water, power for four days and by the way, it was winter, so negative 20 degrees below zero at night.

I was supposed to jump on one of these helicopters to go back to the capital to brief the ambassador.

He said, let's go pick those villagers up.

So we land in this village, open the big bay doors and these villagers start piling on and there's a little girl who's about six or seven who lost both her mother and father in the earthquake.

And she sees this picture and thinks these people are from outer space and this village elder hands this little girl to me.

I hold on to her as tight as I can.

She's crying.

She's screaming.

We take off and halfway through the trip, she relaxes and lays her head on my shoulder.

We get to our destination.

I put her down.

She takes about 10 steps, turns around, comes, gives me the greatest hug I've ever gotten before, goes over to the helicopter crewman, kisses him on the hand.

He smiles where big gives her a thumbs up.

She returns to gesture and she runs away.

This little girl's face is seared into my brain because on that day, the United States of America was the only country that had the resources and the willingness to help people even if they're 6,000 miles away.

And it's a reminder that the United States of America became an exceptional nation not because of what we have taken, but because of what we have given.

And when we remember that, we're going to be able to continue to do for another 247 years, what we've done for the last 247 years.

And that's to create an economy and a quality of life that is the envy of the world.

And that is what all those nuts who think we should be protectionists don't understand and why we need to make sure that we have a robust foreign policy.

I think one thing that I'm always baffled by in these conversations is it seems to me pretty straightforward that there's always going to be a big kid on the block.

There's always going to be a policeman.

And as flawed as America has been in that role,

is there any other power that anyone imagines would be more just or better for global peace than us?

Do people imagine that if we pull back from the world that China won't fill that vacuum?

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

You talk about making sure the rest of this century stays the American century. What I hear unspoken there is that let's not allow it to become the Chinese one. 100% sister, look, I agree with you. And here's why it matters. Like the Chinese government are trying to drive and be the global leader in a number of technologies, 5G, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, synthetic biology, because they believe these are going to be the frontiers in which future conflicts are going to be fought. And we already know how they're going to use those kinds of tools because they're already doing it to their own society. They're exporting it to places like Africa. And so we know how they're going to act and how they're going to behave. And everybody should care because if they win, our dollar doesn't go as far as it goes now. Our 401ks or retirement accounts don't last as long. Our kids are not going to be able to get access to the best paying jobs because they're not going to be in America. And the movies we watch are going to be subtitled in English because the power moves somewhere else. And so that's why this conflict matters. And it's Chinese governments, not the Chinese people. It's not the Chinese culture that I'm beefing with. Definitely not beefing with Chinese Americans. All right, this is with the Chinese Communist Party. And we know what they are going to do. And we have to be prepared to continue to enjoy the way of life that we currently have. All right, let's talk about immigration. You represented a district in Texas that is two-thirds Hispanic and spans one-third of the Texas-Mexico border. It's a district whose main concern is drug trafficking, border security, and of course illegal immigration. You've said that both Trump and Biden have been the worst border security presidents in history. Quickly, briefly, what did they each get wrong and how is your approach different? So the first thing that Donald Trump did is he started treating everybody at the border as an asylum seeker. And this is a trend that Joe Biden continued. And that is what's led to this increase and this humanitarian crisis that we're dealing with. Asylum is real. And there are some people that need asylum. But asylum means you are part of a protected class and you're being targeted because you're part of that protected class.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

Wanting to get a better paying job is not a reason for asylum. This is why we've had 5.5 million people coming to the country illegally under Joe Biden. On average, they spend about \$10,000 to use a human smuggler. That's \$55 billion that human smugglers, which are also the narco-traficantes, have gathered. To put that number in context, the entire U.S. intelligence budget is \$60 billion. Who do you think is winning that war? So number one, stop treating everybody as an asylum seeker because it's not humane and it impacts the people that need asylum. Two, streamline legal immigration. If Texas needs people in the tourism industry and California needs people in high tech, it's 2023. We should be able to have a system that's based on that. So if we streamline legal immigration, you have people that are paying to come here, that are paying taxes, that are helping pay down our debt, all those kinds of things. Three, address root causes in the places traditionally that is driven illegal immigration, specifically the Northern Triangle. That's El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras. It's a fraction of the cost to address the lack of economic opportunities, poverty, and extreme violence in those places before having people be on our doorstep. You do those things and we can address this crisis, which is truly becoming a humanitarian crisis. Build a wall, don't build a wall. You need a wall, a physical barrier that makes sense in about 76 miles of the 2,000 miles of the U.S. border. You have existing wall, some of that stuff needs to be replaced, but use the right tool for the right place. And in places like the Chihuahuan Desert, where it takes border patrol hours or days to respond to a threat, then a wall is an inefficient use of time. You should have technology that monitors that can determine a threat, track a threat, until you can deploy your most important resource, the men and women of border patrol. Okay, I want to talk about the culture wars, which feels like a small way to describe something that has come to swallow almost everything in American life. And it definitely dominates the news cycle, especially when it comes to your party.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

Some of your counterparts, I'm thinking of Vivek, I'm thinking of Ron DeSantis, have really made entire platforms out of their anti-woke position. Why do you think so many Republicans are choosing the culture war as their hill to die on and what are you offering instead? I think they're choosing that as a hill to die on because it gets clicks and people interested in it, right? But when you really break it down, a lot of people don't want to be told what to do. They may disagree with somebody who was born a man to play in women's sports, but they think it's a local group that should be making that decision, not the president or the governor. Most people would say, I may not like Disney, and which means I cannot have to show up and go to their parks, but the government shouldn't be putting pressure on companies. That's what I bring to the table. Concentration of power in the hands of the few is a bad thing, and so we shouldn't be advocating on that, and if you want to get engaged at your school districts and get engaged at school districts, right? But there are certain issues, Will, that are national issues, right? You mentioned women's sports, right? There's a huge decision to be made about whether or not the NCAA should change its rules to allow for people that have gone through male puberty to participate in women's sports. What's your position on that? Well, I don't think people that have gone through male puberty should participate in women's sports, but I think the NCAA and the local schools and those districts are the ones that should be making those decisions, not the governor or the president. I had an interesting conversation with Peter Thiel somewhat recently on the show where we talked about the culture war and issue that I think matters, and he made the argument that it's a distraction. Where do you fall? Well, I think the phrase culture wars, it means different things to different people, but for me, people care about jobs and the economy. People care about kind of the kitchen table issues. I think the ones around education matter, like if our kids can't read at grade level or can't do basic math, that's a significant broader problem,

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

especially at a time when technology is even more important, right?

And so education gets wrapped up into the culture wars, but I think when you narrow it down to making sure our kids are getting the kind of education they need in order to get access to jobs that don't exist today, that's one of the focus.

How do we make sure every kid has an AI tutor in their pocket?

Like these are some of the things from a macro level that state governments need to be doing a better job and the federal government can be working on.

So on the issue specifically of culture wars, I think there's so many different areas to slice that up that it's hard to say whether it's all a distraction or not.

Trust in American institutions, and especially the three-letter agencies, like the one where you used to work, is at an absolute all-time low.

Yet that's kind of your background.

You come from the CIA, an institution that these days many Americans sort of despise and certainly distrust.

Can you relate to their distrust?

Do you understand how Americans have arrived at a moment where we have so little trust in institutions like the CDC or the CIA or the FBI?

And the second part of that is, how do you think trust is one back?

Look, absolutely I can understand the American public's frustration, right?

I share some of the similar frustrations, right?

And the only way you can win back trust is by being brutally honest all the time.

And when we take some of the leaders in the intelligence community, whether it's former CIA or former FBI, when one single individual abuses their position, that impacts the entire organization.

I've told some of the former senior CIA officers, when you speak to the public or on TV, as if you have access to information other people don't have access, and you don't actually have access to that, that is a problem.

Go back to your training.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

Your gut and your opinions are not sources and facts.  
So people that have been out,  
that have made these statements,  
they're the ones that are eroding the trust in.  
The thousands of men and women that are in these organizations  
that are putting themselves in harm's way  
every single day and every single night  
for us to enjoy the freedoms and opportunities that we have,  
they're the ones that are ultimately being wronged.  
And so I am proud of my pedigree or my experiences.  
I am proud of my time within the intelligence community,  
but that's also why I've been one of the people  
that have criticized the FBI and the agency more than most.  
For like, you know, I was beefing with Jim Comey  
before it was cool to beef with Jim Comey  
on the encryption issue, right?  
And so the only way to rebuild that trust  
is to have leaders in the organizations  
that people actually will believe in and listen to,  
and that requires them to be fully honest.  
And this is where I say DOJ  
with all these cases with Donald Trump,  
you need to have a level of transparency  
that we have never seen before  
because of how serious the actions are.  
And so the other way to improve trust  
is to have that transparency.  
And that's what I would do if I'm president  
and put people in places that has that trust  
and that I also be honest,  
and even when it may be unpopular.  
At a town hall recently,  
you were asked to fill in the blank in the following sentence.  
The state of our democracy is,  
and you had one word answer, fragile.  
When I hear a former CIA operative  
that's witnessed many countries in deeply fragile states  
describe American democracy that way, I don't feel great.  
Explain to me what's behind that answer.  
When you say American democracy is fragile,  
what are you thinking most of in your mind?  
American democracy has always been fragile,  
and it will always be fragile.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

That's why 247 years ago, people said it was an experiment.  
Nobody thought it was going to work.  
And it had been almost 2000 years  
before there was a democracy on our planet  
that was Rome and Julius Caesar screwed that up.  
It was another 60 years before there was another democracy  
after Switzerland.  
There's only 14 countries  
that have been in democracy for more than 100 years.  
And the reason everybody thought it was an experiment  
was this super novel idea that it is us that are sovereign,  
not the government, right?  
We the people are sovereign, not the government.  
This is such a fascinating concept,  
but it requires us to engage.  
And I would say this.  
In order to make democracy continue to be robust,  
we in this generation do not have to do what our forebearers did.  
We are not having to fight on the fields of Lexington,  
or on the plains of Gettysburg,  
or marching in Selma, or Birmingham,  
or fighting hand-to-hand combat in the mountains of Mazari Sharif.  
All we have to do is show up to vote.  
And not just in general elections,  
but in primaries as well, too.  
And if we start doing that,  
then that fragility will become a little bit more robust.  
One more break, and then a lightning round with Will Hurd,  
where we find out this CIA agent's favorite conspiracy theory.  
Stay with us.  
Hi, honestly, listeners.  
I'm here to tell you about an alternative investing platform  
called Masterworks.  
I know investing in finance can be overwhelming,  
especially given our economic climate.  
But there's one thing that will never go in the red,  
and that is a painting from Picasso's Blue Period.  
Masterworks is an exclusive community  
that invests in blue-chip art.  
They buy a piece of art,  
and then they file that work with the SEC.  
It's almost like filing for an IPO.  
You buy a share representing an investment in the art.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

Then Masterworks holds the piece for three to 10 years, and then when they sell it, you get a prorated portion of the profit's minus fees. Masterworks has sold \$45 million worth of art to date, from artists like Andy Warhol, Banksy, and Monet. Over 700,000 investors are using Masterworks to get in on the art market. So go to masterworks.com slash honestly for priority access. That's masterworks.com slash honestly. You can also find important regulation aid disclosures at masterworks.com slash cd. Okay, Will Hurd, are you ready for a quick lightning round? Let's do it. I'm ready. Let me make sure I'm in the zone. You ready? I'm in the zone. Favorite Republican currently in Congress? Uh, Ashley Henson from Iowa. Favorite Democrat currently in office? Pedagular from California. Worst aspect of public office? Early flights. Best aspect of public office? Oh, man, helping people. Like, that's the part who... I know this is lightning round, but that part, you don't see it. None of us think that we have to call the federal government to help us with the problem, but there's a lot of people that do. And when you can help people that are getting screwed by the federal government, that's freaking awesome. Greatest American president of all time? Lincoln. Okay, one more in answers to the following. Tim Scott is? Kind. Ron DeSantis is? Wrong. Tucker Carlson is? Wrong. Mike Pence? Made the right decision.



## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

Chris Christie?

Brash.

RFK Jr.?

No chance.

Hunter Biden?

National security risk.

UFOs?

Concerning.

China?

Adversary.

TikTok.

Should be banned, should not be banned.

Should be banned on federal devices.

Affirmative action, for or against?

The court ruling was right.

Anthony Fauci, in one word.

Gone.

The American dream is?

Alive.

What was the best part of being a CIA operative?

Working on the most important national security issues of the day.

What was the hardest part of being an undercover CIA operative?

Getting chased by al-Qaeda.

Do you like the show Homeland?

Man, the first three episodes were good, but it's pretty offensive that a female case officer would have sex with her asset and that asset being a terrorist.

So I stopped watching after that.

What is a conspiracy theory that you believe in?

Or what's a conspiracy theory that's been proven right?

I swear I saw Tupac in Atlanta.

I swear I saw him at the airport.

It was Tupac, you know, and if I was Poc and I was trying to hide somewhere,

I'd probably go to Atlanta.

Will Hurd, is there a deep state?

There is an inertia in the government that is hard to break.

That's based on years and years of doing things the same way.

What's something that you've changed your mind about in the past few years?

What have I changed my mind on in the last few years?

You know, I think early in my political career, I was against universal background checks when it came to gun purchases.

And then I voted for universal background checks when I was in Congress.

I think that's one issue, especially having represented places like Uvaldi and Sutherland Springs.

If you had to vote for someone running in the GOP primary, who isn't yourself, who would it be?

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Meet Will Hurd: The Ex-CIA, Anti-Trump Republican Who Wants To Be President

I really like Asa.

He's a good guy.

And I think Governor Burgum is a really smart, thoughtful dude.

If you don't get the nomination, what are you going to do next?

Look, that's a great question.

And to be honest, I can truly say, I do not spend any brain cycles thinking of anything other than how do I win right now?

If it came down to Trump versus Biden, who would you vote for?

Neither one of them, right?

Like, that is not our option.

Like, that is not the best two.

So I cannot accept the premise that those are in 2024, that the United States of America are going to put those two up together.

I just can't think through that.

Will Hurd, thank you so much for coming on, honestly.

I appreciate you doing what you're doing because this is why I feel comfortable about the future of our country because of people like you.

Thanks for listening.

I'm excited that Will Hurd marks the seventh candidate running for president in 2024 that's been on this podcast.

We are not stopping until we get all of them.

And I'm looking at you, Trump.

And yes, Joe Biden.

If you like this conversation, if you never heard of Will Hurd and now think, I want to Google that guy, all of that's good.

Share this conversation with your friends and family and use it to have a conversation of your own.

And if you want to support honestly, as always, there's just one way to do it.

It's by supporting the free press, by going to thefp.com, T-H-E-F-P, and becoming a subscriber today.

We'll see you next time.