

[Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / Presidential Candidate Vivek Ramaswamy Wants a Second American Revolution

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.

When Barack Obama was running for office back in 2008, he would open every speech the same way.

He would describe himself as the skinny kid with the funny name.

He would make jokes about it and always was sure to tell people that his mom was from Kansas and his dad was from Kenya.

And I think the reason Obama introduced himself this way was obvious.

He knew he was an outsider.

Or at least he was sure that he would be perceived that way.

And it was self-deprecating and disarming to get ahead of that.

Here we are in 2023, and we have another funny kid with another funny name running for president.

Vivek Ramaswamy.

Vivek Ramaswamy.

Vivek Ramaswamy.

Thank you so much for being with us.

Good to see you. When do you sleep?

It's good to see you guys.

You know, I'm fine about that.

He's very young.

He's very ambitious.

He's charismatic.

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He's a brilliant talker.
And he is definitely an outsider.
Only this guy is a Republican.
If Ronald Reagan were alive and well today,
I promise you I would not be in this race.
We would be finding other ways of having an impact in this country
because he did that for us in 1980.
Now, Vivek Ramaswamy might not exactly appreciate this comparison.
The president he's obviously modeling himself after is another outsider.
This is the one who swept 44 states in 1980.
Ronald Reagan, who Vivek references constantly.
But to a vision, to that shining city on a hill,
to those values that define what it means to be an American,
we're in an identity crisis today.
And I think we have an opportunity to deliver
a landslide election in 2024, just as we did in 1980.
It's sitting in front of us if we're willing to actually step up,
level up, and define not just what we're against,
but what we stand for, not just what we're running from,
but what we are running to.
And that is that vision of the truth that we will speak without apology.
Wonderful.
Thank you all.
It's a pleasure being here.
But regardless of whether Obama or Reagan is the right comparison,
the point is that Vivek Ramaswamy is different.
He's an outsider.
And like Obama back in 2007 and Reagan decades before him,
pundits counted them out.
They didn't take them seriously.
They said they had no chance.
And well, we know exactly how that turned out.
Vivek Ramaswamy is the first millennial presidential candidate.
He's 37 years old.
He has two young children.
He graduated from Harvard and then Yale Law
and worked as a partner at a hedge fund before starting a biotech company
where he made hundreds of millions of dollars.
And somehow, despite having no political experience,
he has made sure that his name is in the news almost every single day.
His tweets are constantly going viral.
And recent polling suggests that he's hitting a nerve.
According to a new poll, Ramaswamy has hit double digits for the first time.

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But the poll is also one of the poorest showings for DeSantis.
What does this mean for the state of the race?
He's in third place behind Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis.
A few weeks ago, ahead of this conversation,
I spoke to Vivek and I asked him if he saw a path to the nomination.
He sounded confused.
He said, the nomination?
I see a path to the presidency.
So on today's show, I take Vivek Ramaswamy seriously.
We talk about what Vivek's path to the nomination and the presidency looks like.
And from immigration to education to crime to the culture war,
what a president Ramaswamy, with all of his radical proposals,
would do for this country.
We'll be right back.
Today's episode is supported by our sponsor NetSuite.
NetSuite by Oracle gives you the visibility and control
that you need to make better decisions faster.
NetSuite has been the number one cloud financial system for 22 years.
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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.

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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 A disclosures at masterworks.com slash cd. Vivek Ramaswamy, welcome to Honestly. It's good to be on. I've been looking forward to this. Happy to have you. Vivek, politics, I think, is really about storytelling. And the winning candidate is almost always the candidate who tells the best story. Think of the man from a place called Hope or the candidate of hope and change. So what is your story? And why is your story the one that Americans are craving right now? Whether Americans are craving it or not, that'll be for them to decide. But I'll tell you what my story is. My story is that I'm the embodiment of the American dream. My parents came to this country over 40 years ago with almost no money. I've gone on to found multi-billion-dollar companies that created value by doing valuable things for other people. Developing five medicines that are FDA approved today, one of them a life-saving therapy in kids, another one for prostate cancer, another large asset management firm that competes against the largest asset management firms by offering alternatives that stop people from having to invest money that betray their own values. That's my story. And I did it while getting married, while bringing two sons into this world, while following my faith in God, while growing up with the ultimate privilege in this country. We hear that word bandied around a lot. I actually am proud and grateful that I had the ultimate privilege of having two parents in the house with a focus on God and a focus on achievement. And I think the thing that's extraordinary about that story is that it isn't extraordinary. It is the story of this country. It is the story of our American dream in this country. And I believe as a father, it is my job to make sure that my two sons grow up in a country where they're able to live that same American dream as well. And to be honest, what moves me into this very is that I am a young person in this race. I'd be the youngest president ever elected if elected. I'm the first millennial. You're 37 years old, right? Yeah, I'm 37.

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Yeah, I'm the first millennial ever to run for president as a Republican.

And I think that our nation itself right now is actually not in decline, in decay.

It doesn't have to be.

I think our nation is itself still a little young, actually, going through our own version of adolescence, figuring out who we're really going to be when we grow up.

And I don't think we're in decline.

I think we are still a nation in our ascent, in the early stages of our ascent, actually, a nation whose best days are still ahead.

And I think it takes a person of my age and generation.

I'd like to think my best days in life are still ahead of me.

And I think it takes someone in my shoes to see our nation that way too.

And that's truly what pulled me into the race.

And that's the story we're telling people across this country that so far at least lived in this campaign up.

Vivek, a few days ago you wrote this on Twitter.

If the Framers were alive today, they'd say it's time for a second American revolution.

There's a lot of people that are running on sort of a reformist platform.

I would argue that you're running on, and maybe it's too strong a word, but a radical or a revolutionary one.

When you say America needs a second revolution, what do you mean by that?

Many people hear revolution, they think bloodshed and violence.

And what does that revolution look like?

Yeah, to me, it does not mean bloodshed and violence today,

but it means a revival of the ideals that set this nation into motion in 1776.

I do think, Barry, we live in a 1776 moment.

I think that the American bargain was built on the idea that we the people determine how we settle our political differences

through free speech and open debate in the public square, where every person's voice and vote counts equally.

That is self-governance.

And I think that there is the old world vision now rearing its head

in multiple forms from the administrative state to the ESG industrial complex that says, no, we the people cannot be trusted.

The citizens of a nation cannot be trusted to determine what's actually good for them.

So we the intelligentsia must make that determination centrally at large.

There's a big frustration about that in the Republican Party,

and there's an entire field of candidates who will say,

no, we need to reform that, reform the administrative state,

fire Christopher Wray, put Betsy DeVos or the equivalent

on top of the Department of Education.

We need to reform.

I reject the possibility of reform in the environment that we're in.

I stand on the side of revolution.

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I stand on the side of the American revolution,
the ideals that birth this nation.
And I think we live in a moment where we have to confront those radical ideals.
I don't reject that label.
I think that the American ideals are very fundamentally radical ideals,
self-governance, free speech, like absolute free speech,
the idea that you get ahead through unbridled meritocracy,
the unbridled pursuit of excellence,
the steadfast commitment to the rule of law rather than the whims of men.
These are radical ideals because for most of human history,
it was done the other way.
So I don't shy away from that label.
I embrace it and I think it is the radicalism of the American revolution
and those ideals that are our last best chance for national unity
because that is what actually binds us together across our diverse attributes.
And without embracing that radicalism, I think we're nothing.
We're just a bunch of two-legged, higher mammals
with a bunch of different shades of melanin and sexual preferences,
walking some geographic space we call a country,
doing what our iPhones tell us to do on a given day.
That is not a country.
All right, that is a geographic space with a bunch of higher mammals walking around.
I think we are still a nation founded on those, yes, radical ideals
and I'm running to revive them.
Okay, other than what you called a throwaway vote
for the libertarian candidate in 2004,
the first time you ever voted the vague for a major party was in 2020,
when you were 35 years old.
So it's a little strange to have someone go from being so apathetic about government
to running for president on a platform of restoring the soul of America,
a kind of neo-Ragan is sort of how you're fashioning yourself.
And so you can imagine why people would be a little bit skeptical of your candidacy.
Why didn't you vote until you were 35 years old?
People should be skeptical, by the way, of every candidacy.
We need more skepticism in this country and I'll take the skepticism and answer
the question honestly, Barry, is, yeah, I did vote at 18.
I was badly disaffected.
Apathy isn't the word I would use.
Disaffected is actually the word that I would use.
I was not inspired by George Bush or John Kerry.
So I made a throwaway vote for a third party candidate that I knew had no chance of winning,
but I could not in good conscience vote for either of these two men
who did not speak to my hope for this country.

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And then if you have John McCain and Barack Obama that come back around or Mitt Romney and Barack Obama who come back around, I did not feel inspired.

And that's honestly, Barry, what gives me an understanding of what many young people in this country feel.

So for most of my 20s, I voted at 19 and then for my 20s, I didn't vote. I sat it out because I was badly disaffected and uninspired by the politicians who stepped up and didn't really seem all that different from one another in the actual core issues that mattered for the country.

I think something did change for me when I became a father. I did bring my first son into this world in 2020.

I had a cultural cancer that landed on the doorstep of even my own company. I talked about that in my first book, Woke Inc.

That's what inspired me to write Woke Inc.

And there was something about the process of writing, actually writing in just free form before I even got into the book, bringing my son into the world that brought back that sense of engagement to say that, no, actually this isn't somebody else's duty.

We each have to do our part if we care to revive this country.

Yes, I lived that American dream.

It wasn't just about me anymore.

As I said at the very start, it's about passing that on to my two sons.

And so you're right.

In my 20s, I didn't vote.

In my 30s, I came back to it, my mid 30s.

And more importantly, that act of voting also should mean something.

Part of what brings me back to my view, Barry, that every high school student in this country should be required to pass the same civics test that every immigrant, my mother included, had to pass in order to become a citizen of this country.

You don't value a country that you just passively inherit.

I think young people value a country they have a stake in building.

And so I am more empathetic than many of my Republican colleagues, let's call them that now, competitors, to the deep sense of disaffection that young people feel in this country towards politics.

And that's why we're bringing young people along with us as well, Barry, is I've got 70,000 unique donors in this campaign.

40% of them are first time ever donors to the Republican Party in any form.

Normally that number is 2% for a Republican candidate.

And most of them are young, which says something about the movement we're building that does transcend those traditional partisan boundaries, which I do not think actually track the real divisions that we face in this country today.

Here's the conventional view, I think, of your candidacy.

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It goes something like this.
You're incredibly entertaining, phenomenal talker.
You have a view on everything.
And remarkably, as of the latest polls,
your third behind Trump and DeSantis,
I think the latest polls have you at something like 7%, maybe just under that.
But they basically come to the conclusion,
this is in many commentators, that ultimately you have no shot at the nomination.
Jane Costin of The New York Times said that
we should take you very seriously because you are sort of a predictor,
kind of vanguard of the future of the Republican Party,
but there's simply no way you could win.
And in saying that, she was echoing so many other people.
Why is that conventional wisdom wrong about you?
I think that I'm speaking the truth.
Frankly, Barry, everyone seems to be shocked where I am right now.
I'm not surprised.
This is exactly where we expected to be.
And I think even if you want to go into the data analysis portion of this,
we're not even on TV, right?
We have no TV ads right now running.
And other candidates, actually,
their super PACs have put them up in some ways.
I think those poll numbers are downward distorted
because if nobody was on TV or everybody was on TV,
and we will be by later in this campaign, believe me,
that actually is going to just mechanically continue to move the numbers up.
But the reality is, I think people are hungry for the unfiltered truth.
And the fact that I'm untethered by anything,
I'm not even attached to the result.
I don't wake up every day thinking,
okay, here's how I'm going to fetishize being in the White House,
and I'm attached to that result.
I'm not.
I've said it every step of the way.
I would rather speak the truth at every step,
at the very least the truth about my own beliefs at every step,
and lose the election than to play some political snakes and ladders.
And I believe that our voters across this country have a good sixth sense
for being able to tell the difference
for somebody who's actually sharing their true beliefs
versus somebody who's giving them carefully constructed, poll-tested slogans.
And that is the competitive advantage

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that is, I think, driving this campaign forward.
And I think it's part of what gives me,
just being in rooms of 200 people in Iowa and New Hampshire,
is just a gut instinct that I now have.
And my gut instinct, I think, has been right more often than wrong,
but we'll see how it plays out this time.
My gut instinct is, we're going to win this election.
We're going to win it in a landslide of a margin
similar to what Reagan delivered in 1980.
So you're going to be the Obama of this race, not the Andrew Yang.
I'm going to be the Vivek Ramaswamy of this race,
and that's why I'm committed to being, yeah.
Okay, in a recent political op-ed,
Rich Lowry, Republican, wrote this review.
Ramaswamy, who has no political experience
and no chance of winning the nomination,
rightfully has no business running for president,
which should be about more than gaining notoriety
in order to enhance other career opportunities,
whether in media, politics, or something else.
In other words, this is a cynical move
intended to raise your name recognition
for whatever your next enterprise is going to be.
What do you say to that criticism?
I say that I get why people cheering from the peanut gallery
for their chosen candidates might say that,
but I'm here to share the truth of my intentions.
And here's how you know that I'm actually telling the truth
is much of what I've said, especially early in this race,
was not particularly in my short run interest to say.
I think that I'm giving people a conviction
that you don't have to agree with 100%
of what I say to support me.
You just have to know that I believe
what I'm saying 100% of the time.
My intention and expectation is to be the next president,
and this would be lunacy to make the sacrifices
that we're making if it were some other goal.
Just put yourself in my shoes
and then think about it for a second.
I've already put over \$15 million of my hard earned money
into this campaign and precisely have avoided
licking the feet of other billionaires

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to ask them for permission to run to be independent.
I think a lot of those national review pieces
have made the allegation
that I want to sell more books through this campaign.
I'm not sure any of them have studied
the economics of how selling books works,
but if you want to sell books,
putting \$15 million into a campaign
is not exactly going to be a math equation that works out.
It'd be a pretty poor business move
to invest the kind of money we're making in this campaign
if it were anything other than for sacrifice.
And then think about it from a family standpoint.
We've got two young sons.
One's three years old.
One just turned a year old earlier this month.
And the first question my wife asked me was,
even if this was your ambition,
are you sure we don't want to do it
when these kids are out of the house,
when we all have more experience,
when it's a more appropriate time in our life?
And that was a hard question to answer,
but I think the answer is, Barry,
I don't think we have 20 years left.
I don't think it's going to be,
in any sense of the word,
the same United States of America that we take for granted,
have taken for granted for most of our lifetime,
if we wait 20 years to lead this revival.
And oddly enough, I think that Apurva and I
are best positioned of anybody in this race
to actually reach that next generation
and fill that void of purpose and meaning
that I think we are beginning to fill.
And so I'm guided by my sense of purpose.
I understand why people will be cynical or skeptical.
In some sense, they should be.
That is part of the process.
You deserve and require vetting in order to be
the person who's asking to sit across the table
from Xi Jinping.
So I embrace that.

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I don't chafe at it,
but I'm going to honestly share my intentions
and it's up to the people of this country
to decide whether they believe me.
You've wanted to run for president for a long time though,
right? Yes.
When did you know that you had this ambition?
So I probably couldn't tell you precisely,
but when the thought really started crystallizing
in a serious way was when I was on my woke ink book tour.
I was still a CEO of a company, right?
And so it was not like a track I was really seriously considering.
But think about it.
You're in a room full of 100 people in a book tour event
or whatever after an hour.
People you don't know come up to you and tell you,
hey, listen, you need to consider running for president.
And some of them very specifically in 2024.
One or two people tell you that that's fine,
but you're in a book tour talking about the future
of the country and your vision of what's wrong
in the American culture today.
And a number of people tell you that.
That becomes a hard idea to shake off.
And so yes, it was probably only this last December
when we got very serious about making moves in life
towards taking this step.
But to me, it's not an ambition.
I think genuinely, I don't think that being the president
is the most important job.
I don't think there is such a thing as a most important job.
I think we each have to look ourselves in the mirror
and ask ourselves, how are we going to make
our maximal contribution with the gifts we've been given?
I think that there are a lot of other important jobs
that are going to be required in our national revival.
But I believe right now, in the moment that we live in,
when the managerial class runs the show in this country,
it will take the combination of an outsider,
somebody who did not grow up in professional politics,
the experience of, yes, being an executive,
a CEO, a doer, an entrepreneur, but to combine that,
you know, Trump brought some of that,

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but to combine that with also being a leader
who has a deep understanding of the Constitution
and the laws of this country and the commitment to that.
That's not a normal combination.

And that being a member of a new generation
that can actually reach young Americans
to revive national pride.

Yes, I do believe I have that set of qualities,
but that's also what kind of gave me not the ambition,
but what in some sense felt like the obligation
to actually step up and play a role in a time in our life
where it's not particularly convenient to do it.
And that's what drew me into the race.

Let's talk about how you practically win the nomination, right?
Trump is still pulling far and ahead of everyone else,
despite all of the indictments.

I think he's pulling in around 50% today.

At least, actually.

So most of your primary opponents
are taking a particular strategy,
which is to say, sidestepping him, ignoring him,
trying not to piss off the base by ignoring Trump.
Then you have the Chris Christie strategy,
which is like dead on, punch him in the face,
punch him again and again and again,
because Chris Christie says the only way to beat Trump
is to go after him.

You are doing neither of those things.

You're actually praising Trump.

You actually said recently that you would pardon Trump,
more on that in a bit,

but the point is you're not positioning yourself
as anti-Trump or kind of pre-Trump or post-Trump.

Some would say you're running as a kind of Trump 2.0.

What do you think of that?

I think that's not inaccurate.

I mean, the reality is I do think he was by and large
in terms of policy accomplishments, judicial appointments,
foreign policy, keeping us out of wars, economically speaking,
an excellent president as judged by measurable results.

I think that there's one that I deeply care about,
which is national unity, which we can come back to.

But I think he was an excellent president,

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so I'm not going to fake it and say that,
okay, now that I'm running against him,
now I'm going to find the wedge versus Trump.
No, to the contrary, I actually think
that his election in retrospect, certainly in 2016,
was probably one of the great barriers
to the otherwise what seemed to be inevitable march
of a toxic neo-Marxist worldview
in the form of institutional capture in this country.
And I think that giving him credit for that
is almost necessary to speak truth and build trust by doing it.
Now, you talk about the path, that's what your question was about.
We can get into the philosophy, but you asked about the path.
Yeah, how do you win the nomination?
So I think it is by taking most of Trump's voters with us.
That's the answer.
How though?
They're going to come, is the answer.
I'll take the experience that I have even in rooms, right?
Because this is actually more telling,
forgetting any data or large-scale events or polls.
I can't tell you the number of events
I've been in now in Iowa, in particular,
in some in New Hampshire too, where some people come
wearing Trump shirts or Trump hats into the event.
Like, it's an event for a different candidate for U.S. president,
they're wearing a hat of my lead competitor,
and they'll come up to me afterwards,
and more than once, they'll use exactly this term,
I'm an always-trumper.
He's like, nah, it's not a never-trumper.
I'm an always-trumper, but you've put me in a difficult position.
I'm now on the fence, and that's sitting in June or July, right?
But, Vivek, why would I go for new Coke when I could have Coke?
Like, if I'm an always-trumper, why am I going for you?
And that's the same argument I would make if the Santas was here.
Do you want a two-liter bottle that's been in the fridge, right,
and doesn't have the same fizz that it did
when you first popped the cork?
That's the question, right?
I'm sticking to your analogy, right?
Not mine, but that's really the question.
I've got fresh legs. I'm 37.

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I'm going further than Trump did,
and I think the part that's most persuasive is the truth.
Barry, here's the truth.
30% of this country becomes
psychiatrically ill, maybe deranged,
when Trump is in office.
It's just a fact.
It's not his fault.
We can debate who's fault it is.
It's just a fact.
It's like a law of nature in the United States of America
in the 2020s.
30% of this country is mentally deranged
when Trump is in office.
They start, you know, Republicans that start identifying as Democrats, right?
You have people who disagree with things
that they otherwise would have agreed with
because of the person who's actually articulating the view.
You have people agreeing with things they would have never agreed with
because a particular person happens to be in the White House.
It's psychological derangement for at least 30%,
maybe a third or more of this country.
For whatever reason, and I think our base sees this so far,
at least it's true,
I'm not having that effect on people,
even as I'm saying many of the same things that Trump is saying,
even when I'm going even further than Trump, actually.
That's because surely you understand that character matters.
In other words, I don't believe that I have Trump derangement syndrome.
I can look at a lot of Trump's policies,
not least the Abraham Accords and say,
yeah, that was a good thing.
And yet I look at the way that he dismantled the moral guardrails
that keep bigotry to the fringes,
the way he normalized things that should be stigmatized,
the way that he played to people's basest instincts and say,
that matters.
Like there could be no policy that is as important as keeping
comedy and civility and unity in our democracy.
You and I share one thing in common, Barry.
This is the standard I want you to hold me to
when hopefully I'm the next president.
I want you to be able to look your daughter in the eye.

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I want to be able to look my two sons in the eye.
And whoever's in the White House to be able to say,
I want you to grow up and be like him.
Exactly. So when you-
I think that's important.
And I'm in this race.
And I am in this race running for the presidency,
yet wanting to be held to that standard.
But when you portray the people who are sort of like foaming at the mouth
and wild-eyed because they hate Trump so much,
that is exactly the reason why.
And what did I say, Barry?
I'm not assigning any blame or any fault.
I said it's almost like a law of physics
in the United States of America.
When Donald Trump is in that White House,
we can just accept it as a fact
that about 30% of this country starts adopting beliefs
about issues in the world
that they otherwise would not have adopted
if Trump were in that office.
Left, right, center,
MAGA, traditional Republican,
doesn't matter.
I think we all agree with that reality.
And so I think that if you agree with those policies,
you don't have to agree with those policies.
If you don't agree with those policies,
you're probably not going to vote for me.
But if you agree with putting this country first,
the interests of the United States of America first,
to revive the principles enshrined in our Constitution,
but in a way that, yes, unites us as one nation,
bound by those radical ideals
that set this nation into motion 250 years ago,
and want to do it,
not in the context of a national divorce,
but a unified national revival,
then I am better positioned to do that
than anybody else in this race,
including Donald Trump,
which is why I believe that most of his base
by January or February next year

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will be coming along with us,
and most of the rest of the Republican Party
will be coming along with us.
And I expect to win not only the general election,
but likely the primary by a wide margin.
And I think that's exactly what's going to happen.
One of the reasons I think people love Trump
is that he plays to the base instincts
that we have as human beings,
whether it's in his humor
or the way that he denigrates other people.
I don't think this is a good thing about human nature,
but I think that people say that they don't want to be divisive,
and yet when you look at the choices people actually make,
the things they actually watch,
the people they actually vote for,
that there's something primal about what he appeals to.
The social media posts they like, you know?
Sure, the Tucker they watch, like whatever it is,
like whether it's because of genuine disaffection
that is because of inequality
or because of demoralization
or because of the sense that America is in decline
or because of social, like whatever it is,
there is clearly something in the zeitgeist in America right now
that draws people in to influencers,
to personalities, to pundits, and to politicians
that play to our basest instincts.
You seem to me that you're embracing a lot of Trump's,
you know, America first sort of healthy nationalist worldview,
but you're trying to do it by taking the Michelle Obama high road
as opposed to playing to the gutter.
Do you actually think that that's what Americans want?
We'll find out is the answer.
I agree with a lot of what you said, Barry.
I would take the Tucker piece of that and carve that out
because I think that's a little bit of an unfair characterization
of actually where he is.
I think that he's actually somebody,
I consider an inspiring figure for this country as a commentator,
but we'll put that to one side.
But I take the spirit of what you said,
and I'm not sure that Michelle Obama actually

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does the thing that you say either, right?
So we'll take the other personalities that you mentioned.
Character personalities out of it.
Yeah, exactly, because I disagree with some of those characterizations of the individual people.
I think that the question of whether that's what the people want will be the determinant of whether or not I win this election.
That's for sure.
And so if we lose, it's because I'm wrong about this, but I think that is what people want right now.
I think that the other candidates are running from something. I am aiming to lead us to something, to an affirmative vision of what it means to be an American. And I think that that's part of what Trump spoke to, but I think there's two ways to do it.
Writing the left gives you a vision of human identity today. Certainly the new left, to forget the old left they're hiding, but the new left feeds us race, gender, sexuality, and climate. And I think much of the right, even the so-called anti-woke right, will criticize that vision endlessly, but almost become complacent with just wallowing in that criticism.
And Trump isn't so much criticizing those things, but is criticizing other larger scale economic grievances for a longer time.
I think that we would do much better to offer an affirmative vision of our own, grounded in a vision of the individual, the family, the nation, and God.
And I think there come times where the moment demands somebody who sees a problem with clear eyes that other people are either not seeing or not willing to speak to.
I think that moment was 2015 in this country and 2016 in this country.
I think the moment now is many of us, certainly an educated Republican primary voter base, and by educated, I don't mean college educated, I mean educated as an actually educated about what's happening in the country.
Understand and see that problem more or less with clear eyes,

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but now ask the question I believe of,
okay, great, what are we running to?
And so Reagan came after Nixon, right?
I think Solomon came after David, I think that-
Not to compare yourself to the biblical kings of Judeo,
but sure.
I'm not, or to Reagan or to Nixon,
or to compare Reagan to Solomon either,
or to compare Nixon to David either,
but I'm saying that there's something that's true
about human history, there's a time for destruction
and there's a time for creation.
And I mean, I'm Hindu.
There's a version of that in my faith as well.
I think that there are moments for the right thing.
So Trump is the creative destroyer and you're the builder.
I think so.
After the break, where Vivek stands on the issues,
from foreign policy to immigration,
to why he wants to dismantle the Department of Education
and the FBI, seriously, we'll be right back.
Okay, let's talk about policies.
You have really, really interesting ideas
I want to get into.
Let's start with foreign policy.
On Ukraine, the consensus position
among establishment Democrats
and establishment Republicans is very clear.
Russia has waged an unprovoked war of aggression
against their neighboring country,
and the U.S., both from a moral and a strategic perspective,
has to support Ukraine.
Why is that view wrong?
So much to say here.
Okay, so first of all, just as table stakes
for having the discussion,
I think we need to abandon the fiction
that Ukraine is some model, paragon of democracy.
It is not.
This is a country where you have a leader
who has banned 11 opposition parties.
You have a leader who is fundamentally corrupt.
You have a government that's fundamentally corrupt.

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You have a client state of the, you know, effectively the United States is the client. Literally our taxpayers are paying the money of Ukrainian officials and the government. I believe in part at least making good on a corrupt bribe pay to the person who is making those decisions from the Oval Office today in the form of Joe Biden. I think you have a guy who has consolidated in the form of Zelensky state media, all media into one state media arm. So we just have to abandon the fiction that this is some paragon of democracy. A guy who's going after. I don't think you need to have the view that Ukraine deserves American strategic and moral support. I don't think that that view at all relies on a caricature of Ukraine. Well, I think you did say something about standing on the right side and invoked a moral argument for the establishment view, right? Oh, I said that Russia's waging an unprovoked war against Ukraine and the U.S. from a moral and strategic perspective. I'm not saying it's a paragon of democracy. I'm saying in comparison. I was just reacting to the moral piece. I'm saying in comparison to Putin's Russia, how could you not be on the side of Ukraine? So I was all I was doing there. It wasn't even the heart of my answer, Barry, but I was just responding to the invocation of the word moral in there. I think these are two thugs sorting out differences in Eastern Europe. You think there's a moral equivalence between Zelensky and Putin? I don't think that there is an obvious moral superiority that Zelensky has compared to many other autocrats around the world who we would put on the side of evil. And I do not think this is a battle of good versus evil.

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And that's why I take the moral valence out of it.
I think the valence that I bring to this
is what advances American interests.
And there I think we have room for reasonable debate,
but I have a firm view on that too.
My view is that we are not advancing American interests
by giving more money to Ukraine,
by giving more resources to Ukraine.
Not only is it the wasted money and resources,
which I believe will be better utilized
protecting our own border from our Southern border,
porousness rather than the porousness of Ukraine's border.
But more importantly, we are driving Russia further
into the hands of our real adversary,
which is Communist China.
The Russia-China military alliance
is the single greatest threat
that the United States of America faces
from a military perspective.
Nuclear stockpile in Russia,
largest one in the world,
hypersonic missile capabilities ahead of that of the US,
naval capacity in China ahead of that of the US
compared to an economy that we depend on
for our modern way of life.
That is a problem.
That is part of why China is matching Russia,
coming to their rescue in a metered way,
as much as they have to, to be able to extend this war,
because they're bound in a 2001 treaty
and a further 2022 no-limits partnership.
And it is a shock to me, Barry,
that you do not hear this from any candidate in either party.
That's the real risk we face,
and we're now driving Russia further into China's hands.
NATO, which by the way was created
to deter the aggression of the USSR,
has now expanded more after the fall of the USSR
than it ever did during the USSR's existence.
Its supposed purpose was to avoid
and deter nuclear war with the Soviet Union.
It is now taking us closer to the doorstep
of nuclear war with Russia today.

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We fetishized this 1994 Budapest memorandum, where we agreed to Ukraine giving up certain of its nuclear capabilities to protecting its border, along with the UK and Russia, being parties to that agreement. I believe the US has more than fulfilled its obligations pursuant to the Budapest memorandum. Yet we conveniently forget that James Baker, then Secretary of State, made a hard commitment to Gorbachev, the leader of Russia, that we would famously expand not one inch NATO would beyond East Germany. We have broken that commitment, and yet we have actually lived up to the Budapest memorandum, and yet the consensus in both the Republican and Democrat Party is that somehow we have this obligation to Ukraine while having no problem reneging on our own prior agreements with Russia. And so I can go much further and much deeper on this because the history here is important, but I have a major problem with our policy. I think what's more important is a simple principle. A bigger, more unfree country just invaded a more vulnerable, freer country, one that the US is allied with. And you're sitting here saying you want to be commander-in-chief of this country and saying we should allow Russia to do that? No, I'm not saying that we should allow Russia or not allow Russia to do anything. I'm saying it is not our job to be the world's police of deciding who the good guys and bad guys are. And the idea that we're allied with Ukraine, I'll put some pressure on that, Barry. Ukraine is not in NATO. We have an alliance. It's a treaty organization that we set up. Ukraine is not a member of NATO, so we're not allied in the same way as we've made commitments to someone else. And so I think it's really important to analyze this. I fundamentally disagree that the US shouldn't be the world's policeman, meaning I am a hawk on China as you are.

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I'm an owl.

I'm an owl on China.

Sure.

I'm neither a hawk nor a dove, but yeah.

Fine, but I'm saying there's always going to be a policeman, always on the world stage.

Wouldn't you rather that it be us than China?

And by the way, speaking of China,

China and Taiwan are watching exactly what we're doing vis-à-vis Ukraine and Russia.

And what message would China take vis-à-vis Taiwan if we simply stopped supporting Ukraine?

Yeah, so I think you and I, this is interesting.

I think you and I have a fundamentally different view of international relations on two counts.

One is I don't believe that there always has or needs to be a policeman status in the world.

I think instead it is the net sum of relationships of nations that advance their own self-interest

that can actually trust each other

if we're unapologetic about a worldview

that nations act to advance their own self-interest.

You get better deals done if you're honest about what your actual incentives are.

So I believe I will be able to lead through greater peace, through greater strength for the U.S.

by being honest about the fact that as U.S. president,

my sole job will be to advance American interests

and to tell the rest of the world that they can trust us more.

The second place we disagree is on this latter point

you raised on China and how Xi Jinping

will make his decision of whether or not to invade Taiwan.

He will not reason by analogy.

And I think this is where the consensus totally misses the plot.

It's not like he's worried about validation

on the global stage to say,

oh, well, if Putin got a piece of Ukraine

and he doesn't look that bad,

then now I can not look that bad.

He doesn't care how he looks.

He makes the decision based on hard power.

And when Russia is allied with China,

here's Xi Jinping's bet.

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And he might be right about this.
The U.S. won't want to mess with two different
allied nuclear superpowers at the same time.
If Russia is not in China's camp,
he will have to think twice before going after Taiwan.
Now let's say we know that India is definitely not neutral
either in this.
He'll have to think twice
because the Middle Eastern oil supplies
have to cross the Indian Ocean to reach China.
And so I believe in foreign policy,
I will be successful in getting us out
of a retroactive backwards-looking consensus
about what our foreign policy worldview should be
by being transparent as a realist
that nations do and should act in their self-interest.
And we will be at our best,
and the free world will be at its best
when the U.S. acts unapologetically in its own interest.
And that school of thought,
Barry is a departure from the neocon worldview
that also represents most of the modern Democratic Party.
But it's a closer vision of reviving a George Kennan worldview,
a Cold War realist view, a James Baker view,
a George Schultz view.
But I don't think we have the James Bakers
and the George Kennans anymore.
I think Kennan before he died in the late 1990s,
and this is the chief architect of Cold War deterrence strategy,
said correctly, I believe that NATO expansion
was one of the greatest disasters
of post-Cold War foreign policy.
That doesn't exist today in the mainstream,
but I'm probably the newest and I think, dare I say it,
probably most vocal embodiment of it in American politics today.
But that's the way certainly I will lead this country if I'm elected.
Vivek, simple question.
Do you think the world is safer when America is a hegemonic power?
Or do you think the world is safer and America is safer
when America is in contention with China?
So it depends is the answer.
But I believe hegemonic is not the word I would use.
I think the free world is at its best

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when America is strong and is the strongest nation on earth.
And I will lead America to be the strongest nation on earth
by actually advancing our own interests.
I'll remind you Barry that we're now depleting military resources
that might actually be relevant in a China-Taiwan conflict.
And so at the start of the war in Ukraine,
people laughed at me for saying this.
This guy who doesn't know anything about foreign policy
and national security doesn't realize that's a naval issue.
And this is a land conflict.
And those basics you don't add up, those aren't the same resources.
Well, now actually we realize that maybe the hubris of thinking
that that was just going to be a naval conflict in Taiwan
is a form of false precision and a fatal conceit
that we are now, the Biden administration themselves,
worried about actually the depletion of capacity
that could be relevant in other conflicts
in other parts of the world.
The New START Treaty, let's start with that.
Russia left the New START Treaty in the middle of this war.
We are now for the first time in an environment since 1972,
the first time where we don't have a nuclear nonproliferation
agreement between the US and Russia.
And Biden in the middle of this war is now also saying
that he will without preconditions, his words not mine,
re-enter New START negotiations with Russia.
So we are weaker, Barry.
I think that it's a little bit of a false distinction
where you're saying that one course of action
would have the US be more likely to be,
I don't like the word hegemonic,
but more likely to be strong or the strongest nation on earth.
I think we are weaker as a consequence of the policies
that don't clearly advance American interests,
that have no identifiable American interest
when we're still expending not only military resources
and dollars, but taking real risk of war
that doesn't advance those interests either,
when in fact we should be focusing on dismantling today
that Russia-China alliance that I stand by
is the single greatest military threat that we face today.
And it shocks me that nobody in either major political parties
talking about it.

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And last thing I'll say, Barry,
and you're going to be the first show that I ever say this on,
so you'll enjoy this is,
I thought this is an interesting opportunity
to find consensus with the so-called far left here,
many of whom are also skeptical of engagement in Ukraine.
And so I kind of had a discussion about this
with a bunch of people in the Republican party
who were frustrating me.
And so I was in a car ride home in Washington, D.C.
I actually picked up the phone
and I thought I could have an interesting chat
with Bernie Sanders.
This was a couple of weeks ago.
And so I called him on his cell phone,
but he wasn't in a mood to talk.
But it was interesting because I think it's an interesting way
where we're going to be able to find-
So, Bernie blew you off?
He was, I think he thought it was a prank call.
I think he thought it wasn't me.
I called him up and like literally he picked up.
He's like, who? I was like, Vivek Ramaswamy.
He's like, how'd you get this number?
Who is this?
Don't call me. Don't call me.
And then he hung up.
But I hope I get to talk to him again
because I don't know exactly what his position is here,
but I think that there's a version of the world
where the neoconservative consensus
that I think has pervaded
both major political parties here
and the donor class in ways that I can't quite explain
because I don't quite get why it is
that being a mega donor to either party
automatically predicts that you have to come on down
in this side of Ukraine.
I don't think financial interests explain it.
I know that's the facile explanation that some provide.
I don't think the facts hold up to that.
So it's something else going on here
that's I think deeper, psychological.

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But there's something going on here, Barry,
that blinds us from seeing
what I think is going to be a disaster hiding in plain sight.
I think it's going to be unfortunately,
even during the course of this election,
likely even this primary,
that our decisions in Ukraine will age poorly.
They will age poorly quickly.
As we now see this surge,
this counterinsurgency is going to be flat.
It's going to be a disaster.
Ukraine is going to not be able to win this war,
largely because we have no definition
of what winning even means.
And then we're going to be in a position
where the deal that even a guy like me
would have otherwise been able to do with Putin
will put me in a worse spot than I would be right now
to be able to end that war on terms
that end the Russia-China alliance.
And that's the shame of this.
This is hard because I really feel like
I could debate foreign policy with you
for the next three hours,
but I want to make sure we get to other issues.
So just one question on China,
you say you're an owl,
you sound to me like a hawk,
you went after,
and I thought this was really interesting,
Elon Musk,
when he met with China's foreign minister in Beijing,
you got after Wall Street
for what you call the conflict of interest
and fiduciary breach of their ties to China.
You've said of America's relationship with China,
the sooner we end it, the better for us.
You say that China will fold
if we actually have the fortitude
to deliver on that message,
the argument of decoupling.
What do you think, briefly,
that American policy on China should be?

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What is the headline that listeners should take away
that's the vague outlook on China?

We need, and by fold,

what we need to do

is to get them to either dramatically reform
or be prepared to say that when they cut us off,

which is I think what they're moving towards

is exercising the keys to power,

if they sit on the semiconductor supply chain

of this country,

no, we're not going to be cut off

because we were independent

by reentering the trade relationships

in the CPTPP that Trump exited.

So I would reenter the CPTPP,

make sure that we're in trade relationships

with South Korea, Japan, India, Vietnam, Australia,

the Pacific Rim,

but to put ourselves in a strong position

to say that we are not dependent

on a military adversary for our modern way of life.

I think that's imperative.

And I predict, Barry,

what we're going to see from China

is that they will have a tougher hand than we do.

They will then have to play by the same set of rules

with no IP theft,

no data theft,

no turning companies into mercantilist pawns.

And what do I mean by mercantilist pawns?

I think it is a breach of fiduciary duty

when BlackRock will vote on behalf of shares of Americans

whose money they manage

to tell American energy companies

that they have to meet net zero emission standards

when those same emissions move across the world

to be emitted by companies like Petro China,

where BlackRock is, you would guess it,

one of the largest shareholders

using Chinese client capital.

That is a fundamental conflict of interest.

And the CCP understands that and exploits it

because they say you can't sell mutual funds in China

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unless you do what the CCP wants.
But apply those same constraints in the United States,
they will roll out the red carpet.
So I don't think that's capitalism.
I think it's mercantilism.
Should Americans be willing to pay more
for things like televisions and refrigerators
in order to decouple from China, yes or no?
I don't think they will have to,
if we re-enter the trade relationships
in the way that I described.
If we try to pretend that we have to onshore
all of that to the United States,
yes, they will have to pay more.
And I don't think that's a choice we should force upon them.
But if we're very careful about re-analyzing
and actually entering relationships
with all of the other nations
with whom we've exited those trade relationships,
then I don't think that's a consequence
they're going to have to suffer.
Okay, let's talk about immigration.
A record 69% of Republicans told Gallup last year
that they wanted less immigration to the United States.
And I want to understand your view
because you're a first generation American
as we talked about before,
you and your family have lived out the American dream.
You're running for president of a country
that your parents, at one point,
dreamed of raising their children in.
Given all of that, where do you stand on immigration?
I think that illegal immigration is not even immigration.
It's a violation of border security.
And so I can go into my policies,
but the upshot of it is I will use the U.S. military
to secure the southern border.
That is what it means to live in a nation
founded on the rule of law,
that the wall was insufficient.
The cartels are building tunnels underneath that wall.
Vehicles can run through them, it's insufficient.
I will use the military to secure that southern border.

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And I am a hardliner.
I will accept that label.
I'm a hardliner on illegal immigration.
On legal immigration, I am an unapologetic fan
of merit-based legal immigration.
I do not believe, and I think this does depart
with some of the Republican consensus here,
I do not believe in hard caps on the numbers.
I think there are bills making their way
through Congress and the Senate.
I think that's the wrong approach.
There are more job openings in this country
than there are people in this country.
I think that one of the tickets to economic growth
is making sure that businesses
are able to hire the best and brightest.
But we have to use a merit-based
deburacratized system to accomplish that.
Merit means two things to me.
Definitely not just a bunch of IT guys in Silicon Valley.
That's what people think first
when they think merit-based immigration.
No, it means matching skills to the needs
where we actually have them in this country.
But it also means a second thing.
I think you have to have civic commitments to this country.
I would take the citizenship test from the back end
to actually even bring it up to the front
and even to get a visa or be a green card holder in this country.
And I think that addresses much of the agita,
which I understand in the Republican base
for the erosion of national identity, to say no, no, no.
If you know something about the country,
in fact, no more about the country
than many high school students do who become 18 years old,
and you have actual useful skills to offer to this country,
that's one where actually I think those poll numbers
don't really track the real intuitions
of where our voter base is,
but it will be my job to evoke that
as the core of the Republican Party's platform position,
because that's not where most of my competitors are on this.
Vivek, a few weeks ago, you said you would end

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birthright citizenship for children born to parents who illegally immigrated to this country. Now, these are children who didn't have a say in the decision-making of their parents. And yet you're suggesting that they should be essentially living in the shadows, not able to get a job, not maybe able to get a lease on an apartment. These are people that currently live in fear of deportation. How is that empathetic and just as a policy? Well, I think my policy isn't exactly what you said. So they have a same path to naturalization that an immigrant who legally comes to this country can follow. So as a kid who's born in this country, just because you're not yet a citizen doesn't mean that you can't become one. My worldview, and I've said this in a different context, Barry, but this is part of a broader worldview about American national identity, is that every kid in this country should have to pass the same civics test or do some minimal service to this country in order to have all of the privileges of citizenship. And so I don't think that automatically just the act of being born here should entitle you to all of those civic privileges. So could you imagine a scenario like in this world, right, where everyone's getting this civics test, which I kind of like as a gimmick, you know, would you? It's not a gimmick, but yeah. Okay, sorry. There's more to it, but yeah, under this rubric, yeah. Under this rubric, excuse me, Vivek, in which, you know, 18-year-olds are taking a citizenship test and maybe they're not passing it. Like, are you going to rescind citizenship for someone born in this country if they can't pass the civics test? I am fine with if somebody cannot pass the civics test and is unwilling to serve the country in some minimal way, then I don't think they enjoy the civic privileges of being a citizen, such as voting. I am on that side, absolutely. I think that there need to be civic privileges

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that come with civic duties attached to them.

And what is that test?

It asks you, what branch of government does the U.S. president lead?

I think it is perfectly acceptable to say whether you're a naturalized citizen, whether you're the kid of an illegal immigrant, whether you're an 18-year-old graduating from high school, that you should know what branch of government the U.S. president leads in order to vote for that U.S. president.

I think that is reasonable.

And at minimum, if you don't know that, then at least serve the country in some minimal way.

Six months in the military or six months in a first responder role, this is not as unfamiliar as it seems, Barry.

I'm going to tell you something that many people forget. Right now in this country, on pain of criminal penalties, young men have to register with the selective service between the ages of 18 and 25.

What does that mean?

You could go to jail if you fail to register for the draft between the ages of 18 and 25 if you're a man.

I would decriminalize that.

I don't think that should be something somebody goes to jail over.

But conversely, what I believe is that your civic privileges, not your immunities, and I'm using language from the 14th Amendment here, not your immunities of citizenship, but your privileges of citizenship come with civic duties attached to them.

That's a 1776 vision.

That is part of the radicalism of the American Revolution in our constitutional republic, that we have civic duties as citizens in a constitutional republic.

And so, yes, that is part of a broader worldview.

And I'm glad we're having this conversation because passing Twitter media headlines will take one piece of this and distort it, but it's part of a broader worldview

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of reviving capital C citizenship
in the United States of America.

Well, one thing Americans pretty much all of us
can agree on is that we hate tests,
so this might be your chance for bipartisanship.

Okay, let's talk about the culture wars.

The thing I associate you most closely with
is this subject.

You might hate the phrase woke,
you might hate the phrase anti-woke,
but come on, you are the anti-woke crusader.

You wrote an entire book about it.

You tweeted and you mentioned in this conversation
that you left biotech to, quote,
focus on a different kind of cancer,
a cultural cancer that threatened
to kill the American dream.

I have two questions on this.

The first is, convince the skeptical listener
that the culture war, which is a subject

I also care deeply about, isn't a distraction.

And if it's not a distraction,
and I don't believe you think it is,
convince me that it's actually a winning political issue
because I look at the campaign of Ron DeSantis,
I look at his falling poll numbers,
and I look at the fact that he's chosen
to die on the hill of library books
and Disney.

And I think even if we agree that the culture war matters,
does it actually matter to ordinary voters?

So I'll say a few things, Barry.

I did write Woking.

That book was written at a time where
everyone advised me not to even use that word
in the title because no one knew what it meant.

I will tell you that I think that these issues
relating to identity, racial identity,
gender identity, identity in relation
to the climate, I think these are important issues
because they give us a lens
into what's really going on in our country.

We are starved for purpose and meaning and identity.

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I agree with that.
That is what's going on in our country.
And this is why what some will call the culture war.
I don't call it that it's reductionist.
It means different things to different people.
It's nonspecific.
But this is why the topics that some refer to
as the culture war is important
because it gives us a prism to understand
what's really going on.
And so the deeper cancer is not wokeism.
And I think this is where I'm a little bit different
from a candidate who learned it
as a second language and not a native tongue.
But I think-
We will not name that candidate, but yes, go on.
Well, anyone, whoever it might be, right?
I think that the real cancer I'm talking about
is that void, that black hole of purpose
and meaning and identity.
That's the cancer.
And when you have a vacuum that runs that deep,
a lot of poison is going to fill that void.
Yes, it might be wokeism, transgenderism,
climatism, Covidism, globalism, Trumpism,
anyism, but it might also be depression, anxiety,
fentanyl, suicide, all of which are up
in the same timeframe we're talking about.
That's not culture war now, Barry.
Now we're talking about other issues.
But to me, it's even the economy.
Many of our economic struggles are downstream
of not the culture war,
but are downstream of this deeper void,
existential void of purpose and meaning
and identity in our country.
And so yes, I do think that is the real issue.
And I do think that that is a winning issue.
Filling that void of purpose and meaning
with the vision of American national identity,
what it means to be an American,
ask somebody you're my age that question
and not just get some sort of anesthetized

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blank stare of a hollow look in response
like you're a deer in a headlights,
but to actually say that that means something.
Yes, that is the heart of the matter
right now in our country,
is the loss of that national self-confidence
which is upstream of the economy
because once you get that self-confidence back,
people then have the confidence to take a risk,
start an enterprise, invest capital.
So let me just say it back to you.
The reason people are drawn to secular religions,
the reason they're drawn to all of these isms,
the reason they're fixated,
as you would put it on their gender or their sexuality
or the amount of melanin in their skin,
the reason they're fixated on the victimhood Olympics
is because they're desperately trying to fill
an existential maybe God-shaped hole inside of them
that right now isn't being filled by religion,
isn't being filled by patriotism,
isn't being filled by the things
that actually are healthy ways to fill that need.
Yes, and that is the premise of my candidacy.
That is my diagnosis of our country.
That is the void that we must fill.
I don't see a single other candidate
stepping up to fill that void.
And that is what I feel called to do in this race
as the president, which comes back to a point
you made earlier.
Not all of that is going to be done through policy.
I think policy can play a role.
A lot of this is done through the character of leadership
that we bring to the helm of this nation.
And that is a gaping hole, not just in our hearts,
but in our electoral politics of today.
And I think Reagan is probably the last president
to actually do that in a successful way.
His farewell speech in 1989, January 1989,
one of the best farewell speeches,
probably Eisenhower's George Washington's
and then Ronald Reagan's is probably number three

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in American history.
But when I think about farewell speeches,
what's interesting about that speech that Reagan gave
in January of 1989 was of all the things
he could have said he was proud of,
nearly ending the Cold War, ending inflation,
growing the economy, he didn't mention any of those things.
He said he was proud of the revival
of a sort of national character that we lacked
when he took office in January of 1981.
And I think that we live in that 1979-1980 kind of moment.
I think that's the heart of the matter.
This is why though, I think about the beautiful way
that you just put that, the way that you're referencing
that Reagan farewell speech,
the way that you're talking about the need
to restore a national character.
I cannot square that with your support of Donald Trump.
Barry, I'm voting for myself in this election.
I support myself in this election.
I'm running in a race where Donald Trump is running,
actively expecting and staking significant personal fortune
and risk and family sacrifice on defeating him
in this primary and then winning them the general election.
But I'm running to unite one nation, Barry.
And I think that here's my theory on national unity.
Okay, if it's like a football field,
we don't show up at the 50-yard line
and get a bunch of people from the 30 and the 30
to say, hey, let's all get together and call it a day
and call it unity.
I believe on starting on the goal line
and then finding our way to the other goal line
and uniting the entire nation,
not just part of it.
I have hardcore America First instincts, okay?
I'm a George Washington America First conservative, right?
Donald Trump didn't invent America First.
Neither did Ronald Reagan for that matter.
George Washington really did,
in his farewell, speaking of farewell speeches,
in his farewell speech, actually,
one of also the greats of all time,

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which would be an interesting piece
to weave back into our Ukraine discussion.
But I'm a George Washington America First conservative.
And my intuitions are pretty closely aligned
with much of what you will call the Trump-Maga base
or what many will call the Trump-Maga base.
I'm part of that base.
I just am.
But I believe that most of us
share those same principles in common.
And I care deeply about uniting this country
not through compromise.
I think that's a siren song.
We're not going to get to national unity
through compromise at the 50-yard line.
I think the way we will get to national unity
is by embracing the radicalism of the American Revolution,
actually, the radicalism of those ideals,
of putting our nation first,
the ideals that define what it even means to be an American.
Our diversity is not our strength.
Trump and I share that in common.
But what I'm willing to say is that our strength is
what unites us across our diversity.
And I care deeply about reviving that common thread
that unites us across those different attributes.
And I believe we will get there.
I believe that our base, our Maga base,
the base I am part of,
cares deeply about national unity.
And that is what gives me hope
that this is a different moment than the moment
the nation was in even as recently as four or eight years ago.
Your candidacy is based on sort of the Vivek Ramaswamy
version of the Ten Commandments,
what you call the Ten Truths.
Point number four in those Ten Truths
is that reverse racism is racism.
Do you see affirmative action as reverse racism?
And do you support the recent Supreme Court decisions
on Harvard and UNC?
Affirmative action is reverse racism.
I believe the Supreme Court ruled correctly on the law.

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And I think it was the morally correct decision as well to end affirmative action in college admissions.

And as U.S. president, I will take that principle and end affirmative action in every sphere of American life, including across the economy.

I think affirmative action has been a disaster for black Americans, for Hispanic Americans, for white Americans, and for Asian Americans in different ways.

And I think it leaves us more divided while disguising the actual failures in ensuring equality of opportunity for all Americans.

And so I stand on the side of merit. I believe America is founded in part on the ideal of unbridled meritocracy.

I think affirmative action is fundamentally anti-meritocratic. I think there is an inherent tension between group outcome equality and meritocracy.

I stand on the side of meritocracy.

And so I can go into much more detail on that. One particular policy on day one that I've said, Barry, is that one of the executive orders of Lyndon Johnson was 11246.

It was a requirement that any private contractor that does business with the government, that now includes 20% of the U.S. workforce, has to adopt effectively affirmative action in order to be able to win government business.

That's 20% of the U.S. workforce today. I'll take a pen and draw a line right through that day one. I actually pushed Trump's people on why they didn't do it. They said it was a political hill they didn't want to die on.

And I think this comes back to why I'm able to even go further than Trump did for our own America first base.

You go further when you're doing it based on moral foundations, on first principles, not just vengeance and grievance.

And so this is near and dear to my heart. I am very motivated to move us beyond group identity politics and the manifestations of it and any affirmative action

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is something that I will take great pride and honor in executing early on in my administration.
Let's skip to point seven in those 10 truths.
And that is that the nuclear family, as you say, is the greatest form of governance known to mankind.
Family and family formation and families staying together, that's a cultural phenomenon.
That's about cultural norms.
That's not about something you could fix by fiat.
How are you going to fix that?
This is not the government job to create.
I agree with you on that.
It is the government's job to get out of the way, though.
I've been to the south side of Chicago in this campaign, not exactly a popular place for Republican candidates to visit.
I've gone to Kensington in the heart of the inner city of Philadelphia.
I'll tell you where I land on this.
I think we need to stop paying people to do the exact opposite of what is best for them to do.
So we do pay single-parents more now, not to have a man in the house than to have the man in the house.
That's part of why Lyndon Johnson's so-called great society has been a disaster for the supposed families they were actually supposed to help.
I mean, black single-parent households are far more rampant today than they were in the 1950s or 1960s, in part because we created the economic incentives for it.
I don't blame black Americans for that.
I blame the federal government.
In fact, we have a fatherless epidemic that's not limited to one particular racial group.
25%, and that includes people of every race that fit that description today.
Eight times more likely to end up in jail or in poverty to underperform, to earn less money when you grow up, if you grow up in a fatherless household.
That doesn't mean it's impossible.
There's plenty of people who do.
So I'm not impugning anyone who finds themselves in that circumstance.
To the contrary, I hope that people are able to succeed to their maximal potential, but that doesn't mean that we should want to create that circumstance.

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And right now, we're using taxpayer dollars to actually create an incentive barrier for it. And that's part of how I'll think about taxpayer dollars more generally, stop paying people more not to work than to go to work, not to have a man in the house than to have a man in the house, to not repay their loans than to repay their loans, to smoke a crack pipe or have a needle in Kensington rather than to actually get off drugs. It's a bad habit we form in this country, and that's something a president can do, is at least stop subsidizing the undesired form of behavior. I'm raising a child in a fatherless household, not because I'm a single mom, but because we have two moms in my house, and I wanted to ask you what your position is on gay marriage. Because I'm pro-family, I think I am pro-family in the form of having two parents in the house is good. And I think it's going to be a negative if we actually stop people from being able to, you know, you can't criticize the behaviors that people espouse when you stop them from engaging in what a pro-family structure would actually look like. And so I come down on the side of this issue, the part that's a little bit more controversial in my views, maybe Barry, is on the religious liberty side of things. I do not believe that somebody should be forced to officiate a gay wedding. I do not believe somebody should be forced to make a website for a gay wedding by saying things on a website that they design that they personally disagree with. And so that is, I think, where we move from tyranny of the majority into tyranny of the minority, which I think is arguably a bigger risk in the country today. So as it relates to sort of the hot button tug of war, as it relates to gay marriage issues, it's more the religious liberty side of this that I come down on the side of pretty staunchly right now. But hopefully that gives you a sense of where I'm at. You have been sounding the alarm on what some people call

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the emerging social credit system in the United States,
or what others have called turnkey totalitarianism
for the last few years.

You wrote a book about the dangers
of stakeholder capitalism.

You've said, and it's a very powerful quote,
that private companies are doing through the back door
what government cannot do through the front door
under the Constitution.

My whole life, we are used to Republican candidates
being soft on big business, being boosters of big business.

But a huge part of your worldview
is being critical of big business,
of being critical especially, I think, of big tech and Wall Street,
and the way that they are suppressing democracy
in all sorts of ways, including ESG,
which we don't have time to get into a huge discussion about it.

But make the case, if you could, to the skeptical listener
that this is as big a threat as you think it is,
that woke Inc. is a fundamental threat to our democracy.

Yes, so I'll just clarify one thing on what you said, Barry.

I'm not critical of big business per se.

I am critical of the relationship
between big government and big business,
which I do think is a threat to self-governance
in the United States,
where each actor is able to delegate to the other
what it otherwise was unable to do.

The government can't censor speech directly.

What are they doing now?

They're using private companies
through a combination of carrots and sticks
to censor speech that the government
could not censor under the First Amendment.

My view is, if it is state action in disguise,
then the Constitution still applies.

Those companies then ought to be bound
by the same standards as the federal government
if they're doing the federal government's bidding directly
at behest of threats and inducements.

Much of the ESG movement fits this description.

And I think the real threat here is twofold.

It's one, a threat to prosperity and capitalism itself.

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I think businesses are less effective
when they're not carrying out their core mission
of providing products and services to customers for profit,
but are also taking on other orthogonal social agendas.
But you don't need me to tell you that.
Milton Friedman could have told you that part.
I think the second and more important threat
is the threat to self-governance itself.
It's that old world view which says that the people,
the citizens, cannot be trusted to sort out
hard questions like climate change or racial equity
or historical racial injustice that instead,
it has to be a small group of people
in the back of palace halls in the old world
or in today's new world in the back of corner offices
on the Park Avenue of Manhattan.
And I think that goes to the heart of what we fought
a lot of revolution in this country
to declare independence from.
And I think it's the heart of what's going on
is the real threat to liberty today.
So the Silicon Valley billionaires,
in a way, are our Latter-day King George's?
Our Latter-day Dutch East India companies, certainly.
I think BlackRock or Google today
are each respectively more powerful
than the Dutch East India Company was in its era.
And I do think it is a question of
corporatic monarchy of sorts
and the distinction between that
versus a self-governing constitutional republic.
That is one of the important questions of our time.
And I don't think that that tracks
the Republican-Democrat divide.
I think it tracks the divide of the great reset
or the great uprising.
And I stand on the side of the great uprising.
Let's talk about education.
At a New Hampshire town hall recently,
you said that you would shut down the Department of Education
and you said this,
not because I'm anti-education,
but because I'm pro-education.

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Why is the DOE the main obstacle
for academic success in America?
It's certainly the head of the snake
that the federal government can deal with by ending.
So here's what happens.
\$80 billion of taxpayer money
is used by the Department of Education,
among other things,
to tilt the scales towards four-year college degrees
for people who otherwise wouldn't have chosen them,
for whom vocational education was a better choice,
distorting decisions in the marketplace,
and then also as a cudgel to get local schools
to adopt toxic racial and gender ideologies
that those schools otherwise would not have adopted
if they didn't require adopting them
as a condition for getting that federal money.
I've said we need to shut the thing down.
We will use that money,
put it back in the hands of parents.
There's a role for the states then to play here.
They have to have school choice programs
in order to be able to use that money
to fund underfunded school choice programs.
I personally think that I want public schools
to be able to compete,
which is why they need to end teachers' unions,
write the contracts in a way
that there's no collective bargaining protections.
Think about it.
If you're a public school teacher and you're unionizing,
who exactly are you unionizing against?
It's not against John D. Rockefeller anymore,
it's against the kids, the public,
that you're supposed to represent.
So now you have true transparency, true choice.
I say if you teach it in the classroom, put it online,
put money in the hands of parents,
then I go one step further to school choice 2.0,
school choice on steroids,
which is to say that not only can parents
move their kids to another school
and here's what actually is the reality in this country,

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the schools that spend more money per student actually have worse results than schools that spend less money per student. So let's say that's in New York's case, let's take \$40,000 per student per year and many New York City public schools. And Eva Moskowitz School's Success Academy has like half of that and gets much better results. Right, exactly. So say you move to a better result of \$15,000 student per year, that \$20,000 Delta, I think the parent should be able to take half the difference with them. So the \$10,000 difference, put that into an account for the kid. At normal investment returns, just do the math on this, that kid graduates with a quarter million dollar graduation gift. Think about which is a better use of money, both from then getting a four year college education if they want or just getting a head start in the American dream versus feeding the beast of the teacher's union driven bureaucracy. It's not even close, Barry. And that's not a Republican idea or Democrat idea, but that's how I see restoring the power of not only education and putting achievement of kids first, but also putting kids in a position to live the American dream. And that gets back to dissolving this boundary between the culture war and the economic issues, which I think is a bit of an artificial distinction because part of the crisis of national pride in our generation is that we grew up. I mean, my first job coming out of college was at a finance firm in New York City on the eve of the 2008 financial crisis. And yet things worked out for me and it didn't for many of my peers in the same way. And you know what? People are jaded and less proud of a country when we're making less money in that country. People were told you go get a four year college degree,

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work hard, get ahead, live the American dream.
Well, when that doesn't happen,
and then especially when you see other people
actually living that monetary version
of the American dream on steroids,
because the federal money is printing money from on high,
raining like mana from heaven,
it does foster a sort of jadedness.
And I think that people will tend
to be more proud of a country,
young people in particular,
when they're making more money in that country.
Is that an economic issue, a cultural war issue?
I think labels don't mean much.
I think this is about how we lead a national revival.
Part of this is give people a head start
and a down payment on living that American dream.
That's also part of how we address that crisis of national pride,
which addresses that black hole,
which then gives us, as a byproduct of that,
less transgenderism and climatism as a consequence.
So that's where I'm at on it.
I don't want to get into transgenderism and climatism
because I want to make sure I get through a bunch of other things.
Sure.
Okay.
The DOE is not the only thing you want to shut down.
You also want to shut down, as you've said, the FBI,
the IRS, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
You say that shutting down the administrative state
quote, calls you into this race.
What do you mean by that?
Why do you want to be in government
if you so hate government?
Because the government we have right now
is a perversion of the government that we, the people,
came together to create in 1789.
I think that the administrative state,
most of it, is fundamentally unconstitutional.
I think most federal regulations today
failed the test laid out in West Virginia versus EPA last year,
probably the most important Supreme Court case of our lifetime,
which said that if those EPA regulations applying to coal miners

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were unconstitutional because Congress never gave the EPA the authority to randomly make up those rules, then most of those federal regulations are also unconstitutional because they're random three-letter agencies that randomly made up those rules.

From the FDA to the SEC to the FTC to the God knows what, we will rescind most federal regulations because they fail the standard laid out by the Supreme Court in *West Virginia versus EPA*.

Let's go to the FBI.

It's a good example of how I think about shutting down many portions of the federal government and reorganizing the remainder.

So first of all, if people haven't read the book, my wife and I are making our way through it. She's a faster reader and ahead of me on it.

It's called G-Man.

G-Man stands for government man.

It's about J. Edgar Hoover, and it lays out the institutional history of the FBI.

And the interesting thing is this is an institution that was destined to be corrupt from the beginning.

It's a bureaucracy that really needn't have existed.

At the local level, you have local police and local prosecutors.

You don't have a separate investigative unit sitting in between.

At the federal level, you have the U.S. Marshals, which you will never hear me call corrupt.

There's no evidence to suggest it, right?

They're carrying out their job and then the U.S. attorneys.

But the separate bureaucracy that sits in between was almost created to suck the air out of self-governance.

It is still the J. Edgar Hoover building of the FBI that people walk into.

So there's 35,000 people who work there.

15,000 of them are frontline agents or investigators.

I've actually said that we're going to keep most of them, but we will put them in the U.S. Marshals or in the DEA or in the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network sitting under the U.S. Treasury, where they'll have much more specialized functions carrying out the investigative functions they're carrying out today.

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The 20,000 people that aren't on the front lines,
that's really where the politicization comes from,
and they're going to have to go back
and find honest work in the private sector.
So when I say shut down the FBI,
it's grounded both in a constitutional vision,
believing that you should not have a policy-making function
that's not democratically accountable in this country,
but it's also grounded in pragmatism.

I think we will be more effective in enforcing the law,
in carrying out the functions of the federal government
if you're actually narrowly tailored in your purpose
and far more efficient with a head count reduction
that probably by the end of my first term
is going to be a 75% head count reduction
in the administrative bureaucracy of Washington, D.C.
One more break, and then a lightning round with Vivek,
in which, and I'm not kidding,
you will hear his rapping skills.
Stay with us.

The 2020 election, amazingly,
is still a point of division inside the Republican Party.
Almost a third of Americans still believe
that the election was stolen.

And I want to look at what you have said about this issue.
In the days following January 6th, here's what you said,
quote,

What Trump did last week was wrong, downright abhorrent,
plain and simple, I've said it before.

You said,

The breach of the Capitol is a stain on American history.

You said,

I just wrote a book explicitly calling out Trump
and saying at the end of the day,
it was Trump victimhood that failed the country.

He lost the election.

He should have admitted it and moved on.

Here's what you're now saying about January 6th
and the election, quote,

It is false and it is a mistake to blame January 6th
on Donald Trump.

There's a temptation to say that there's one man
whose name is unspeakable.

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You want to know what caused January 6th?
Pervasive censorship in this country
in the lead up to January 6th.
Here's what else you've said.
I think the 2020 election was stolen in a limited sense.
The 2020 election would have been different
if the Hunter Biden laptop story had not been suppressed.
I could go on.
The vague, which isn't?
Was the election stolen?
No, I want to address this on the facts, actually, Barry,
because I'm glad you're asking me this.
It's just been a lesson to me on how
distorted the media actually has been
already this early in the race.
So I want to be very precise to you.
I don't think you would group me in
with distorted media personality.
No, no, I'm not.
I think that some of what you came from
came through actually a filtered lens.
I absolutely don't,
but I'm saying that this is good that I might be able to have
the discussion with you on the facts.
So the quote that you cited was a reply tweet to a tweet
that was a response to an article that I wrote
in the Wall Street Journal in the days after January 6th,
where I made the case that censorship was indeed
what was responsible for what happened that day.
And I said in that piece that it's a friendly parley
compared to what's to come unless we confront that reality.
And where I also talked about state action
in disguise to censor speech.
In response to that, people said,
are you condoning what Trump did?
And I said, no, I'm not condoning what Trump did.
What he did was wrong.
But the real cause of what happened on January 6th
was censorship.
And three advisors to my company notably resigned.
I paid price for this, actually.
This was in the days following January 6th, 2021.
I have said the same thing then in my book,

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Nation of Victims, which came out a little over a year ago.
And I'm saying the same thing today.
And so I know there's like an opera research thing,
you know, how campaigns work is like,
well, you said this thing, then you said this thing.
Now, literally, even in Nation of Victims,
I said the real election that was stolen from Trump
was the 2016 election, which I believe was stolen from him.
He wasn't able to govern because of a fraudulent theory
created by opposition research
that somehow the FBI bought to get a FISA warrant
to stop a man from governing for the first two years
as effectively as he might have done.
I also believe that the Hunter Biden laptop story,
if unsuppressed, the data would suggest it.
I think you would agree on these facts
if you look at the polling data,
would have likely changed the outcome of what
was otherwise a very close election.
Most Americans did not have access to that story
because it was systematically suppressed.
If they did have access to it,
many of them, there's strong evidence in polling data
to suggest that would have changed the outcome of the election.
I've also said that I've seen no evidence
of systematic ballot fraud
that would have overturned the result of the 2020 election.
It is a mistake for us to conflate a bad decision.
I would have made very different decisions than Trump made,
but that is different from saying that it was illegal behavior.
It is also different from saying that
we're going to pin what happened that day, which was deep.
A deep issue and a deep suffering in our country
that boiled over that day.
To then put that at the feet of one man,
we're making a mistake if we miss the real thing,
which is a year of telling people
that you got to stay locked down in your basement.
Shut up, sit down and do as you're told,
unless you're Antifa and BLM,
in which case you can burn down the streets of Portland.
You can't say that it came from a lab in Wuhan
or we shouldn't be locked down

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without having your social media account censored.
That you get an election to set this straight,
except, oh, if you actually send a message
of a New York Post story, your account is shut down.
Shut up, sit down and do as you're told for a year.
Yes, you tell people they can't speak,
that's when they scream.
You tell people they can't scream,
that's when they tear things down.
I do believe that January 6th
was a product of a year of systematic censorship.
I'm running for president,
so I should be able to take the heat and say,
oh, Vivek, you didn't say that then.
No, actually I did say that then.
Just take a look at the hard facts.
More importantly, look at the heart of what I am saying.
We need to understand that diagnosis
and admit it with clear eyes.
I think every American should look himself
or herself in the mirror
and ask himself, what role did I play
in creating the conditions for January 6th?
I think that's a question.
We're going to have national reckoning
we're going to have to go through.
And I say this as somebody who does not want to see
something like that happen again.
And I fear we will see far worse in the future
unless we go through that honest self-reckoning.
That's what I believe.
Speaking of legality, last month,
Trump was indicted for a second time.
This time, unlike the New York case,
it's actually much more serious.
He stored state secrets in bathrooms
and ballrooms in liquor cabinets.
Who knows why he didn't, maybe to brag about it.
And the worst part is that when he was asked
to return them by the feds,
Trump apparently said to his lawyer,
well, what happens if we just don't respond at all
or don't play ball with him?

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It's a really, really terrible thing.
Then, of course, there's this third indictment
moving over his efforts to overturn the 2020 election.
Quick answer, if you could,
are these sort of the long-awaited return of the rule of law?
Is this justice or is this partisan politics at its worst?
I think these indictments so far, and I respond to facts,
the first two indictments, I believe,
are politically motivated persecutions
for reasons I can explain or I have explained
for those who want to read it
in the pages of the Wall Street Journal in recent months.
These are politically motivated persecutions
through prosecution, they're distortions of the law,
and I think that they set an awful precedent for our country
that in absence of extraordinary leadership
from a Republican, who comes next,
is going to set a dangerous precedent of the party in power
using police force to indict and arrest
their political opponents.
And I am deeply worried about this,
and I say this as somebody who is now polling at third
in the Republican primary,
for whom it would be much easier
if Donald Trump were not in this race to win this election.
At this point, you could say that that's clear, right?
I'm rising on Ron DeSantis, if Trump weren't in there,
I'm going to be clear path to the nominee.
I don't want to win that way.
I do not want us to become a country
where this becomes a natural precedent,
and for reasons I can explain,
I mean, the Alvin Bragg indictment is complete trash, right?
The legal theory he's using is failed on numerous counts
that I could go into the technicals on.
I agree with that.
Do you think Georgia is trash?
I don't know about Georgia, because I haven't read it,
but I will tell you that the documents case,
I think, is also clearly politically motivated
without one single mention of the Presidential Records Act,
which is, I think, the relevant statute,
also the invocation of a statute

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that I think is one of the most un-American statutes on the books, which is the Espionage Act, which has been used to lock up political opponents and dissidents for most of our last century. It's a statute that I've said I would repeal. These are politically motivated persecutions, and they need to stop.

Okay, last question before we get to the lightning round. It seems to me that right now, elections in this country are Republicans to lose. If you look at people's rage and distrust, especially given crime and COVID and the economy and the ideological extremism of many Democrats, all Republicans need to do is stand still and be normal, and I think they'd win.

And somehow it seems to me that they can't do that, right? If I were your campaign manager, I would tell you, talk about crime, talk about kids' education, maybe talk a little bit about parents having the right to decide on the really important things for their families. But you're doing that, but you're doing a whole lot of other things, too. You're talking about amending the Constitution to raise the voting age to 25, not an issue I think is a winning issue. You're focused on abolishing the FBI and the Department of Education, which I think to most ordinary voters' ears just seems radical. And I want to give you a last chance to win over the listener. Why should the undecided voter? Why should the disaffected voter, who's so fed up with where we are, especially after the pandemic, why should they vote for you? And what comes with you is many of these pretty radicals we've been talking about in this conversation, revolutionary policies. So I think that our commitment to the radical ideals of 1776, that is what unites us as Americans. That is what allowed us to become the most prosperous nation in human history, where my American dream story is possible.

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The idea that we have a constitutional republic with three branches of government rather than four. But most importantly, a country whose ideals fill our human need for purpose and meaning. And so is crime a problem? Absolutely. Is education badly broken? Yes. Are anti-meritocratic policies dividing us and holding us back? Absolutely. But these are symptoms of a deeper problem in our country. And I am trying to address that deeper problem to unite one nation by talking about the things that, yes, they're not just the kitchen table issues. And I appreciate you very recognizing that I do care deeply about each of those pragmatic issues, from crime to growing the economy, offering specific policy solutions that will deliver on at least restoring normalcy. But I don't just aspire to normalcy. That's not ambitious enough. I aspire to excellence. I think we as Americans aspire not just to normalcy. We aspire to excellence. And I think to revive excellence in this country, we have to revive the civic duties that we each have as citizens to this nation. We have to revive our commitment to the ideals of 1776. That includes three branches of government, where whether you're Republican or Democrat, it's the people who we elect to run the government, who actually ought to run the government. These are the principles that unite us. They're the principles that make us us. That's what makes America great. That is what makes America itself. That is what unites us across our diversity. And once we have that commonality, that foundation, then our diversity becomes a beautiful thing. We can celebrate it. But only against the backdrop of something greater that unites us across that diversity. And I think about giving you a bunch of policies that temporarily just solve crime or grow the economy. Separately, I don't think there are many candidates

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offering prescriptions for that and I am.
But I'm doing this part of a broader vision
of reviving those shared 1776 ideals,
which I believe are our last best hope for national unity.
And so if you're fine with a national divorce
or California's seceding and New Hampshire
going a different way, then fine, I'm not your guy.
But if you actually care about still being one nation
at the end of this, and I think we can be,
and I think we should be,
and I think that's the last best hope for the free world,
and so we have an obligation to make it so,
then I think it's going to require more
than just making your life normal and convenient again.
That's part of the journey.
It's going to be about reviving that pursuit of excellence
and unapologetic pursuit of excellence as Americans.
And I hope if that speaks to you,
that you come along with what may sound radical at first,
but actually at its core,
is just a description of who we really are.
Vivek, do you have five minutes left for a lightning round?
Yes, let's do it, three minutes.
Okay, during your time as an undergraduate at Harvard,
you went by the stage name Devec
and rapped Eminem covers and freestyle songs
about the free market.
What is your favorite Eminem song?
Ah, lose yourself, tops the list,
but till I collapse is probably a close second.
Can you give us a little sample from your rapping days?
Just like a little Eminem right now?
Yeah.
Okay.
If you had one shot or one opportunity
to seize everything you ever wanted one moment,
would you capture it?
Just let it slip, yo.
His palms are sweaty, knees weak, arms are heavy,
there's vomit on his sweater already.
Mom's spaghetti, he's nervous,
but on the surface he looks calm and ready to drop bombs,
but he keeps on forgetting what he wrote down.

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The whole crowd goes so loud, he opens his mouth,
but the words won't come out.

He's choking how everybody's choking now,
the clocks run out, time's up, over, plow, snap back to reality.

Oh.

Oh, yeah.

We keep going, but we're in lightning round, so you know.

Vivek, who's your favorite comedian?

It was Dave Chappelle for sure.

You know, I haven't liked some of his recent stuff as much,
but Dave Chappelle probably, I would still give it to him.

Greatest American hero, living or dead.

Thomas Jefferson.

Who is the most interesting Republican in Congress right now?

Mike Gallagher.

Who is the Democrat you most admire that's currently in office?

I'd say Bernie Sanders in 2015.

Let's do one more to answers for the following.

Ron DeSantis is.

A candidate for U.S. President.

Tucker Carlson is.

Brilliant.

Tim Scott.

Optimistic and a good man.

Nikki Haley.

A candidate for U.S. President.

Chris Christie.

Grumpy.

RFK Jr.

Necessary.

Mike Pence.

A good Christian man.

Joe Biden.

Old and on his way out.

Randy Weidengarden.

Toxic influence on our country.

January 6th, what word would you use to describe what happened that day?

Sad.

Bitcoin.

Bullish or bearish.

Promising.

If you become the nominee, who would you choose to be your vice-presidential candidate?

I haven't decided yet.

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Would you be Trump's veep if he asked you?

No.

If you don't win the nomination, what is it that you want to do next?

I am very focused on being our next president and if I am not, I would think about whatever's next with a very open mind.

Convince the listener to vote for you in one sentence or less.

This is still the country where no matter who you are or where your parents came from or what your skin color is, that you can get ahead based on your own hard work and commitment and dedication.

And that you are free to speak your mind at every step of the way.

That is the American dream and that is what I am leading us to.

We are running to that dream and we will get there.

Okay, a lot of commas, but I will count that as one sentence.

Vivek Ramaswamy, that was so much fun.

Thank you for coming on, honestly.

This was fun.

I appreciate it, Barry.

Thanks for listening.

If you like this conversation, if you disagree wholeheartedly with Vivek and cannot believe the things he's proposing, or if you thought you didn't like him, but now find that you like some of his policies, that's all great.

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

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