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**AUDIENCE:**

I think with the past election-- so Donald Trump is, obviously, one of the 1%, right? So why do you think there's such different views on whether or not he's representative of America, whether being the American dream or being or being one of the "crooks" in the top 1%?

**NOAM CHOMSKY:** For one thing, there's no America. There's many splits. And some of the splits are quite sharp. In fact, this country has become polarized in the last 50 years to an extent that's never happened before. In fact, just take a look at the two political parties.

Up until the 1960s, the parties weren't all that different. You couldn't distinguish a moderate Republican from a liberal democrat. They're more or less alike. By now, the parties are so differentiated that literally people don't intermarry across parties.

And it's become-- literally, there are some good studies of it. And what actually happened is it's connected with race.

Up until the 1960s, the Democrats were kind of a coalition of Southern Democrats, all extreme racists, and people who were very powerful because they stayed in office forever since the South was a one-party region.

Take a look at "The New York Times" this morning. There's a headline about one-party Alabama. Everybody is a Republican, as if that's something new. That goes back to the Civil War, except now they call them Republicans. They used to call them Democrats. But same system, basically.

But the Southern Democrats were extremely powerful because the senators had senior positions. They'd been there forever. There was a big block. They had a big effect on legislation.

So if you look at the New Deal legislation, there was a lot of progress. But it was straight racist. So Social Security, for example.

The Southern Democrats were willing to permit it to go through as long as it excluded blacks.

And it did. So Social Security was designed to exclude the majority of the workforce, agricultural and domestic workers. Namely, African Americans.

The GI Bill gave-- it was a segregated army. So it didn't go to blacks.

All the way through, the Southern Democrats were willing to tolerate reformist measures as long as it maintained the Southern system of deep racism. And what amounted to new kinds of slavery.

Well, what happened in the 1960s was the civil rights movement broke through this. The Democrats began to pick up civil rights legislation. And the Southern Democrats simply pulled out. That's Nixon's famous Southern strategy, let's appeal to the South and turn them into Republicans on straight racist grounds. So the parties realigned. And a large part of rural America went along with it, too. That's quite separate from urban America.

The lines became sharper during the neoliberal years, when rural America was just smashed. Rural America meant working class, industrial America. Small towns with those industries and so on. That was all smashed. Urban America, that's where the 1% is. That's where we come from-- the people who prosper, the more educated, and so on. So these splits became extremely sharp.

It's increased with new media. So the cable television, social media, and so on. One of their effects is to intensify the split. So one part of America lives in talk radio and Fox News.

I don't know if you listen to talk radio here, but you should. I often listen to it when I'm driving. It's very interesting.

And what's interesting is not Rush Limbaugh and those guys. They're predictable. But the people who call in are what's interesting. And that's a slice of Boston. We're not talking about Mississippi. We're talking about Boston. It's a slice of Boston which is in some other universe. The things they believe, the things they hear, the things they read. That's why, I forget the exact number. But maybe half-- some large percentage of Republicans think that Obama is a Muslim and that he wasn't born in the United States. You hear that drummed into your head all the time. OK.

And of course, the hatred of Obama was substantially racist. I mean, why is the Affordable Care Act called Obamacare by Democrats, by liberals? Was Medicare called Johnsoncare? Of

course not. We just accept the racism. It's part of us. So sure, it's Obamacare. This black guy pushed it through. And that's liberal Democrats call it that. We don't even think about it. But it's because it's all deeply ingrained.

And when you get to parts of the culture where that's all they hear-- talk radio, Rush Limbaugh, Loren McLaughlin, or whatever her name is. You really have to hear this stuff to believe it.

And for large parts of rural, lower middle-class, small businessmen, the kind of people who vote for Trump, that's what they live with. And by now, with the reconstruction of the political parties-- the Republicans are an interesting party. They are slavishly dedicated to the welfare of the super-rich and the corporations.

Take a look at their legislative programs. Paul Ryan is the extreme example. The most savage, brutal programs you can think of. So that's the actual Republican Party. But their constituency is people who are being harmed by these programs. It's the kind of paradox that Arlie Hochschild wanted to understand.

And I think when you read through what she found, you can understand it. But even true of things like environmental issues. So in the Bayou area where she was working and living, there's an extremely high rate of cancer. In fact, it's called Cancer Alley. And the reasons for it are the petrochemical corporations who just pour poisonous chemicals into the Bayou.

And these are people who live in the environment. They hunt. They fish. Quite apart from the fact that their children are dying of cancer. These people are environmentalists. And the people they vote for are the ones who want to destroy the EPA.

And when you look into it, it turns out there's a reason. For them, what the EPA means is some guy in a suit who comes from Washington and tells us, you can't fish here. That's the EPA. But that guy does nothing about the petrochemical plants. So why shouldn't they want to get rid of the EPA? That's their lives. That's the kind of lives that these people are living.

And when you see it firsthand-- and even you can see it right here if you want to-- you can understand the attitudes. They're not as paradoxical as they sound. It's leading to a very strange situation in the country. Very dangerous one.

Incidentally, most of the Trump voters were not working class and poor. They're mostly kind of lower middle-class or very rich. Those two groups. But there were working people who voted

for Trump, or who voted for Scott Brown here. And many of those people voted for Obama. They believed his rhetoric about hope and change.

And when they saw very quickly that hope and change means money for bankers and nothing for us, they became deeply disillusioned. And so they're now trusting the word of a con man who also says hope and change. But it's not that different from the 2008 election in some respects. Just a different con man.

**AUDIENCE:** How do you think we could go about trying to change the attitudes of like, what people think that the EPA does? Or like, that idea of being in a line? How do you think we could change that?

**NOAM CHOMSKY:** By interacting with people. It's the only way. That's what organizing and activism are about. You have to be in touch with the people who have these beliefs. Sympathetically, figure out-- come to understand why they have the beliefs and interact-- show them. Try to lead them to understand that there's another way of looking at it. That's what education is about. That's what organizing is about.

You can do it right in Boston. That's why activists live in communities, work with communities.

**MICHEL DEGRAFF:** Any questions on that side?

**AUDIENCE:** Speaking to what we've been discussing these last few minutes, I think there's a tendency in a lot of-- not only in politics, but just in general to not be as willing to try and understand the point of view of somebody who opposes you. I don't know-- speaking now to politics specifically-- if that's something that's kind of arisen the last couple decades, or that has some sort of historical precedence. And given the polarization I've seen in media that's now trickling into various political constituencies, have you seen any similar effects in any, maybe historical elections or any sort of prior settings?

**NOAM CHOMSKY:** This inability to hear the other person?

**AUDIENCE:** Yeah.

**NOAM CHOMSKY:** Sometimes, it takes really extreme forms. Take Clinton. I think maybe the low point of the last election was her mocking of the deplorables, which had a big effect.

Here is this rich, elite woman who goes-- talks to Wall Street. Gets huge honoraria talking to

Wall Street bankers. She's calling us deplorable.

Why are we deplorable? We're hardworking and honest, religious, conservative, traditional people. What makes us deplorable? But that's an extreme example of what we see around us all the time. This contempt for the, say, Trump voters.

How can they be so stupid? How can they be so ridiculous? They're not humans. And they feel the same way towards the people walking around Harvard Square. There's plenty of that all the back. Like Benjamin Franklin saying we shouldn't admit Swedes and Germans. Not very different.