



# WTH is going on with defunding the police? Rep. Will Hurd on reform, racism and what the Republican Party needs to do to reach out to minority communities

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Danielle Pletka: Hi, I'm Danielle Pletka.

Marc Thiessen: And I'm Marc Thiessen.

Danielle Pletka: Welcome to our podcast, "What the Hell Is Going On?" Marc, I'm becoming so weary. What the hell is going on?

Marc Thiessen: Yeah, that's a better question with every episode, let me tell you. Well, first of all, what the hell is going on is that we've been doing two podcasts a week during this coronavirus lockdown, because what else are we going to do? But, we're entering the summer months. Our normal pace is one podcast a week. So, we're going to pull back and do one podcast a week unless we get some really, really interesting guests and want to throw one more out at you. So just for a programming note, if you've been listening to us twice a week, you're going to get one podcast instead of two.

Danielle Pletka: And one more housekeeping note for everybody. This week technology was not our friend, so we apologize for some of the sound quality issues that are on this podcast. We hope, I believe, the substance more than makes up for it. But, we're working to get better.

Marc Thiessen: Excellent. So Dany, what the hell is going on this week?

Danielle Pletka: One of the things that we've been talking about this last week, our country has been talking about, is — and you were writing about in the Washington Post, is the aftermath of the George Floyd murder. Not just the peaceful protests, but the violent riots, the creation of an autonomous, I can't help but laugh, autonomous zone named CHAZ in Seattle. It sounds like a Saturday Night Live routine. And-

Marc Thiessen: Well, the first thing they did, Dany, they built a border wall. The first thing that the autonomous zone did is build a border. So I guess Donald Trump is vindicated.

Danielle Pletka: Irony is dead. But what we've really, I think, settled on in the national conversation about racism, systemic, question mark, non-systemic, and about whether we need police reform. I mean, that's what the political conversation has been around. You wrote about this. I found your article and actually a few others that I read on the

question of what's stood in the way of police reform thus far really interesting.

Marc Thiessen: Well, thank you. So, I mean, everyone's looking to Washington to see what is Washington going to do about this problem, because our natural reaction is, whenever there's a problem, is what is Washington going to do? But if you look at the cities where there have been controversial deaths of African Americans at the hands of police officers, one, they are all in cities, almost all exclusively in cities run by Democrats. And the police officers have invariably been protected by collective bargaining agreements that were reached with the police union.

Marc Thiessen: So the barrier to getting rid of good cops is not policies in Washington. It's not the Trump administration. It's not Republicans or Democrats in Congress. It's these collective bargaining agreements that are negotiated between local Democratic officials and public worker unions. In this case, in the case of the police. There was a Duke Law Journal study that looked at 178 police union contracts and found that most of them interfered with the effectiveness of mechanisms designed to hold police officers accountable for their actions. So if you want to root out the bad cops, and this is a different question that we need to discuss, which is, is the problem that we have a few bad apples that need to be rooted out, or is the problem that there's systemic racism in the police? But if you believe, as I do, that most police officers are good people who can't stand the bad cops, know who the bad cops are, want to get rid of the bad cops, what's blocking them isn't in Washington. It's collective bargaining with the police union.

Danielle Pletka: Yeah. Listen, from what I've read about this, and I obviously know less about this than you do, who has been writing on it, but from what I've read about this, there's a pretty persuasive argument to be made. I got to tell you though, watching the spectacle of the demonstrations going on in New York City and Mayor de Blasio's absolutely ridiculous posturing reminded me of 9/11. Remember when everybody wore NYFD and NYPD hats? Remember when that was the thing? First responders were our national saints, and now all of a sudden we want to defund the police. Americans need to decide, if you're willing to throw yourself in harm's way to protect someone, are you a hero or are you a racist?

Marc Thiessen: Yeah. I will tell you that obviously my heart breaks for George Floyd and his family. My heart breaks for anyone who fears that they might become the next George Floyd, whether that's a legitimate fear or not. No one should feel that way in America. But my heart also breaks for these police officers who literally, as you say, go out and risk their lives every day. When there's somebody breaking into your house, you don't call, notwithstanding some of the Democratic proposals, you don't call a social worker. You call a police officer and you want him to have a gun. And these people put themselves in harm's way. As you pointed out, they were the first on the scene after 9/11. If there's a terrorist, if there's a criminal, if there's a lunatic on the loose, they're the ones we count on. And the good cops are the vast majority of them. And they are being horribly mistreated.

Danielle Pletka: No, they are. And again, I mean, the fact that there are bad cops is a fact. There's another problem here as well, and what people need to remember when they start screaming about racism is, their victims are not you and me and our neighbors. Their victims are their neighbors in poorer areas of our country and the people who are going to suffer the most from the ridiculously hysterical nature of this debate, as opposed to a reasoned, serious debate that brings in the kind of reforms that we need to see, are those minority communities.

- Danielle Pletka: If somebody decides to defund the police in my neighborhood, yes, I think it's stupid. I'll wonder why I'm paying taxes. But, it's not like I will be in peril tomorrow or the next day. That is not true for certain areas of Washington, DC. And those people who are most at risk of being threatened, shook down, robbed, having their children offered drugs, those people need protection from the police. Of course they shouldn't be afraid. Of course they shouldn't fear that they're going to be pulled over needlessly. But they need a good police department.
- Marc Thiessen: Oh, no doubt. And look, some police departments are better than others. There's no doubt. There's some that have deeper problems and they need better training and we need to have the ability to fire bad cops. I mean, the problem with collective bargaining is that it makes it an almost like ... First of all, a lot of these police chiefs that you're seeing on the news now defending their departments are African American. You think that they really want to have a police department that disproportionately hurts African Americans? Of course not. They know who the bad cops are. They can't fire them. We have to empower police chiefs to fire bad cops.
- Danielle Pletka: No, look at what happened in Atlanta. Look at the Wendy's that got burned down. The police chief in Atlanta that quit, a woman, a progressive, very well-respected woman. And she stepped down and you know what? That sort of sacrificial lamb is only going to further harm the people who need protection from the police most. I want to turn to our guests because we have an awesome guest this week, but I wanted to cite one statistic to you because it really stayed with me. So you've been talking about collective bargaining. You've been talking about the power of police unions and how they stop discipline and firing of bad repeat offender cops. So everybody talks about how Camden, New Jersey, which was the murder capital for a while, defunded the police. First of all, folks, that is not what happened in Camden, New Jersey. They just disbanded the police unions and found a way to do it. But before they were able to, get this number, you guys won't believe it. The average, not the top, the average cost per officer, including fringe benefits in Camden was \$182,168 a year. I mean, what?
- Marc Thiessen: We can afford some training with that kind of money. But this is also the stats for — you go to these DC public schools. I don't have the numbers on my fingertips, but they've dramatically increased the per student spending and the schools are still awful.
- Marc Thiessen: It's not a question of money. I worked on a book on collective bargaining with Scott Walker, because you remember back when he had the whole 100,000 people took over the Capitol because he wanted to get rid of collective bargaining for municipal workers and for teachers. And in schools, especially like in the New York public schools, but also other places, they have what they call rubber rooms, which is where they can't fire the bad teachers. So they just send them to sit in a room all day and play on a computer and get paid. And then the next year, the next school year, they get transferred off to another school. I don't know that you can do that with cops. So-
- Danielle Pletka: Every single parent that depends on public schools, just like every single parent that depends on police and community security, it is such a slap in their face that they are not allowed to demand and expect more. Doesn't mean money. It means quality. And I wish that we could, as a nation, understand the difference between cash and quality. \$188,000 per cop in Camden, New Jersey got them the distinction of being the murder capital.

- Danielle Pletka: So we're really lucky today to have Congressman Will Hurd with us. He represents Texas's 23rd congressional district. That's San Antonio for people who don't spend all their time looking at what district is what, including me. He was first elected in 2014 and he's been in Congress ever since. He's actually announced that he will not be running again this year. Prior to being on the Hill, though, he worked at the Central Intelligence Agency for nine years. He was stationed here in DC, but he also did a duty tour as an operations officer, and for the uninitiated, that means a spy, in Afghanistan and Pakistan and in India. He speaks Urdu, which is the language of Pakistan and a lot of really bad guys. He's a great loss to the Republican party on Capitol Hill. You're really going to enjoy this conversation.
- Marc Thiessen: Congressman Hurd. Welcome to the podcast.
- Rep. Will Hurd: Hey, thanks for having me on. It's great to be with you all today.
- Marc Thiessen: Excellent. Well look, you were recently marching in Houston, in solidarity with George Floyd. Tell us a little bit about marching and what you saw out there and your impressions of the situation we're facing right now.
- Rep. Will Hurd: Sure. What was interesting is when I first got there, I didn't know what to expect. But my goal was to show solidarity with the George Floyd family and then ultimately with over 60,000 other folks, and everybody was incredibly peaceful. There were police officers there, handing some of the marchers water. All the chants were nothing derogatory towards the police. And what I saw there is you could be outraged by the murder of a black man in police custody, you could be thankful that law enforcement was there enabling our civil rights and civil liberties to peacefully protest, and you can be outraged when there's criminals that are involved in trying to take advantage of this period of time by looting and rioting, and even trying to kill police, right? All of those emotions and all those feelings you can feel at the exact same time. And I think that's what most of the folks in the crowd were feeling.
- Rep. Will Hurd: And the other thing I was not prepared for was there was folks from all walks of life, all shapes and colors that were there. It wasn't just the African American community. And there is a recognition, and when you see a video, and nobody who saw that video thought that what was happening in that video of George Floyd being killed was okay. And I think that impacted a lot of folks. And I saw that in Houston, Texas, which is where George Floyd grew up, basically.
- Danielle Pletka: So you said something that I really like and appreciate, and I think we don't hear enough of, and I'm going to read your quote back to you because everyone loves that. So you said, "The march was for justice. And for me, justice is ensuring we don't have a society where this kind of shit happens. I know what it's like to have uncomfortable interactions with the police. But I also know that the officer that put his knee on George Floyd is one person." What you said there is one of the most balanced things I've heard, which is that just because somebody has done something completely unacceptable in our society — not just unacceptable, but illegal. This was murder. Just because somebody has done something, does not besmirch the entire institution of the police, nor the entire community that is white. Just as a crime by a black man does not besmirch the entire community. Why have we come to a point where we are incapable of seeing things the way you described them?
- Rep. Will Hurd: Well, look, short answer to that question is, to be frank, I don't know. But we're in a

period where everything is defined by contrasts, right? And it's sometimes out of fashion or not in vogue to agree on concepts, especially with people that you may not agree with on a lot of things. And so I think that's what drives this. And look, when you're a bombastic or you have an extreme take, you get more coverage on television; you get more likes on social media. And so I think that drives ultimately some of the behavior.

Rep. Will Hurd: But what we also have to step back and realize is that these kinds of things have been happening in the African American community for a really long time. And so those that don't have to deal with this, sometimes people feel like, "Oh, this is something new," just because you saw it on a video for once. No, this has been going on for hundreds of years. And so, oftentimes, folks that want to dismiss this as one incident get upset because this is a continuation of a long history of problems, right?

Rep. Will Hurd: And so that's why you have to recognize the act and the behavior. But then you can't use this as justification for everyone. And so part of the problem is, how do we address these underlying concerns, right? Because we can go down the list, right? Breonna Taylor... Ahmaud Arbery's different because it didn't involve the police. And so in some of these cases that people were just as outraged, nothing had happened. And I think right now, a lot of the focus and energy is around making sure there's reforms.

Rep. Will Hurd: And ultimately there are some best practices when it comes to policing that are not being followed across the country. And one example I always focus on is mental health. 25% of the stops that police departments across the country deal with, deal with mental health. But most police departments only do eight hours of training of how you deal with mental health. Now my hometown, San Antonio, where I live, the San Antonio Police Department is a leader in incorporating mental health into their jobs. There's a great documentary on HBO called Ernie and Joe. And it's about these two guys that have built this program within the San Antonio Police Department. Every police officer in the San Antonio Police Department gets 40 hours of training when it comes to mental health. They know how to deescalate a situation. And so what we should be doing is making sure the best tactics, techniques, and procedures are being used across the entire country, because guess what? That's going to make all communities safer. And that's where I think some of this focus should be.

Rep. Will Hurd: Also, we got to be able to give police chiefs the ability to fire bad cops. And this is - every police chief wished they had that ability. Half the time what happens, the police chief fires a cop, it goes through arbitration, and 46% of the time that police officer gets put back on the force, right? That's part of the problem. Every police chief knows who his bad officers are and every good police officer knows who's the bad cop is. They don't want to serve with them. They don't want to be with them. So let's help everybody — the people that are getting impacted by the bad cops, the good cops that have to serve with the bad cops — and make sure those folks are able to be fired and then not even be picked up in another city or community on their police. I think that's a reform that would go a very long way in changing the culture and making sure there's ramifications of negative behavior.

Marc Thiessen: So let's talk about that, firing bad cops, because I think you're absolutely right. And the people who want to get rid of the bad cops most are the good police chiefs and the good police officers, because look at what they're suffering now because of the

actions of that officer in Minneapolis, the blow back that they're experiencing. They didn't do that. They don't want those people in the police department.

Marc Thiessen: But you know, that officer had 15 complaints against him, and almost none of them had any disciplinary action. But how do you fix that from Washington? Because the reason why you can't get rid of bad cops is largely because of collective bargaining agreements between the police union and the local officials, mostly of whom are Democrats in these cities, that they cut that allowed them to avoid interrogation for 48 hours. It allowed them — that ban anonymous complaints, all of these different things in the police contracts that do that. How is Washington supposed to fix that when the source of the problem is local officials making bad agreements with police unions?

Rep. Will Hurd: Marc, I agree with your precept 100%. And the way you do it — you could address it two ways. Oftentimes, in those agreements, anything in that personnel file gets expunged after two years. And so, you basically can't use previous history in a case against somebody if it's more than two years old, in a lot of cases.

Rep. Will Hurd: Alright, keep a federal database where that information goes in, and state officials or federal officials have access to it. And because it's a federal database, the federal government decides the rules of what gets put in there and what doesn't get put in there. That's one way to keep the data on individuals. That's one way. Two, say, "Listen, it is a local issue, but if your local police department wants \$2 billion of the..." It's \$2 billion in DOJ grants, Department of Justice grants, go to police departments. If you want access to that money, there are certain things that you have to adhere by. And those are the standards to get access to those federal dollars.

Rep. Will Hurd: And can you do something as simple as saying, in the case when it goes to arbitration ... Anybody can just file a complaint, and it may be an absolutely worthless complaint. That's why you have citizen review boards to review these complaints, to see things that are actually valid and that there is some scrubbing that's gone to that. So you want to have that due process, if you will, for that officer. But let's say it goes through that process, the police chief fires them, maybe you have two arbitration arbiters make the decision on putting that police officer back on the force.

Rep. Will Hurd: Because what happens is, one side has their arbiter, the other side has theirs. And usually one of those gets picked as doing the arbitration. Okay, both sides select an arbiter, and both of them have to agree for that person to get back on. And that's a very high bar to do that, and say, "Okay, this is what a best practice looks like when it comes to firing and going to arbitration of a police officer. And if you want federal dollars, you have to be following that best practice." And so it's up to that locality to make the decision whether they want to do that or not. And that's how, I think, you can incentivize that kind of behavior.

Danielle Pletka: So, you're talking about the influence that the federal government can have in creating, basically, incentives for positive behavior. Which, I think, generally speaking, most people agree is more effective than punishment for bad behavior. Although the police union issue is a very real one and there are bad cops who, frankly, need to be excised from the system. But I have two quick questions for you. The first is, do you think that the emphasis that we've seen, especially coming from the House leadership, on federal solutions, is the right one? Or do you think that localities need more power to deal with this? And then I want to come back to you



on a procedural question in the House, too.

Rep. Will Hurd: Sure. I look to organizations that have the expertise in what best practices ultimately are. And so there's an organization called CALEA, the Commission for the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies. These are police officers that make up this entity that decides what these best practices are. So don't listen to some bureaucrat in Washington, DC on what you should do. Let's talk to the pros, to say, "Hey, this is how you deescalate a situation. This is what use of force should be used. This is how our officers determine whether there'd being — focus on bodily harm." Let's look at those entities and decide what's best. Look, I spend a lot of time on... My background is in computer science; I helped build a cyber security company; I do a lot on artificial intelligence, things like this.

Rep. Will Hurd: And when you look at standards in the technology world, you look to NIST, the National Institute for Standards and Technology, to say, "Hey, these are the best practices, they evolve over time." The way we defend digital infrastructure today is different than the way we defended them before. We need a similar body, and the closest body I think we have is CALEA. Every Department of Justice has had some commission. Under President Obama, it was called the 21st Century Policing Commission. Under President Trump, it was constituted in January, it was the Commission on Law Enforcement.

Rep. Will Hurd: You can have folks, and decide, "Hey, based on what we've learned to date, here's what we have." Oh, and by the way, let's start keeping track of some of this crap. We talk about no-knock warrants. Do we have an idea of how many times no-knock warrants are done? Like, the judicial system, are they just looking at no-knock warrants in a pro forma way, similar to what we saw with FISA? So there are some other elements in there that we could do. I think, we'll get to the experts, have the experts tell us what is the right thing to do, and then go from there. And again, I prefer not to listen to some bureaucrats in Washington.

Marc Thiessen: So you've said that we owe it to the men and women who protect us to prevent a few bad cops from soiling the reputation of the entire force. And that's what we've been talking about, how do we get rid of the few bad cops who are causing the problems? The left doesn't see it that way. And Black Lives Matter doesn't see it that way. What they say is, "It's not a few bad cops. Policing is systemically racist. And our country, for that matter, is systemically racist." Do you see the system as systemically racist? And as an African American, you've had experiences with the police that have been less than ideal that I probably haven't as a white American. Talk to us a little bit about systemic racism.

Rep. Will Hurd: Let's take a place like San Francisco. In San Francisco, after World War II, there were places where African Americans weren't allowed to get FHA loans. There were communities that were built that weren't allowed to have black people apply to try to rent those homes. This is what everyone would consider liberal progressive San Francisco, and we're talking '40s and '50s.

Rep. Will Hurd: And you can fast forward to 1968, where a lot of those things were still going on and that stuff was still happening even in the '70s. So while a lot of those things have been taken off the books today, the ramifications of those previous decisions are still having an influence. And so, here's what I know. I know that there is training that would make sure a police officer has the best chance of making the right decision in a sticky situation. I want to make sure that officer does that. I know that when an

unarmed person is killed in police custody, that's unacceptable and something like that should never happen. And so you address those issues. Things like defunding the police is actually going to make our communities less safe which is the exact opposite of what we're trying to do.

Rep. Will Hurd: And we have to address — like, is there a racial bias? Absolutely. How do you address those? How do you deal with those? If I knew the answer, it wouldn't be happening. But yeah, it still happens. But again, I don't think these things are mutually exclusive.

Danielle Pletka: One of the things that in the same vein has become divisive — you said this at the beginning of our conversation, that basically everybody has gone to the mattresses, everybody's gone to their different bunkers and we can't find a way to speak to each other. And even on the Hill, where you could talk to each other about COVID, you can't talk to each other about race or racial injustice or police reform.

Danielle Pletka: And one of the things that I wonder is what this means for the Republican Party. You are a black man in the Republican Party. You are not in the majority of the party. Most of the party does not look like you. Now for me, I will tell you, I actually do live by Martin Luther King's words. I don't think about these things, I don't notice, I don't care. I really don't. You're black, you're white, you're purple, you're green, as long as you're doing what you're supposed to be doing, I'm very happy. But for a lot of people, one of the outcomes of, yes, this George Floyd fight, but also with what went before it and, in many ways, the Trump presidency, has been the notion that if you are a Republican, you are a racist. Help me, what do you say to that?

Rep. Will Hurd: Well, first off, unfortunately, we've had some Republicans, again, some Republicans, say racist, misogynist, anti-Semitic, homophobic things, right? And so first off, don't say those things. Two, we have to show up in communities that Republicans haven't been in. How has a black Republican been successful in a 71% Latino district, right? My district is 29 counties, 820 miles of the border, 71% Latino. It has been a district since 2016, has gone back and forth, R/D, R/D, R/D. And I've held it three cycles in a row to include the blue wave, to include the year of the woman, to include all these times where everybody heralded my demise.

Rep. Will Hurd: And the way I've done it is by showing up. When I'm at Eagle Pass, which is probably 90% Latino, 95% Democrat — when I show up ... like, the first time I went, it was during a tardeada, which is an afternoon party. And there was about 700 people at this event. And 212 people came up to me, and I know it was that because there was the first one and I told him to count, and they all asked me the same question. They said, "Why are you here?"

Rep. Will Hurd: Now, what I call the professional political class, the people that run races and pollsters and stuff, they would say, "Okay, this is a Latino community. They're probably Catholic, Catholics are pro-life. You should talk about your pro-life credentials." No. My answer to that question of why was I here: I like to drink beer and eat cabrito, too. Cabrito is barbecue, right? And the second time I showed up, people would shake my hands. Third time I showed up, people would walk by and whisper "I'm a Republican." And then fourth time I showed up, they tell me their problem. Fifth time, I'd say how I solved the problem. Right?

Rep. Will Hurd: So the way we improve the Republican brand is to show up to places we historically haven't shown up. And guess what? When people like Vice President Biden makes



comments that shows that they're taking for granted communities of color, we can't capitalize on it because we haven't spent time in those communities. Right? So how have we articulating how conservative principles have specifically helped communities of color? Women with college degrees that live in the suburbs? I looked for that stuff, and to be honest, that stuff doesn't exist. Right? We should be talking about education. In Texas, you look at school choice, and we have seen since 2014 to now Latino kids, their performance on tests have been drastically better. Light years better, there's no question. Oh, and guess what? More than 70% of kids that are in our charter schools are Latino kids. Right?

Rep. Will Hurd: But we're not talking about how these principles are actually impacting many of these communities. So we've just got to do a better job taking the message. And look, I will say that if the Republican Party doesn't start looking like America, there's not going to be a Republican Party in America. And why should everybody care about that? That competition of ideas is what has made our country great.

Rep. Will Hurd: And Dany, to go back to your first question, right? Why is everything black or white, red or blue? I think it's because of the way our electoral system is designed. When this cycle, let's say maybe 40 seats are in play — 20 years ago that number was way over 75, almost to 90. 10 years before that it was like 115, 10 years before that it was like 150.

Rep. Will Hurd: When 85% of congressional seats are decided in a primary, whether it's Republican or Democrat, that means that the only way you win an election is by creating contrast. And if you win an election by creating contrast, what are you always doing? Creating contrast. Right? And so ultimately I think if more districts were like mine, that were truly 50/50, then you could ... and I get rewarded for solving problems. I get rewarded by being inclusive and talking about solutions that solve everyone's problems. I think we'd be better off. Now, this is something that would have to happen in 50 states all at the same time, and it's probably unlikely, but I think that's something that would address this issue. And we can go back to recent history to show that that was the case.

Marc Thiessen: So let's talk a little bit about how the Republican Party can do that. We've got an election coming up between Joe Biden and Donald Trump. There was a poll recently that showed that only 65% of the African-Americans under 29 plan to vote for Joe Biden, which is something like 17 points below what Hillary Clinton was in 2016. They're not very happy with Joe Biden or with the Democratic Party. Only 13% say they're going to vote for Donald Trump, but this is a guy who, if you just look at it on paper, it's like with everything with the Trump presidency, you just looked at it on paper, not knowing who the candidate was you'd say, "Pretty good record," you know? Criminal justice reform, lowest African-American unemployment before the pandemic in history, opportunity zones that Tim Scott, and you, and others worked on. Why does he have such a problem reaching out to that community?

Rep. Will Hurd: You have to ultimately show up, right? And look, criminal justice reform was important. Are people make a voting decision based off of that? I don't know the answer, right? In my district when I've done polling, criminal justice reform is not one of the 10 things I ask people, "rank your 10 most important issues," right? Now, the lowest unemployment rate in the African-American history is great. But right now in this recovery that we're seeing post COVID-19 and the African-American community is being disproportionately hit, right?

- Rep. Will Hurd: And so how are we ultimately going to address that? This is not something that you can fix three months before an election. I always tell candidates that are running across the country, "Showing up three months before an election is called pandering. You got to be there all the time." And again, when I would show up in October, people would be like, "Oh, Will's back." Because I had been there 17 times before that.
- Danielle Pletka: Now, I listen to you and I know your background. I mean, you're a guy who's a lot like me and Marc and all of our friends. You served at the CIA. You care about the world; you care about our country. You care about conservative ideas. It depresses the hell out of me that you're not running again, I got to tell you.
- Marc Thiessen: Yeah. The Republican Party is going to look less like you because you're not there.
- Rep. Will Hurd: Look, to be honest, it shouldn't be, right? But I will say this. So in 2018, there was only three of us that were running, that were the Republican candidate in a primary. This cycle was a lot more, I think we had over 212 African Americans running. They haven't all gotten out of primaries, but you had great guys like Wesley Hunt in Houston, you have John James in Michigan, right? There's more than — I haven't met them all, right? My goal is to stay involved. When I left the CIA, the job that I love and I was good at, my job was to collect intelligence. I was the dude in the back alleys at 4:00 in the morning, recruiting spies and such. It's best job on the planet. But I also had to brief members of Congress when I was at the seats.
- Rep. Will Hurd: And to be frank, I was pretty shocked by the caliber of most of our elected officials. And so I thought, I can help the intelligence community in a different way by running for Congress. And now I think I can help my country in a different way in other areas, right? To continue talking about issues that are going to matter, right? Like cyber security, artificial intelligence, quantum computing. I don't agree with anything Vladimir Putin has ever said. But, Vladimir Putin said, "Whoever masters AI is going to master the world." And I agree with that. There's no second place when it comes to AI. And to be able to work on those issues, continue to work on those issues, with companies, in the private sector, that's going to be great. To be able to help academic institutions build an institute on technology policy. Taking young kids that may be a poly sci major, and have them have a data analytics minor and then have them come to Washington DC and work at the department of Homeland Security one summer, and then at Amazon, AWS, another summer.
- Rep. Will Hurd: And then you have a policy professional that understands both worlds because the technology change that we're going to see in the next 30 years, makes the last 20 years look insignificant. It's coming. We have to be ready. We have to be able to take advantage of technology before it takes advantage of us. So helping to do that, right? Those are the things I'm looking forward to being able to continue do it.
- Rep. Will Hurd: And talking about these issues still in the media, like I said, my goal — there is a quote I saw recently from, I don't know if the quote was actually about Reagan, or if it was, it was said by Ronald Reagan, or if it was about Ronald Reagan. And he said to "Learn, lead and then leave." I don't think these positions are designed to be in forever.
- Danielle Pletka: Thank you for your service in every possible way. And I hope you'll come back and join us on the podcast when you're no longer a member of Congress and then we can be even more frank. Thanks a ton.

- Marc Thiessen: I'm really sad that Will Hurd is leaving Congress. He's a great member. He's a great leader in the Republican Party. And as we can see, we need voices like him to talk about these things because he brings rationality to the discussion that seems to have gone completely irrational.
- Danielle Pletka: I mean, I guess one of the things that I asked him, and I still don't understand, is, yeah, I get it, the Republican Party has bridges to build with a lot of minority communities. On the other hand, being taken for granted, being pandered to by the Democratic Party, I'm sorry, if you're a thinking man, a thinking woman, I don't care what color, what ethnicity you are. You've got to ask yourself why it is that it is good for you and your community and your family's future that a party just takes you for granted. I don't get it.
- Marc Thiessen: Well, there is a really a real opening for Republicans with the African American community now. Because there was a great story in the Washington Post. And I cited this poll partially to Congressman Hurd. But Biden has about 85% of African American voters overall, which is less than Hilary Clinton did at the same time last year, but he's only got 68% of younger voters. And 29 and under African American voters, 13% are voting for Trump. 18% are undecided. So what that means is there's about 31% of younger African-Americans who are not backing Biden or are open — are voting for Trump or are open to Trump. That's a remarkable number. And it shows us that there's a cultural shift in the black community where the older voters that have traditionally been with the Democrats, the younger voters aren't necessarily lock step with that. And so if we could just get the Republican Party and the President to really make an effort to win those folks over, the Republicans could take a significant chunk of the African American vote.
- Danielle Pletka: One thing I think you're not considering is that that 19% undecided may actually think that Joe Biden is too conservative.
- Marc Thiessen: I don't know if that's true, Dany, because the whole pitch of Joe Biden within the Democratic Party was that he was the guy who can bring the African American vote. In fact, within the Democratic Party, African American voters gave him the nomination over Bernie Sanders. It was Bernie Sanders who had the problem with African American voters, it was Pete Buttigieg who had problems with African American voters. So Biden should be over-performing with African Americans. He was Barack Obama, the first black president's, vice president. He has strong ties with that community. I think it's more of a generational shift, that there's openness to other ideas. It takes Republicans reaching out and trying to build, as Will Hurd said, you got to show up. And not just once, but several times so that they're used to having you around. And if we don't show up, we're not going to win those votes.
- Danielle Pletka: Well, and I'll add this. It's not just showing up. It is actually caring about issues that affect not just the kind of communities that Donald Trump really spoke to — rural whites, people who had been left behind by international trade agreements, people who felt like neither the Republican Party nor the Democratic Party spoke to them. It's a question of actually reaching out to black communities, to Hispanic communities, to everybody and saying, "I'm interested in the problems that plague your community." One of my friends has said to me repeatedly, American male, black voters are extraordinarily enthusiastic about the question of prison reform. They're extraordinarily enthusiastic about the question of what to do with people who have served their time and want to become functioning members of society, because they are also forgotten. And of course, mostly men, they are forgotten men.

- Danielle Pletka: The Republican Party believes in opportunity. And that's what Will Hurd has said. I'm a Republican because I believe in opportunity. Our Nick Eberstadt at AEI has done probably the most important work in the country on the ex-felon population that nobody gives a damn about. Prison reform is a really important idea. School reform, teacher reform, and absolutely police reform. You know something? I will say this. I have not thought about this enough in my life. But if I were black and I had to actually school my children in what to do if they were pulled over by the cops because they were more at risk, I would be resentful. I would be angry. Somebody needs to fix that. And there is absolutely nothing to suggest that when we had an African American president, a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate, they did crap for those communities. So this is an opportunity and it's a challenge to everyone who's a conservative to get the hell out there and start talking about it and start showing up as Will Hurd said. Okay, my sermon's over. Sorry.
- Marc Thiessen: That's okay. I'll give you an amen. I agree. But keep in mind, as you said, Obama did not ... Who did criminal justice reform? It wasn't Barack Obama, the first African American president. It was Donald Trump. I mean, if that's really an issue that's motivating then by all means they really ought to give Donald Trump a look because for all his rhetoric and his Twitter and all the other things that we agree are — unproductive is probably the understatement —he's done a lot for the African American community.
- Marc Thiessen: I started out in politics working for Jack Kemp. I wanted to get Jack Kemp elected president. And his big idea was opportunity zones in inner-city communities. Well, guess who signed it into law? Donald Trump signed it into law, the bill passed by Tim Scott. There's a lot that he has done for that community.
- Marc Thiessen: And the other thing I need to point out is that when everyone talks about the forgotten Americans who voted for Trump, they're not necessarily all white. The polls show that there's a lot of working class voters who voted for Donald Trump who are minorities, who were also forgotten, who also were hurt by those trade agreements, whose jobs were lost. So it's not a monolithic — it's not the white working class that are the forgotten Americans. It's the working class. And I just think there's a huge opportunity for the Republican Party if they just get their act together to reach out and make inroads with these communities. And they need to do it, not just because it's the right thing to do, though that should be enough, but because the country is changing. If we don't do it, then as Will Hurd said, the Republican Party won't exist.
- Danielle Pletka: We've been talking too much, but look, this is an important conversation and we are going to come back to it. Please don't hesitate to share your views with us, to tell us where you think we got it right and of course where Marc, per usual, got it wrong. And thanks for listening. We hope you are opening up in your state, going to restaurants, going to gyms, getting your nails done, getting your hair cut. Take care, everyone.
- Marc Thiessen: Bye.