

SMITH: I'M BOB SMITH AND WE'RE GOING TO EXPLORE A LOT OF KEY ISSUES IN OUR SOCIETY THIS HOUR. MY GUEST THIS HOUR IS COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR, ATTORNEY AND AUTHOR PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS IS THE LATEST SPEAKER AND THE CAROLYN WARNER GANNETT LECTURE SERIES AT RIT. SHE'S TALKING THIS AFTERNOON JUST AFTER FOUR AT THE CAMPUS'S GOLISANO AUDITORIUM. THE TITLE OF THE TALK CONJOINED IDENTITIES IN THE CORPORATIZED BODY. WE'RE GOING TO HEAR ABOUT THAT AND MUCH MORE THIS HOUR AND I THINK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMING TODAY; I APPRECIATE IT. I WAS READING YOUR BOOK "THE ROOSTER'S EGG", WHICH WAS FIRST PUBLISHED ABOUT A DOZEN YEARS AGO AND I HAVE TO SAY IT WAS ONE OF THE MOST ACCURATE AND ONE OF THE BLEAKEST PICTURES I'VE EVER SEEN OF THE PERSISTENT PREJUDICE IN OUR CULTURE. THAT WAS 1995; THAT WAS THEN. IS IT STILL AS BAD NOW?

WILLIAMS: WELL, I THINK THAT EACH ERROR IN THE POST CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT HAS HAD ITS BLEAK MOMENTS. I THINK "THE ROOSTER'S EGG" WAS WRITTEN TO A GREAT DEGREE ABOUT THE CULTURE WARS AND UNFORTUNATELY I THINK SOME FEATURES OF THE CULTURE WARS HAVE ACTUALLY METASTASIZED AND GOTTEN WORSE. I THINK CERTAINLY OUR INCARCERATION RATE ON THE SOCIAL FRONT HAS GOTTEN WORSE FOR, CAMPUS POLITICS, WHEN I SAY THAT AS THE SIZED I THINK HAVE GONE BEYOND SIMPLY THE BLACK/WHITE CONFRONTATIONS OF THE MID NINETEEN NINETIES AND BECOME IMMIGRANT BASHING CONFRONTATIONS, PRACTICALLY FISTFIGHTS ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST A SENSE OF FUNDAMENTALISM REGARDLESS OF RELIGION, FUNDAMENTALISM IN THE SENSE OF INSISTING ON ONE'S OWN LITERAL INERRANCY OF TRUTH OR VERSION OF TRUTH WITH VERY LITTLE ALLOWANCE FOR OTHERS. AND I THINK TO SOME DEGREE THAT HAS FIXED BREAD AND GOTTEN A LITTLE WORSE. IF WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE CLASSIC CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT OF THE NINETEEN FIFTIES AND SIXTIES THEN OF COURSE THERE ARE SOME MARKERS WHICH COULD BE DESCRIBED AS REVOLUTIONARY. THERE ARE MANY MORE AFRICAN AMERICANS IN CERTAIN KINDS OF POSITIONS, THERE ARE MANY MARKERS OF THE SO CALLED PIGGYBACK MOVEMENTS ON THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. WHEN I WENT TO LAW SCHOOL THERE WERE ONLY 8% WOMEN; NOW MOST LAW SCHOOLS ARE ABOUT 50%. WE STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO WHEN IT COMES TO MANAGING PARTNERS AND LAW FIRMS AND THINGS LIKE THAT, BUT THERE HAS BEEN MOVEMENT AMONG THOSE TRADITIONAL MARKERS. BUT AGAIN, WHEN IT COMES TO INCARCERATION, WHEN IT COMES TO THE HOUSING MARKET AND WHEN IT COMES TO THE UNEASE GENERATED PERHAPS BY UNEMPLOYMENT, BY GLOBALIZED MOMENT, I THINK THAT THE TENDENCY TO LOOK FOR SCAPEGOATS HAS, AND PERHAPS HAS ONLY GOTTEN WORSE AND CERTAINLY PROBABLY SPURRED TO SOME DEGREE BY THE WAR ON TERROR AND A GENERAL SENSE OF PHYSICAL

INSECURITY THAT THE SETS US.

SMITH: I'M HEARING A GOOD NEWS/BAD NEWS MESSAGE HERE. IF IT'S TRUE THAT WE ARE SCREENING OUT FEWER OF OUR BEST AND BRIGHTEST FINE GROUNDS OF RACIAL OR GENDER PREJUDICE, AND ALLOWING MORE OF OUR BEST AND BRIGHTEST TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT THEY SHOULD, AT THE SAME TIME DOES THAT ALSO MEAN THAT WE'RE STILL PUTTING UP A LOT OF WALLS?

WILLIAMS: YES. AND I DON'T THINK THAT IT'S NECESSARILY I THINK WE ARE STILL SORT OF A FRENETIC SOCIETY IN CERTAIN INSTANCES AND IN CERTAIN FIELDS, WHAT YOU CALL THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST HAVE MUCH MORE OF AN OPPORTUNITY AND HAVE MANY DOORS OPEN TO THEM. AT THE SAME TIME WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT THINGS LIKE GLASS CEILINGS I THINK THAT SOME DOORS HAVE OPENED, BUT THE ABILITY TO RISE IS STILL A MAJOR ISSUE. THE QUESTION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS OR WOMEN OR MINORITIES OF MANY SORTS RISING VERY HIGH IN THE CORPORATE SPHERE IS STILL QUITE A CHALLENGE. SO I THINK THAT IT'S NOT ENTIRELY HELPFUL TO THINK OF THIS AS SIMPLY MERITOCRATIC BEST AND BRIGHTEST KIND OF OPPORTUNITY. I THINK THAT THE OPPORTUNITY OF WHICH I AM SPEAKING IS THAT THE (INAUDIBLE) US EDUCATION IS NO LONGER ON OUR BOOKS SO THAT AS A LEGAL MATTER JIM CROW IS DEAD. AS A DE FACTO MATTER, THE STILL HAVE A LOT TO WORRY ABOUT AND IN THAT SENSE I DON'T THINK THAT, FOR EXAMPLE THE HOUSING MARKET HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH BEST AND BRIGHTEST. YOU STILL FIND REDLINING, YOU STILL FIND RESPONSES TO PEOPLE SIMPLY BECAUSE OF THE WAY THEY LOOK IN MANY MARKETS AND IN A FREE MARKET THAT IS SUPPOSEDLY COMES ACCORDING TO CONSUMER PREFERENCE, THE DEGREE TO WHICH THAT CONSUMER PREFERENCE IS TO SOME DEGREE AN INVISIBLE CIPHER FOR RACIAL PREFERENCE THAT HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH MERIT OR BEST AND BRIGHTEST.

SMITH: YOU HAD A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, APROPOS OF THE HOUSING MARKET AND OF COMMERCIAL DISCRIMINATION THAT YOU TALK ABOUT IN ONE OF YOUR BOOKS AND I WANT YOU TO SHARE THAT WITH US FOR A MOMENT BECAUSE I FOUND IT SHOCKING AND DISMAYING BUT VERY INSTRUCTIVE AT THE SAME TIME.

WILLIAMS: IS THIS THE PURCHASE OF MY MORTGAGE THAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT? (LAUGHING) I PURCHASED A HOUSE AND IT WAS AT A TIME WHEN I WAS DOING A SORT OF ACADEMIC PERIPATETIC THING IS SO I WAS PURCHASING A HOUSE IN ANOTHER STATE IN ANTICIPATION OF MOVING THERE. SO I APPLIED FOR THE MORTGAGE ON THE TELEPHONE AND I GUESS THE KIND OF PROFILING DATA THAT BANKS USE I SPEAK STANDARD ENGLISH AND THEREFORE AM MARKED OR MARKED ON THE

BOX AS WHITE AND IN FACT WHEN I GOT THE FAIR HOUSING FORM, ALL OF THE PAPERWORK WENT THROUGH IN RECORD TIME. I'M A VERY GOOD CREDIT RISK, I'M A REAL SQUIRREL, I PACKED AWAY MY NUTS, FIND THE ANT THAT STORES UP STUFF FOR THE HARD TIMES, SO I'M A VERY GOOD CREDIT RISK. I HAD NO TROUBLE GETTING THIS MORTGAGE IMMEDIATELY. BUT WHEN I GOT THE FAIR HOUSING FORM IN THE MAIL THEY HAD CHECKED ME OFF AS WHITE ACTUARIALLY, STATISTICALLY OR MAYBE IT WAS MY VOICE. I'VE BEEN FREQUENTLY ACCUSED OF NOT SOUNDING BLACK; SOME STEREOTYPE OF WHAT A BLACK PERSON IS OR ISN'T SUPPOSED TO SOUND LIKE. BUT IT WAS APPROVED, I SIGNED THE CONTRACT, SEND IT BACK AND BY WAY OF CORRECTION I CROSSED A WHITE AND CHECKED OFF AFRICAN AMERICAN AND THE MOMENT I DID IT CAME BACK AND I WAS TOLD THAT I HAD TO PAY HIGHER FEES, I HAD TO, THAT ACTUALLY THE PRICES IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD WERE FALLING AND I COULDN'T FIGURE THAT OUT BECAUSE I HAD DONE VERY CAREFUL MARKET RESEARCH, EVERYTHING IN THAT NEIGHBORHOOD HAS ONLY GONE UP SINCE WORLD WAR TWO AND IT WAS EXPLAINED TO ME LATER THAT IT WASN'T RACE THAT WAS MAKING THE PROPERTY VALUES FALL, IT WAS A RISK AND THAT EVERY TIME A BLACK PERSON MOVES INTO A NEIGHBORHOOD THE PROPERTY VALUES ARE LIKELY TO FALL. SO AGAIN, IT WAS RATIONALIZED AS NOT RACE, BUT RISK AND THAT INTERESTED FLIPPING A VOCABULARY TO TAKE A RACE OUT OF IT, TO MAKE IT ECONOMICALLY NEUTRAL IN SOME FASHION I FOUND BOTH, COMICAL BUT ALSO AS YOU SAY SORT OF TRAGIC AND I THREATENED TO SUE AND THAT'S WHY I'M VERY GLAD THAT WE HAVE THE FAIR HOUSING ACT BECAUSE THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A LITTLE THREATENING TO SUE. IN FACT, IN A FEW YEARS LATER THAT PARTICULAR AREA, THE BANKS IN THAT AREA WERE EXPOSED AS HAVING A WHOLE COMPLICATED REDLINING SCHEME.

SMITH: AND WHAT WAS THIS AREA?

WILLIAMS: IT WAS IN MASSACHUSETTS; IT WAS IN THE BOSTON AREA.

SMITH: THIS IS SUPPOSEDLY LIBERAL MASSACHUSETTS?

WILLIAMS: WELL, I THINK THAT THE QUESTION OF WHETHER WE'RE LIBERAL OR WE'RE CONSERVATIVE SOMETIMES IS OVERRATED AS AN INDICATOR OF RACIAL RESPONSIVENESS AND I THINK THAT WHETHER YOU WANT TO CALL IT UNCONSCIOUS OR CONSCIOUS, WE ARE A DEEPLY, DEEPLY DIVIDED COUNTRY BY RACE AND THE STATISTICS FOR SEGREGATION AND HOUSING IN THE NORTH RIVAL ANYTHING IN THE SOUTH I THINK THAT THIS POINT IN OUR HISTORY.

SMITH: IS THAT BECAUSE IMPLICITLY WE HAVE THE SAME PROBLEMS OF ENDEMIC PREJUDICE IN OUR SOCIETY NO MATTER WHERE WE ARE? WHY

DO YOU THINK THAT IS?

WILLIAMS: I DO THINK THAT, THERE'S A WAY IN WHICH WE AT A PARTICULAR MOMENT IN HISTORY CLEARLY WHEN PEOPLE WERE USING FIRE HOSES AND MAD DOGS TO BEAT BACK BLACK POPULATIONS UNDER A SYSTEM OF JIM CROW AND THERE WAS LYNCHING IN PARTICULAR REGIONS, ANOTHER PART OF THE COUNTRY, BUT ALSO MANY GOOD PEOPLE IN THE SOUTH RECOILED IN HORROR. I THINK TODAY'S RACISM AND THE CULTURAL REMNANTS OF SOUTHERN RACISM AS WELL FOR HIS EVENED OUT INTO A CULTURAL BREW THAT IS MUCH SUBTLER, THAT IS MUCH LESS IN YOUR FACE FOR, BARRING ANNE COULTER PERHAPS, BUT BY AND LARGE IS ONE OF AGAIN CLOAKED IN THE VOCABULARY OF RISK RATHER THAN RACE, OF THE ECONOMICS, OF MERIT, AND WE REALLY NEED TO PICK APART, OR BEAUTY, AESTHETICS, THE DATING MARKET IS ANOTHER ONE OF THE MOST DEEPLY RACIALLY SEGREGATED MARKETS IN THE COUNTRY. WE ARE DIVIDED BY CLASS AND WE CAN MUCH MORE EASILY TALK ABOUT CLASS THAN WE CAN ABOUT THE WAY IN WHICH CLASS IS ALSO A CIPHER FOR RACE. SO I THINK THAT IT IS SUBTLER, BUT IT'S PERVERSIVE IN OUR CULTURE REGARDLESS OF WHETHER WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE EAST, THE WEST, THE NORTH, THE CELLS, NEW ENGLAND, LIBERAL, WHATEVER. IT'S THE DEGREE TO WHICH WE ARE WILLING TO ACKNOWLEDGE IT MIGHT VARY SLIGHTLY BY REGION, BUT AS WE HAVE SEEN IN RECENT NEWS STORIES, WE HAVE NOOSES IN THE SOUTH AND WE HAVE NOOSES IN THE NORTH.

SMITH: ACTUALLY, EVEN, DARE I SAY IT, THAT YOUR CURRENT INSTITUTION AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, RIGHT?

WILLIAMS: AT TEACHERS COLLEGE THERE WAS AN INCIDENT JUST TWO WEEKS AGO, THAT WAS THE ONE JOE WAS REFERRING TO. TEACHERS COLLEGE IS ACTUALLY INDEPENDENT OF COLUMBIA. IT'S ASSOCIATED WITH COLUMBIA, BUT IT'S NOT TECHNICALLY PART OF THE COLLEGE.

SMITH: IT'S SHOCKING NONETHELESS TO SEE SOMETHING LIKE THAT CROP UP IN NEW YORK CITY DIRECTED, I MEAN DIRECTED AT ANYBODY, FRANKLY, IN THIS DAY, IN THIS TIME YOU WONDER WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ALL THESE YEARS?

WILLIAMS: WELL, INDEED, AND THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT IT IS SHOCKING IS I THINK PART OF PERHAPS THE PROBLEM. I WRITE FOR THE NATION MAGAZINE AND THERE IS A FORUM THAT IS BEING SPONSORED SOON, AND I FORGET THE PRECISE TITLE, BUT IT'S SOMETHING LIKE HOW MANY TIMES CAN WE BE SHOCKED? ARE WE STILL VIRGINS AT BEING SHOCKED, BECAUSE THIS HAPPENS OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN AND EACH TIME WE ARE SHOCKED. AND I DO THINK THAT PART OF THE DIFFICULTY WITH GETTING A HANDLE ON THIS IS THAT WHEN IT DOES

HAPPEN, I WAS ON A CALL IN SHOW, THE BRYAN LEHRER SHOW NOT SO LONG AGO AND PEOPLE WERE CALLING IN FROM ALL OVER THE CITY SAYING I'M A CONSTRUCTION WORKER, I HAD THREE NOOSES HUNG ON MY JOB. IT'S MUCH MORE COMMON. PEOPLE WOULD DRAW NOOSES, THIS IS NOT IS UNCOMMON AS ONE WOULD IMAGINE AND I THINK THAT THE DEGREE TO WHICH WE TENDED TO ANALYZE THINGS ON HIGHLY INDIVIDUALIZED LEVELS. OH, THIS IS JUST A ROGUE ACT; THIS HAS NEVER HAPPENED LIKE THIS BEFORE, ISOLATES THIS AND DISGUISES THE DEGREE TO WHICH IT IS SIMULTANEOUSLY BEING ANALYZED IN MANY QUARTERS, IT WAS JUST A JOKE, OR IT'S NOT SO IMPORTANT. CAN'T YOU LAUGH IT OFF? AND I THINK THAT TO HOLD BOTH OF THOSE REALITIES IN MIND IS TO BEGIN TO SEE HOW COMMON WE BELIEVE IT IS BUT HOW FREQUENTLY WHEN IT DOES HAPPEN WE BRUSH IT OFF AS A PRANK; WE USE THE VOCABULARY OF PRANK.

SMITH: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LAW PROFESSOR AND AUTHOR PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS JUST A FEW HOURS AWAY FROM HER LECTURE AT THE CAROLYN WARNER GANNETT LECTURE SERIES AND RIT ACROSS THE TABLE FROM US HERE ON 1370 CONNECTION FOR THIS HOUR ON WXXI AM 1370 AND AS YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT IT, I CAN NEVER KNOW REALLY FELT IT FEELS TO BE THE TARGET OF SOMETHING LIKE THAT. LET'S BE HONEST, IF YOU'RE WHITE, STRAIGHT AND MALE, YOU DON'T END UP AS THE TARGET OF THOSE THINGS VERY OFTEN. WHAT MUST IT BE LIKE TO BE A TARGET OF THAT KIND OF ABUSE AND TO HAVE TO DEAL WITH IT AND HAVE IT DIRECTED YOUR WAY?

WILLIAMS: IT'S INTERESTING; I REALLY HOPE WE CAN HAVE A KIND OF SOCIAL DISCUSSION THAT IS BASED IN EMPATHY. I DON'T THINK IT'S BEYOND THE POSSIBILITY OF OTHERS, BEYOND THE LIMITS OF ONE'S GROUP TO IDENTIFY WITH WHAT IT MIGHT FEEL LIKE AND I THINK THAT THE VOCABULARY OF PRANK, OH, IT'S NOT SO IMPORTANT, IS A WAY OF REALLY NOT GETTING IN TOUCH WITH WHAT IT FEELS LIKE. LYNCHING'S HAPPENED AT THE RATE OF ONCE A WEEK WHEN MY FATHER WAS GROWING UP IN GEORGIA, REAL LYNCHING'S, PEOPLE BEING KILLED. WE HAVE THAT HAPPENING, THANK GOD, MUCH LESS FREQUENTLY IN THE UNITED STATES RIGHT NOW. HOWEVER, WE HAVE MANY, MANY PEOPLE WHOSE RELATIVES WERE KILLED BY MEANS OF LYNCHING. TO THE DEGREE THAT THIS IS A REALITY IN THESE UNITED STATES, I HEAR NONE OF THAT REALITY BEING RECOGNIZED OR ECHOED IN SOME OF THE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT NOOSES IN WHICH IT'S UNDERSTOOD TO BE MERELY SOMETHING LIKE A CARTOON SYMBOL, HAVING NO CONNECTION TO A REAL HISTORY. SO I THINK PART OF IT IS THAT WE NEED TO KNOW EACH OTHER'S HISTORY. I DID NOT HAVE TO BE RELATED TO SOMEBODY WHO DIED FEE AND POGROMS IN RUSSIA TO UNDERSTAND THE WEIGHT AND SERIOUSNESS AND WHY THAT IS NOT A JOKE IN OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES. WHY I AM AN INHERITOR OF THAT

LEGACY AS MUCH AS THE DIRECT IMMIGRANTS THEREOF AS AN INHERENT ARE OF SOME LESSONS IN THAT. AND I THINK THAT WE TEND TO KNOW HISTORY THAT IS AT A DISTANCE BEFORE WE'VE REALLY COME TO KNOW THE IMPACT OF OUR OWN HISTORY AND AGAIN, I DON'T THINK IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO BE MORE EMPATHETIC WITH EACH OTHER'S HISTORY. SO MANY AMERICANS HAVE COME TO THIS COUNTRY BECAUSE THEY WERE TORTURED, ABUSED, DISCRIMINATED AGAINST, PUT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PAIL. THE IDEA THAT WE HAVE A POPULATION WHO HAS BEEN KEPT AT ARM'S LENGTH, DEHUMANIZED, MADE CHATTEL SLAVERY IN VERY RECENT MEMORY. MY MOTHER REMEMBERS TALKING TO SLAVES. I THINK THAT THAT IS AN UNREAL HISTORY TO MANY IN OUR COUNTRY AND AGAIN, THERE'S A LOT OF EXCUSE MAKING. MY ANCESTORS DIDN'T DO IT. BUT WE ARE ALL THE INHERITORS OF THAT AND SOME CONVERSATIONS THAT WOULD LEAD TO A SENSE OF GROUP SORROW FOR THIS PART OF OUR HISTORY, FOR THE IMPACT IT HAS HAD ON ALL OF US, BLACK AND WHITE, IS PERHAPS WHAT IS NECESSARY SO THAT WE CAN FEEL.

SMITH: HOW MUCH OF OUR HISTORY DO WE ACTUALLY KNOWN THOUGH? HOW MUCH OF IT ARE WE TALKED, HOW MUCH OF IT DO WE GET AND HOW MUCH OF IT ARE WE JUST WORKING AROUND IGNORANT OF?

WILLIAMS: IT'S CERTAINLY NOT TAUGHT, I THINK IT'S CERTAINLY NOT TAUGHT. IT'S STILL VERY HARD TO TALK ABOUT. IT'S INTERESTING, THERE'S A BOOK BY A SOCIOLOGIST NAMED BETH ROY AND I THINK IT'S CALLED "BITTERS IN THE HONEY". IT'S PUBLISHED BY UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS PRESS AND IT WAS A WONDERFUL BOOK BECAUSE SHE INTERVIEWED NOT JUST THE YOUNG, BLACK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO INTEGRATED LITTLE ROCK HIGH SCHOOL, CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL IN LITTLE ROCK, THOSE TWELVE YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE BEEN THE FOCUS OF SO MUCH OF THAT HISTORIOGRAPHY. SHE INTERVIEWED THE WHITE STUDENTS THERE, SHE INTERVIEWED GOVERNOR FAUBUS, SHE INTERVIEWED THE PARENTS OF THOSE STUDENTS, SHE WANTED TO SEE WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THEM SINCE. SHE ANALYZED THEIR CLASS INSECURITIES, THE DEGREE TO WHICH LITTLE ROCK WAS DIVIDED ALONG WHITE LINES BETWEEN THE STUDENTS IN THE WEALTHIER HIGH SCHOOL WHO WERE NEVER ASKED TO INTEGRATE AND THE STUDENTS IN THE LOWER INCOME WHITE NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL WAS LOCATED. SHE TRACES THOSE RESENTMENTS AND TO THEIR EMBRACE OF CERTAIN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICIES TO THIS DAY. SHE TRACES IT THROUGH SOME OF THOSE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, THE CLASSMATES, THROUGH TO A COMPONENT OF THE CULTURE WARS THAT IS QUITE INTERESTING WHEN ONE STARTS TO TIE IT BACK TO THAT MOMENT IN HISTORY. I THINK THAT, I LOOK FOR MORE STORIES ABOUT HOW PEOPLE ABSORBED THE LESSONS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

IN A WAY THAT BRINGS US CLOSER TOGETHER AND HOW AGAIN THE AGGRESSIVE DEFENSIVENESS ABOUT INTEGRATING HAS ALSO LED US TO A SYSTEM OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS, OF PULLING OUT OF INVESTING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, THE RESEGREGATION OF THOSE SCHOOLS THAT WERE TEMPORARILY INTEGRATED AND SO FORTH AND I THINK THAT REALLY KNOWING HOW PEOPLE WENT ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, HOW WHITE PEOPLE WENT ONE WAY OR THE OTHER ABOUT IT AND HOW BLACK PEOPLE WHO WERE SO INVESTED IN INTEGRATION, I THINK A LOT OF OUR POPULATION HAS SORT OF GIVEN UP ON THE QUEST FOR OF INTEGRATION AND IS NOW SIMPLY SAYING JUST LETS GET EDUCATED! AND I THINK THAT'S UNFORTUNATE BECAUSE WORKING AND LIVING SIDE BY SIDE IS A BIG PART OF WHAT AMERICA IS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT.

SMITH: ISN'T THAT SAD THAT SO MUCH OF WHAT PEOPLE THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING TO GET, SO MANY PEOPLE ARE RUNNING AWAY FROM?

WILLIAMS: I DON'T THINK RUNNING AWAY FROM. I THINK THERE IS AN IMMENSE LEVEL OF FRUSTRATION AND I THINK IT'S VERY, VERY IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THIS IS A FIGHT THAT IS NOT OVER AND I DO THINK THAT THERE'S A KIND OF PARALYSIS THAT SETS IN IF WE THINK THAT THE BATTLE WAS WON WITH THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT OR WITH THE PASSAGE OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT. THIS IS AN ONGOING CIVIC CHALLENGE AND IT'S JUST VERY FAR FROM OVER. IT'S PERHAPS TAKING MORE TIME THAN WE THOUGHT IT MIGHT.

SMITH: AND THEN THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO EVERY ONCE IN AWHILE WANT TO THROW SOME ADDITIONAL ACID INTO THE MIX; I'M THINKING OF A GUY WHO AT ONE TIME WAS ONE OF THE MOST HONORED SCIENTISTS IN THE WORLD, DOCTOR JAMES WATSON, CO DISCOVERER OF DNA THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN HE COMES OUT WITH SOME CRAZY NOTION, HOWEVER HE GOT IT, OF RACIAL INFERIORITY OR LET'S FACE IT, WHAT HE'S REALLY SAYING IS RACIAL SUPERIORITY BASED ON DATA HE COULDN'T POSSIBLY HAVE AND STUDIES HE DIDN'T MAKE.

WILLIAMS: AND ADMITS THAT HE DOESN'T HAVE. THIS IS NOT HIS AREA OF EXPERTISE, BUT FOR WOULDN'T SAY THAT IT'S ALL OF A SUDDEN. ONE OF THE THINGS THAT I THINK IS MOST DANGEROUS ABOUT JAMES WATSON IS THAT BECAUSE HE IS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF DNA, HIS OPINIONS, HOWEVER CRACKPOT, ARE GOING TO BE GIVEN GREAT, GREAT WEIGHT. BUT IT IS CERTAINLY NOT ALL OF A SUDDEN. JAMES WATSON COMES OUT OF A BRITISH HIERARCHY THAT WAS RACIST LONG IN EUGENIC DEBATES THAT GO BACK A LIFETIME AND THAT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER. AND CERTAINLY HIS EXPRESSION OF IT IS IN THE CRUDEST POSSIBLE PRE SCIENTIFIC TERMS. THIS IS A CASUAL

EXPRESSION OF OLD FASHIONED RACISM; HE CITES DNA IN PASSING BUT HE'S JUST A CRUDE, UNPRECONSTRUCTED RACIST. HE IS WITHIN CERTAIN CIRCLES KNOWN AS KIND OF A CRACKPOT. HE APPARENTLY HAS A SON WITH A VERY UNFORTUNATE MENTAL CONDITION AND A GREAT DEAL OF HIS WORK HAS BEEN TO CREATE A FORM OF IQ THAT COMPENSATES. IF I HAD TO PSYCHOANALYZE IT IT'S SORT OF A COMPENSATORY TIC PECULIAR YEAR TO HIM, SO LET ME PUT IT THAT WAY. BUT HE ALSO IS WORKING TO BIOENGINEER THE HUMAN GERM LINE SO THAT HE CAN CREATE A POST SPECIES FORM OF INTELLIGENT BEING THAT WILL HAVE A MEMORY. HE REALLY, I THINK, COLLAPSES THE QUESTION OF IQ INTO MEMORY. AND AGAIN, IQ BY MOST DEFINITIONS IS A BIT MORE COMPLEX THAN MEMORY OTHERWISE; PEOPLE LIKE SAVANTS OR CERTAIN FORMS OF AUTISM WOULD BE AUTOMATICALLY HIGHEST IQ OF PEOPLE WE HAVE. HE SORT OF ASSOCIATES WITH MEMORY AND HE WANTS TO CREATE PEOPLE WITH IQ'S OF 300; THAT THAT WOULD BE THE NORM AND HE'S BEEN ALSO WIDELY QUOTED AS SAYING THAT IF YOU DON'T PURCHASE THIS AS A PRODUCT OR AN OPTION FOR YOUR CHILD, YOU'LL END UP WITH THE DUMBEST KID ON THE BLOCK. I THINK THIS IS ALSO PART OF A KIND OF EUGENIC UNDERPINNING OF HIS THINKING THAT IS AT LEAST AS SCARY AS IS RACISM AND AGAIN, HIS IS MORE THAN RACISM, IT'S SPECISM, BECAUSE HE WANTS TO CREATE WHAT HE CALLS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SPECIES AND LIVING AS A PARENT IN NEW YORK, MY SENSE IS THAT IF THERE'S THAT ELIXIR AS A PRODUCT ON THE MARKET THERE WILL BE A THOUSAND PARENTS LINING UP TO PURCHASE IT. I THINK IT IS A DISGUISED FORM OF EUGENICS AND I'D LIKE TO HAVE THAT DISCUSSION.

SMITH: HE SOUNDS LIKE A MAN WHO HAS PROBABLY WATCHED TOO MANY REPLAYS OF STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN.

WILLIAMS: WELL, IF ONLY IT WERE SCIENCE FICTION, BUT I THINK FOR WHAT'S PARTICULARLY TROUBLING ABOUT IT IS THAT WE ARE AT A POINT, QUITE LITERALLY, OF BEING ABLE TO CHANGE THE HUMAN GERM LINE IN CERTAIN FASHIONS, BUT THE PROBLEM IS THE DEGREE TO WHICH WE WILL HAVE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES IS A VERY BIG OPEN QUESTION FOR, THE DEGREE TO WHICH YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO ALTER SOMEONE'S MEMORY, BUT THEN (INAUDIBLE) IS CERTAINLY A VIOLATION OF THE NUREMBURG CONVENTIONS BECAUSE IT IS AN EXPERIMENTATION ON PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT CONSENTED FOR BECAUSE YOU'RE EXPERIMENTING ON CHILDREN WHO HAVE NOT YET BEEN BORN. THE RISK OF CREATING PEOPLE WITH OVERDEVELOPED PARTS OF ONE BRAIN BUT NOT WHAT WE WOULD CALL PERSONALITY ON THE OTHER. THESE ARE ALL VERY UNEXPLORED AND THE KIND OF WORK HE'S PROPOSING AND I KNOW THAT HE'S CREATED GREAT ALARM AGAIN, NOT JUST FOR HIS RACISM BUT HIS DESIRE TO ALTER THE

SPECIES, TO HAVE US, HE WANTS TO ADD ANIMAL CELL LINES IF NECESSARY, HE'S VERY GUNG HO AND VERY UNSCRUPULOUS.

SMITH: THIS IS A FELLOW WHO OBVIOUSLY WHOSE HUMAN EMPATHY IS IMPAIRED BUT BY THE SAME TOKEN IS HE IN A WAY JUST AN EXTREME EXAMPLE OF A SOCIAL PATHOLOGY THAT'S OUT THERE A LOT?

WILLIAMS: I THINK SO, I MEAN YOU CERTAINLY HAVE A LOT, HE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO CLAIMS RACIAL SUPERIORITY. AGAIN, WE HAVE WHOLE PARTS OF THE CULTURE PREMISED EITHER EXPLICITLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY PERHAPS ON RACIAL SUPERIORITY, CLASS SUPERIORITY; HE SEEMS TO BE A COMBINATION OF RACE AND CLASS SUPERIORITY. THE BELL CURVE, CHARLES MURRAY, RECENTLY DID A PIECE AS WELL IN COMMENTARY MAGAZINE CLAIMING THAT GENETICALLY JEWS, WHICH HE DID NOT DEFINE, I MEAN THE WHOLE CONCEPT OF WHO SOMEONE WHO IS JEWISH IS, WHETHER IT'S A GENETIC OR IT'S A CULTURAL, WHETHER IT'S RELIGIOUS, WENT UNEXAMINED BUT HE SAID THEY'RE SMARTER BECAUSE BASICALLY THE DUMB ONES WERE KILLED OFF IN THE POGROMS IN THE HOLOCAUST. SO WE'RE DEFINITELY AT A MOMENT IN TIME WHEN ON THE ONE HAND IT'S INCREDIBLY IRONIC BECAUSE IF THE HUMANE GENOME PROJECT HAS DONE NOTHING, IT REALLY HAS SHOWN, THAT'S WHAT I AGAIN FIND ALARMING ABOUT JAMES WATSON'S PARTICIPATION IN THIS INTERFACING WITH INFOTAINMENT MEDIA, BUT WE ARE AT A MOMENT WHEN THE HUMAN GENOME PROJECT HAS SHOWN THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS RACE; THAT RACE IS A CULTURAL CONSTRUCT THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS RACE, THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS SUPPOSEDLY FIVE GROUPED RACES THAT YOU CAN TRACE FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIP, YOU CAN TRACE BROAD MIGRATORY PATTERNS ACROSS CONTINENTS BUT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS RACE. SO AT THE MOMENT WHEN WE SHOULD BE CELEBRATING AGAIN, LEARNING AGAIN THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS RACE, INSTEAD IT'S BEING REINSCRIBED, REBIOLOGIZED, IN THIS CARELESS, CARELESS WAY.

SMITH: DO WE NOT WANT TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE FACT THAT MAYBE WE'RE NOT DISTINCTIVE AS PEOPLE OR AS GROUPS, BUT WE ALL CAME OUT OF THE SAME PLACE IN EAST AFRICA A FEW HUNDRED THOUSAND YEARS AGO AND WE'RE ALL IN IT TOGETHER? ARE WE HAVING TROUBLE COMING TO TERMS WITH THE FACT THAT WE AREN'T DISTINCTIVE FROM EACH OTHER BUT THAT WE'RE ALL THE SAME?

WILLIAMS: AGAIN, I THINK THERE HAVE BEEN BETTER TIMES IN HUMAN HISTORY AND WORSE TIMES IN HUMAN HISTORY. IT MAY BE THAT WE ARE TRIBAL BY INSTINCT, BUT I ALSO THINK AGAIN THAT THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN HOSPITALITY ACROSS TRIBAL BOUNDARY BEYOND THE PAIL HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT LESS FREIGHTED THAN AT OTHERS AND I

THINK THAT AGAIN, YOU CAN EXAMINE A CULTURE, WE HAVE ENOUGH HISTORY BEHIND US TO KNOW WHAT THOSE ELEMENTS OF TRUST AND DISTRUST MIGHT BE AND WE CAN, WITH OUR GLORIOUS TECHNOLOGY, EITHER ENHANCE IT BY PROFILING THE LIFE OUT OF OUR ABILITY TO BE COMMUNITARIAN, OR WE CAN USE THAT TECHNOLOGY TO BRING US CLOSER TOGETHER, TO REALLY RECREATE A KIND OF GLOBAL VILLAGE IF ONLY WE WANTED TO. BUT I THINK THERE IS A TIME IMMEMORIAL FIGHT OVER RESOURCES THAT FEEDS SOME OF THIS CONVERSATION AS WELL.

SMITH: WE'LL TALK ABOUT THAT, WE'LL TALK ABOUT THE FEAR, WE'LL TALK ABOUT ALL OF THE THINGS THAT MOTIVATE US, DIVIDE US, MAYBE SHOULD UNITE US, TALKING WITH PATRICIA WILLIAMS, WHO'S HERE WITH US RIGHT NOW ON 1370 CONNECTION IN ADVANCE OF HER LECTURE AS PART OF THE CAROLYN WERNER GANNETT LECTURE SERIES AT RIT. I'M BOB SMITH. JOIN US AT 263-WXXI, 263-9994 OR ELSE WRITE TO US ON THE LIVE LINE AT ASKTALK@WXXI.ORG. WE'LL PICK IT UP IN JUST A MOMENT WITH MORE OF 1370 CONNECTION.

1370 CONNECTION CONTINUING ON WXXI. I'M BOOB SMITH HERE WITH YOU ON WXXI AM 1370 TALKING WITH PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LAW PROFESSOR, ATTORNEY AND AUTHOR, AUTHOR OF BOOKS INCLUDING "THE ROOSTER'S EGG" AND "ALCHEMY OF RACE AND RIGHTS" AND MORE HERE ON 1370 CONNECTION WITH US IN ADVANCE OF HER APPEARANCE AT THE CAROLYN WERNER GANNETT LECTURE SERIES AT RIT. SPEAKING AT COLLOQUIUM THIS AFTERNOON AT 4; THE CAMPUS'S GOLISANO AUDITORIUM AND SPEAKING AGAIN TONIGHT AT 7. HER LECTURE THEN WILL BE "CONJOINED IDENTITIES AND THE CORPORATIZED BODY" AND THAT WILL BE AT 7 O'CLOCK AT WEBB AUDITORIUM AT RIT. AND YOU CAN JOIN US IN CONVERSATION IN ADVANCE AT 263-WXXI. ED IN THE CITY IS HERE WITH US. ED, YOU'RE ON THE AIR WITH US. WELCOME.

ED: GOOD AFTERNOON FOLKS. I APPRECIATE YOU TAKING MY CALL. A COUPLE COMMENTS AND A QUESTION. I'M NOT SURE WHAT WATSON'S INTENTIONS WERE, MAYBE HE WAS JUST TRYING TO POINT OUT SOME GENETIC DIFFERENCES THAT EXIST BETWEEN PEOPLE, RACES, WHAT HAVE YOU, WE ALL KNOW THAT'S EVIDENT, I MEAN OUR VARYING BLOOD TYPES, OTHER

WILLIAMS: BUT THERE IS NO (INAUDIBLE) CULT RACE; THERE IS NO (INAUDIBLE) THAT MARKS A WHITE PERSON FROM A BLACK PERSON. THAT'S A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT. THERE IS NO GENETIC DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BLACK, WHITE, ASIAN, THAT CAN BE IDENTIFIED AS RACE.

ED: I MEAN JUST FOR THE CASUAL OBSERVER THERE HAS TO BE SOME

DIFFERENCE BECAUSE THERE'S OBVIOUS DIFFERENCE IN SKIN PIGMENTATION.

WILLIAMS: BUT MELANIN IS NOT CONNECTED TO

ED: IT HAS TO BE CONNECTED TO YOUR DNA; I MEAN IT'S A CODE FOR THE WAY THE SKIN IS DEVELOPED.

SMITH: SOME OF US ARE ADMITTEDLY MELANIN IMPAIRED, YEAH (LAUGHING).

WILLIAMS: I DON'T KNOW WHETHER YOU WANT TO ASK YOUR QUESTION FIRST BUT MAY I INTERRUPT JUST TO TAKE THIS. BLACK IS A CULTURAL CONSTRUCT AND MELANIN, IF YOU TRAVEL AROUND THE EQUATOR OF THE EARTH, PEOPLE TEND TO BE DARK ANYWHERE AROUND THE GLOBE THAT YOU GO. NOT EVERYBODY ON THE GLOBE WHO IS MELANIN DARKENED IS CALLED BLACK IN A RACIAL CONSTRUCT. SOME ARE CALLED ASIAN, SOME ARE CALLED ARAB, BUT MELANIN IS NOT CONNECTED TO MENTAL CAPACITY, IT'S NOT CONNECTED TO BLOOD TYPE, IT'S NOT CONNECTED TO CULTURE; MELANIN IS A RESPONSE TO EXPOSURE TO SUN AND THAT'S ALL. IT'S NOT CONNECTED TO ANY OF WHAT WE CALL RACIAL CATEGORIES WHICH ARE SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED.

SMITH: IT CAN BE ENVIRONMENTALLY ADAPTIVE I GUESS, BUT YOU KNOW, I GUESS THOSE OF US WHO DON'T HAVE MUCH OF IT, WELL, I GUESS WE GET ALONG BUT WE BURN LIKE HELL IN THE SOUTHERN CLIMATES.

WILLIAMS: IT HAS NOTHING IN COMMON WITH OTHER BEHAVIORAL MARKERS; IT DOESN'T HAVE TO DO WITH ATHLETIC ABILITY, THERE IS NO OTHER (INAUDIBLE), OTHER THAN ONE'S ANCESTORS HAVING BEEN IN SUNNY CLIMES.

SMITH: IT IS WHAT IT IS, BASICALLY. ONE THING THAT'S INTERESTING THOUGH AND THIS CAME UP REPEATEDLY AS I WAS READING YOUR ESSAY, "SEEING COLORBLIND FUTURE", YOU WONDER WHAT THE OBJECTIVE OF A SOCIETY SHOULD BE BECAUSE DO WE WANT NOT TO TAKE NOTICE OF THE FACT THAT WE DON'T ALL LOOK EXACTLY THE SAME OR DO WE JUST WANT TO KIND OF TAKE IT IN STRIDE AND PUT IT IN PERSPECTIVE AND SEE IT FOR WHAT IT IS AND NO MORE THAN IT IS? AND HOW DO WE DO IT? HOW DO WE GET TO THE RIGHT EQUILIBRIUM THERE?

WILLIAMS: ONE THING IS TO TAKE IT OUT OF THE LEVEL OF THAT KIND OF ABSTRACTION; I MEAN TO SAY THAT WE'RE GOING TO BE

COLORBLIND IS A WONDERFUL IDEAL, IT'S A GOAL, WE WANT NOT TO NOTICE IT, BUT ON THE OTHER AND IN A SOCIETY THAT'S AS DRIVEN BY OR IS MARKED BY DIVISIONS AS OURS, ONE WANTS TO BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT RACE WHEN IT MAKES SENSE. SO FOR EXAMPLE IF YOU SAY, OH, MY BEST BLACK FRIEND, WELL, OSTENSIBLY RACE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS PERSON BEING YOUR BEST FRIEND. THAT'S A NONSENSICAL WAY OF DISCUSSING RACE. IF ON THE OTHER HAND YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT HOUSING PATTERNS OR THE FACT THAT A CERTAIN NEIGHBORHOOD HAS BEEN COMPLETELY DESERTED BY GARBAGE COLLECTORS THEN YOU MIGHT WANT TO ALSO OBSERVE THAT WHAT EXPLAINS THIS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE HISTORY OF RACIAL DEPRIVATION OR CLASS ISOLATION OF CERTAIN RACIAL GROUPS AS A WAY IF REMEDIATING IT. I THINK THAT THERE HAS BEEN A KIND OF SILLINESS IN SOME OF THE CONVERSATIONS RECENTLY THAT SAYS THAT IF YOU TALK ABOUT RACE, THEREFORE YOU CREATE RACISM. IF YOU TAKE RACE OUT OF THE PICTURE ALTOGETHER IF YOU SIMPLY DON'T TALK ABOUT RACE AT ALL, IT WILL GO AWAY. I THINK THAT SURELY WE CAN BE MORE INTELLIGENT THAN THAT.

SMITH: YOU TALK ABOUT IT IN AN INTERESTING CONTEXT. IT WAS THE WAY YOUR YOUNG SON WHEN HE WAS IN PRE K TALKED ABOUT SORT OF OFFHANDED AND INDIRECTLY IN THAT WAY AND HOW IT WAS COMING FORWARD WITH HIM AND HE WASN'T DOING HIS COLORS AT THE TIME.

WILLIAMS: YES, YES, YES. HIS PRESCHOOL INFORMED ME THAT HE WAS COLORBLIND AND THEY TOLD ME TO TAKE INTO AN OPTOMETRIST SO I DID AND THE OPTOMETRIST HAD HIM DISTINGUISH SOME FIELD OR OTHER AND THEY SAID THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH HIS EYESIGHT; HE'S NOT COLOR BLIND. BUT THEY SAID HE'S CLEARLY NOT IDENTIFYING THE PINK TEDDY BEAR FROM THE GREEN TEDDY BEAR SO I BEGAN TO, THE OPTOMETRISTS SAYS HE'S FINE, WHAT'S GOING ON? AND THEN I BEGAN TO LISTEN AND WITH THE HELP OF HIS TEACHERS I ACTUALLY UNPARSED SOMETHING THAT HAD HAPPENED IN HIS CLASSROOM. HE ACTUALLY WASN'T MISIDENTIFYING COLORS, HE WAS SAYING, WHEN YOU'D ASK WHAT COLOR IS THE SKY HE WOULD SAY IT DOESN'T MATTER. WHEN YOU WOULD SAY WHAT COLOR IS THE GRASS? IT DOESN'T MATTER. AND IT TURNS OUT THAT THERE HAD BEEN AN INCIDENT IN HIS CLASS IN WHICH ONE OF THE SLIGHTLY OLDER KIDS HAD BEEN SAYING THAT BLACK KIDS CAN'T PLAY GOOD GUYS, SORT OF A BLACK AS CRIMINAL IMAGE HAD ALREADY ENTERED HIS LITTLE TELEVISION BESOTTED BRAIN AND THE TEACHER HAD ROUNDED ALL OF THE KIDS UP AND GIVEN THEM A VERY GOOD LECTURE ABOUT HOW IT DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER YOU'RE BLACK OR WHITE OR RED OR BLUE OR GREEN; COLOR DOESN'T MATTER. AND WHAT WAS INTERESTING TO ME AS MY SON HAD SO DEFENSIVELY INTERNALIZED IT, CLUNG TO IT IN

THIS REALLY RIGID, LITERAL WAY CLEARLY SENSING SOME INVESTMENT OF BEING ON ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER OF GOOD OR EVIL. HE WAS THREE AT THE TIME, THAT HIS WAY OF COPING WITH WHAT HAD CLEARLY BEEN A SOCIAL ISOLATION WAS TO TAKE THESE TEACHER'S WORDS TO SUCH HEART THAT IT DIDN'T MATTER WHETHER THE SKY WAS BLUE OR THE GRASS WAS GREEN.

SMITH: HIS LITTLE THREE YEAR OLD MIND WAS GOING ALL THE WAY, EXTRAPOLATING IT THIS FAR. HOW DID YOU DEAL WITH THAT IN THE END AND GET HIM THE SORT OF THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE ON THOSE THINGS?

WILLIAMS: WELL, YOU KNOW, RACE IS ABOUT IRRATIONALITY AND I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU EXPLAIN IRRATIONALITY, EITHER TO A THREE YEAR OLD OR US AS ADULTS. I MEAN, I THINK THAT WE ARE CONSTANTLY GRAPPLING WITH HOW TO DEAL WITH IT. I DON'T THINK, I THINK RACE HAS THE FUNCTION OF RATIONALIZING IRRATIONALITY AND THAT'S THE CONUNDRUM THAT IT PRESENTS. SO I DO THINK THAT REALLY LISTENING TO DATA, REALLY PICKING APART STATISTICS, REALLY UNDERSTANDING, NOT FILLING IN THE GAP. THE PREVIOUS CALLER SAID THERE MUST BE SOMETHING AND I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE FEEL THAT WAY, THERE MUST BE SOME DIFFERENCES, IT'S SO OBVIOUS! TO REALLY, REALLY UNDERSTAND, TO UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS NO GENETIC FACTOR CALLED BLACK RACE AS OPPOSED TO WHITE RACE AND IF IT SEEMS THAT OBVIOUS WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE SOCIETY THAT MAKES IT SO UNQUESTIONABLE AND THAT'S HARD, HARD WORK. WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES IT SO UNQUESTIONABLE?

SMITH: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS GET MIXED UP AND INVESTED WITH THINGS THAT THEY SHOULDN'T BE BUT IS THERE SOMETHING ABOUT US AND THE WAY WE GROW UP, THE WAY WE'RE RAISED?

WILLIAMS: AGAIN, IT'S ABOUT NOT KNOWING EACH OTHER. I THINK IN A SOCIETY THAT PROFESSES TO BE COLORBLIND, THAT PROFESSES TO BE AS DIVERSE AS WE ARE, WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE OVERALL NUMBERS OF WHO WE ARE IN THIS COUNTRY, LOOK AT ALL THE LANGUAGES SPOKEN. WE ARE NOT AS CLASS BOUND OR AS DIVIDED A SOCIETY AS MANY PARTS OF THE OLD WORLD FROM EUROPE TO ASIA ARE. WE HAVE THIS ENORMOUS HUMAN RESOURCE BUT WE DON'T KNOW EACH OTHER AND I THINK THERE'S SOME STATISTICS THAT ONLY THREE OR FOUR PERCENT OF WHITE AMERICANS HAVE A BLACK NEIGHBOR. WE DON'T KNOW EACH OTHER. BLACK NEIGHBORHOODS ARE FEARSOME TO WHITE PEOPLE IN IRRATIONAL AND UNREASONABLE WAYS; WHITE NEIGHBORHOODS ARE DANGEROUS AND FEARSOME TO BLACK PEOPLE IN SIMILAR WAYS. THIS DOESN'T MEAN THAT CRIME NEVER HAPPENS IN BLACK NEIGHBORHOODS AND IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT BLACKS ARE

NEVER ATTACKED OR PROFILED IN WHITE NEIGHBORHOODS. WE ALL KNOW THAT THAT'S THE TRUTH. BUT THE RESPONSE IN BOTH IS QUITE HYPERBOLIC AND I THINK AGGRAVATED BY OUR EXPECTATIONS WHEN WE GO IN; WE GET WHAT WE FIND. BUT I THINK IT'S ALSO PREPOSTEROUS TO A VERY GREAT DEGREE THAT'S INVISIBLE. BILL O'REILLY'S RECENT COMMENTS ABOUT COMING TO HARLEM. HARLEM IS A REALLY VIBRANT, INTERESTING NEIGHBORHOOD AT THIS POINT, BUSLOADS OF JAPANESE TOURISTS AND TOURISTS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD COME TO SYLVIA'S THIS SOUL FOOD RESTAURANT. THEY COME BY BUSLOADS. IT'S A HUGE WONDERFUL RESTAURANT.

SMITH: IT'S FAMOUS; IT'S BEEN PROFILED ON THE FOOD NETWORK.

WILLIAMS: AND BILL O'REILLY SAYS THAT HE'S NOT SHOCKED THAT PEOPLE AREN'T THROWING CHAIRS AT EACH OTHER OR THAT THERE WAS NO CRAZINESS AS HE PUT IT, THAT IT WAS JUST LIKE EATING IN AN ITALIAN RESTAURANT IN A WHITE SUBURB. THIS IS, I THINK JOHN STEWART DID A LITTLE PARODY OF THIS WITH LARRY WILMORE. HE STOOD ON THE SIDEWALK AND HE SAID, YES, AND PEOPLE ARE ACTUALLY WALKING OUTSIDE IN FRONT OF THE RESTAURANT AND THEY'RE WALKING ON TWO LEGS! SOME AMAZEMENT AT CROSSING THE GREAT SOCIAL BARRIER AND FINDING HUMANITY! THIS IS A TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE STATEMENT ABOUT THE STATE OF OUR STILL LINGERING SEGREGATION.

SMITH: WE SAW THIS BEFORE. WHEN BILL CLINTON SELECTED A BUILDING ON I THINK IT WAS 125TH STREET, NOT TOO FAR FROM THE APOLLO, PICKED THAT FOR HIS POST PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE THAT HE GOES TO EVERY DAY TO WORK, EVERYBODY WAS SHOCKED. THAT'S A GENTRIFYING NEIGHBORHOOD, BUT NOBODY SEEMED TO PROCESS THAT.

WILLIAMS: IT'S VERY INTERESTING BECAUSE I REMEMBER WHEN BILL CLINTON WAS ELECTED WHAT MANY, MANY OF MY AFRICAN AMERICAN FRIENDS SAID OVER AND OVER AGAIN WAS THAT HE WAS THE FIRST PRESIDENT THAT WE HAD WHO HAD AT LEAST PUBLICLY AND AS FAR AS WE KNOW, GENUINE BLACK FRIENDS WITH WHOM HE HAD SOCIALIZED BEFORE HE CAME INTO OFFICE, NOT SIMPLY FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES, BUT PEOPLE HE'D HUNG OUT WITH, PEOPLE TO WHOSE HOUSE HE WENT FOR DINNER. AND IT WAS AN INTERESTING COMMENT BECAUSE REALLY, UNTIL VERY RECENTLY, THE IDEA OF INTEGRATED DINNER PARTIES IS STILL SOMETHING PEOPLE ARE WRAPPING THEIR HEADS AROUND. AGAIN, I FIND THIS SORT OF AMAZING GIVEN THE ENORMOUS DIVERSITY OF OUR COUNTRY, THE ENORMOUS POTENTIAL FOR MIXING BUT WE'RE STILL CELEBRATING I THINK YOU KNOW, A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE SAYING

NOW WE'RE IN THE DAY OF GRAY BABIES AND THERE ARE MORE INTERMARRIAGES AND THEY'VE DOUBLED IN RECENT YEARS. WELL, FOR MANY YEARS IT WAS 1% INTERMARRIAGES AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS AND ANYBODY ELSE AND NOW I THINK IT'S UP TO AROUND 2.8%. IF IT DOUBLES AGAIN IT WILL GO UP TO 4%, BUT THIS IS STILL COMPARED TO OTHER IN GROUP/OUT GROUP INTERMARRIAGES, PATHETICALLY POOR AND I THINK THAT ALSO SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT NOT JUST RACE AS AN ISM BUT ALSO AS A TABOO, AS AN UNTOUCHABILITY, AS SOMETHING VERY CLOSE TO A CASTE SYSTEM THAT HAS A KIND OF PSYCHIC FEAR THAT GOES BEYOND, THAT WE STILL HAVE TO GRAPPLE WITH.

SMITH: PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR, ATTORNEY, AUTHOR, LECTURER AT RIT TODAY, HERE WITH US SHARING HER INSIGHTS ON 1370 CONNECTION. WE HAVE ROY IN THE CITY ON THE LINE CALLING IN AT 263-WXXI AS 1370 CONNECTION CONTINUES. ROY, YOU'RE ON THE AIR.

ROY: GREAT CONVERSATION AND WONDERFUL EXPLANATIONS OF THINGS THAT WE ALWAYS WONDER ABOUT. I WAS TAKEN BY SOME OF THAT, I WENT BACK AFTER THE WAY THIS SUMMER HAS GONE WITH THE COURT AND WAS LOOKING AT JUSTICE JACKSON'S 1955 (INAUDIBLE) LECTURE ON THE COURT AS A POLITICAL INSTITUTION AND HE SAYS THAT ANY COURT THAT UNDERTAKES LEGAL PROCESS TO ENFORCE CIVIL LIBERTIES NEEDS THE SUPPORT OF AN ENLIGHTENED AND VIGOROUS PUBLIC OPINION AND AN INTELLIGENT, DISCRIMINATING COURT THAT CAN REALIZE WHAT CASES ARE CIVIL LIBERTIES AND WHAT QUESTIONS ARE INVOLVED IN THOSE CASES AND HE SAID I DO NOT BELIEVE THE AMERICAN PUBLIC IS ENLIGHTENED ON THIS SUBJECT. AND THE WAY IT'S GONE IN THE LAST FEW YEARS I'D SAY HE MIGHT ACTUALLY HAVE BEEN RIGHT.

WILLIAMS: WELL, THAT'S A COMPLICATED QUESTION AT THIS MOMENT IN HISTORY. I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH IS THE PRODUCT OF A VERY SUDDEN, CERTAINLY WE'VE SEEN A HUGE EROSION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES, OF ENCROACHMENT UPON THE BILL OF RIGHTS, AND I THINK THAT ENLIGHTENMENT IS PART OF IT, I ALSO THINK THAT A CERTAIN KIND OF MARKETED FEAR IS ANOTHER PART OF IT THAT PEOPLE DO KNOW AND DON'T CARE. BUT CERTAINLY LACK OF KNOWLEDGE, PARTICULARLY ABOUT THINGS LIKE THE USA PATRIOT ACT. I THINK OF IT, FORGIVE ME, I KNOW I'M GOING TO OFFEND PEOPLE HERE, BUT THE USA PATRIOT ACT I SOMETIMES THINK OF THE CONSTITUTION ON ONE HAND AND THE ANTI CONSTITUTION, WHICH IS THE USA PATRIOT ACT. IT IS A DOCUMENT WHICH REVERSES SO MANY OF THE PRESUMPTIONS THAT WE THINK OF AS TAKEN FOR GRANTED, JUST BEGINNING WITH SEARCH AND SEIZURE – DUE PROCESS, HABEAS CORPUS, ALL OF THAT, BUT I DO WONDER

BECAUSE A LOT OF PEOPLE DO KNOW ABOUT IT, IT'S NOT JUST A MATTER OF ENLIGHTENMENT. I THINK IT'S FEAR, PERHAPS IT'S A HABIT OF THINKING THAT THIS CAN'T HAPPEN TO US. I MUST SAY THERE IS A BIG GENERATIONAL DIVIDE. I THINK THAT A YOUNGER GENERATION DID NOT LIVE THROUGH MCCARTHYISM, I GREW UP WITH THE SPECTER OF THE SOVIET UNION DEPRIVING ONE OF ONE'S RIGHT OF PRIVACY, ALWAYS BEING IN THE DISCUSSION AND THE BILL OF RIGHTS AS BEING THE PROTECTION AGAINST THAT AND I THINK THAT THIS IS A GENERATION WITHOUT THAT SORT OF OTHER, THAT GREAT, ENCROACHING OTHER TO MENACE US. BUT I ALSO THINK THAT A YOUNGER GENERATION HAS SPENT MOST OF ITS TIME EXPOSING ITSELF. VERY YOUNG PEOPLE, PEOPLE IN THEIR 20'S, YOUNG 20'S, MY STUDENTS, FOR EXAMPLE, SPEND SO MUCH OF THEIR TIME ON SOCIAL ROOMS THAT I THINK THAT THEY IMAGINE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS JUST ANOTHER FACE ON FACEBOOK OR SOMETHING AND I THINK THAT THE DEGREE TO WHICH THIS TECHNOLOGY CAN BE USED NOT JUST TO LIBERATE OR TO CONNECT, BUT ULTIMATELY TO CONFINE OR CONSTRICT OR TO LIMIT IS YET TO BE EXPERIENCED BY THEM, BUT I THINK THAT WE HAVE TO MONITOR THAT POSSIBILITY.

SMITH: THEY HAVEN'T EXPERIENCED THEIR FIRST COMMISSAR YET, HUH? 263-WXXI, WE HAVE JOHN ON THE LINE. HI JOHN, YOU'RE ON THE AIR.

JOHN: YES, THANK YOU. I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION THAT I'VE ALWAYS PUZZLED ABOUT. IF YOU GRANT THAT RACE HAS NO SCIENTIFIC BASIS AND IS SORT OF A CRACKPOT IDEA, THEN HOW DO YOU QUALIFY RACIALLY FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS? I THINK ABOUT WITH THE INTERMARRIAGE AND THINGS THAT GO ON, THAT WE'RE SORT OF MIXING THE GENE POOL IF YOU WILL OR THE RACES TO SOME EXTENT. HOW DO YOU MEASURE – I MEAN, IS TIGER WOOD'S DAUGHTER ENTITLED TO AFFIRMATIVE ACTION?

WILLIAMS: YOU'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT THE GENE POOL WHEN YOU'RE ASKING ME A QUESTION LIKE THAT I ASSUME.

JOHN: IF YOU WANT TO QUALIFY FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, HOW ARE YOU BLACK? I DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT.

WILLIAMS: FIRST OF ALL, WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN MIXED AND NOBODY IS MORE MIXED IN THE UNITED STATES THAN AFRICAN AMERICANS. I MEAN, LOOK AT STROM THURMOND'S DAUGHTER, I MEAN EVERYBODY. YOU CAN LOOK AT AFRICANS WHO ARE DESCENDANTS OF WEST AFRICANS AND COMPARE THEM TO WEST AFRICANS AND YOU CAN SEE THAT WE ARE A DEEPLY MIXED POPULATION AND THAT THE SLAVE SYSTEM WAS ONE OF BREEDING. WE WERE PROPERTY AND IN ORDER TO

INCREASE YOUR PROPERTY YOU BRED SLAVES SO WE ARE MIXED. NOW THE IDEA THAT THERE MAY BE A SEPARATE CLASS OF INTERMARRIED OF IN THIS GENERATION, DOESN'T ALTER THE FACT THAT MOST AFRICAN AMERICANS ARE ETHICALLY CONTINENTALLY AND WHATEVER THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION MEANS, RACIALLY WELL MIXED, AS ARE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF WHITE PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY HAVE AFRICAN AMERICAN DESCENDANTS LIKE SALLY HEMMING'S DESCENDANTS. SO WE ARE MIXED. IF THE QUESTION IS ABOUT TIGER WOOD'S KID, THEN I THINK THE QUESTION BECOMES ONE OF PERHAPS ECONOMICS, ONE OF OPPORTUNITY, THEN THE QUESTION BECOMES AGAIN, WHAT SOCIAL CLASS IS IT THAT YOU WANT TO BENEFIT BY AFFIRMATIVE ACTION. AGAIN, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A VERY BROAD DEFINER OF THE REMEDIES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. I THINK IT IS INTENDED FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN DESCENDANTS OF SLAVES WHO HAVE, WHO GET PROFILED EVERY DAY, AND AGAIN, YOU CAN DO IT AS AN ACTUARIAL MATTER, I THINK THAT'S HOW IT'S BEEN DONE WHICH IS THAT THE AVERAGE AFRICAN AMERICAN'S WEALTH IS 1/8 OF TWO OF THE AVERAGE WHITE AMERICAN'S AND REGARDLESS OF EDUCATION, YOU'RE GOING TO MEET SOME OBSTACLES IN THE JOB MARKET REGARDLESS OF HOW WELL YOU ACCOMPLISH. I ALSO THINK THAT IT SHOULD BE EXTENDED TO WOMEN, I THINK IT SHOULD BE EXTENDED TO POOR WHITES, ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED WHITES AND I THINK THAT IF ONE WANTED TO REFINE IT YOU COULD DO IT ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS BASED ON OTHER KINDS OF UNCATEGORIZABLE HARDSHIPS.

SMITH: SO MAYBE WE SHOULD START TO REACH OUT ON A CLASS BASIS AS WELL? I DO THANK YOU FOR CALLING.

WILLIAMS: THAT HAS BEEN A PROPOSAL AND I THINK THAT SOME STATES DO THAT. I THINK THAT THAT IS A PERFECTLY LEGITIMATE, POOR WHITES ACTUALLY HAVE ALL OF THE SAME DEMOGRAPHICS. PEOPLE KEEP TALKING ABOUT THERE'S A DIFFERENCE IN IQ OR GRADE POINT AVERAGE. NO. IF YOU BREAK DOWN WHITE VERSUS BLACK FOR CLASS, POOR BLACKS AND POOR WHITES ARE EXACTLY ON THE SAME LEVEL IN TERMS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND IN TERMS OF ALL OF THAT. AND I THINK THAT THEY IMPROVE WITH THE SAME INFUSION OF CASH AND RESOURCES THAT ANY OTHER GROUP IN THE WORLD IS.

SMITH: SO BASICALLY THEN LET'S THINK ABOUT IT AS VERY MUCH ECONOMIC STATUS DRIVEN.

WILLIAMS: YOU COULD DO THAT BUT I THINK IT'S NOT APPROPRIATE TO WRITE RACE OUT OF IT ALTOGETHER. SOME PEOPLE SAID IT'S ALL CLASS. WE HAVE RACE AND A CLASS PROBLEM. ANY MORE TO SAY WELL, THERE IS NO ANTI SEMITISM BECAUSE AS A DEMOGRAPHIC MANNER, JEWISH AMERICANS TEND TO FALL AMONG A HIGHER SOCIOECONOMIC

SPECTRUM. THAT'S TO SAY THAT THERE'S NO ANTI SEMITISM? THAT'S NOT TRUE. IT'S JUST NOT TRUE.

SMITH: BECAUSE WHO IS TO SAY WHAT PEOPLE HEAR EVERY DAY?

WILLIAMS: I THINK THAT AGAIN THE REALITIES OF THE COMPLEX WAYS IN WHICH PREJUDICE MANIFESTS ITSELF AND ACTS TO BAR PEOPLE IS SOMETHING THAT WE HAVE TO BE CONSTANTLY ON GUARD FOR, STUDYING, THINKING ABOUT AND REDEFINING SO WE CAN BE FLUIDLY INCLUSIVE.

SMITH: IN THAT CONTEXT, HAVE WE GOT A TEACHING MOMENT COMING UP IN A '08 ELECTION? HERE IS A TIME WHEN A WOMAN AND AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN MAN ARE EACH NOT ONLY CANDIDATES FOR THE PRESIDENCY, BUT TOP TIER CANDIDATES FOR WITH A SERIOUS SHOT AT THE WHITE HOUSE; IS THIS A TEACHING MOMENT FOR US AS A SOCIETY?

WILLIAMS: I THINK IT IS A TEACHING MOMENT, BUT AGAIN I WOULD HOPE IT'S NOT THE SAME OLD LESSONS AND AGAIN, I DO HEAR A LOT ABOUT HILLARY CLINTON BEING A CERTAIN KIND OF FEMALE WHO IS INTOLERABLE AND WON'T MAKE IT BECAUSE SHE IS TOO STRIDENT. THIS IS A STEREOTYPE. I STILL HEAR A LOT ABOUT THAT BARACK OBAMA IS THE KIND OF BLACK PERSON THAT MANY WHITE PEOPLE LOVE TO LOVE BECAUSE HE'S SO CLEAN AND "ARTICULATE" AND WE WILL SEE HOW THE ELECTION GOES, BUT I HOPE THAT WE WOULD APPRECIATE THEM FOR THE ISSUES THAT THEY REPRESENT RATHER THAN BECAUSE THEY FALL INTO A STEREOTYPE WE WANT TO ELECT.

SMITH: MY THANKS TO PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, LECTURING THIS AFTERNOON AT FOUR AND AGAIN THIS EVENING AT SEVEN AT THE RIT CAMPUS AS PART OF THE CAROLYN WARNER GANNET LECTURE SERIES SHARING WITH US HER PERSPECTIVES IN THIS HOUR OF 1370 CONNECTION ON WXXI ROCHESTER. FOR JOHN ANDERS, OUR TECHNICAL DIRECTOR, I'M BOB SMITH IT'S BEEN A PLEASURE.