



Munk Debate on Political Correctness

May 18, 2018

Rudyard Griffiths: Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome. My name is Rudyard Griffiths and it's my privilege to have the opportunity to moderate tonight's debate and to act as your organizer.

I want to start by welcoming the North America-wide television audience tuning in right now across Canada on CPAC, Canada's public affairs channel; C-SPAN across the continental United States, and on CBC Radio Ideas.

A warm hello also to our online audience, watching this debate — the over six thousand streams active at this moment — on Facebook, live at Bloomberg.com, and at Munkdebates.com. It's great to have you as virtual participants in tonight's proceedings.

And hello to you, the over three thousand people who've filled Roy Thomson Hall for yet another Munk Debate. Thank you for your support for more and better debate on the big issues of the day.

This debate marks the start of our tenth season, and we begin this season missing someone who was vital to this debate series in every aspect. It was his passion for ideas, his love for debate, that inspired our creation in 2008, and it was his energy, his generosity and his drive that were so important in allowing us to win international acclaim as one of the world's great debating series.

His philanthropy, his legacy — wow, it's incredible! We all remember that \$100 million donation to cardiac health here in Toronto last fall, transforming the lives of millions of Canadians to come. Bravo!

We are all big fans and supporters of the terrific School for Global Affairs on the U of T campus, represented here tonight by many students in its master's program. Congratulations to you.

And also, what a generous endowment last spring to this series, which will allow us to organize many evenings like this, for many more years to come.

Now, knowing our benefactor as we do, the last thing he'd want is for us to mark his absence with a moment of silence — that wasn't his style. So let's instead celebrate a great Canadian, a great life and the great legacy of the late Peter Munk. Bravo, Peter!

Thank you, everybody! I know he would have enjoyed that applause! And I want to thank Melanie, Anthony, and Cheyne for being here tonight to be part of Peter's continuing positive impact on public debate in Canada. Thank you for coming.

Now, knowing Peter as I did, the first thing on his mind at this point in the debate would be: "Rudyard, stop talking, get this debate underway, get our debaters out here. Come on, get the show on the road!" So we're going to do that right now, because we have a terrific debate lined up for you this evening.

So, let's introduce first our "pro" team, arguing *for* tonight's motion, Be it resolved, what you call political correctness, I call progress.

Please welcome to the stage award-winning writer, scholar, broadcaster on MPR and sports networks across America, Michael Eric Dyson. Michael, come on out.

Michael's debating partner is also an award-winning author. She's a columnist at the *New York Times*, and someone who is going to bring a very distinct and powerful perspective tonight, Michelle Goldberg. Michelle, come on out.

So, one great team of debaters deserves another. Arguing against our resolution, "Be it resolved: what you call political correctness, I call progress," is the Emmy Award-winning actor, screenwriter, author, playwright, journalist, poet and, tonight, debater, Stephen Fry. Thank you, Stephen.

Stephen's teammate is a professor of psychology at the University of Toronto, a YouTube sensation, and the author of the big new international bestseller, *Twelve Rules for Life*. Ladies and gentlemen, Toronto's Jordan Peterson.

We're going to get our debate underway momentarily, but first, a quick checklist to go through. We've got a hashtag tonight,

#@munkdebate. Those of you in the hall and those of you watching online, please weigh in; let's get your opinions going. Also, for those of you watching online right now, we have a running poll at www.munkdebates.com/vote. Reflect, input, react to this debate as it unfolds over the next hour and a half.

Ah, my favourite aspect of the show, which was Peter's brilliant idea and creation — we have our countdown clock. It keeps our debaters on their toes and our debate on time. So, when you see these clocks on the screen go down to zero, I want you to join me in a warm round of applause, and we'll have a debate that ends when it's supposed to end.

Now, let's see; we had our resolution tonight. On the way in, we had this audience of roughly three thousand people here in downtown Toronto vote on, "Be it resolved: what you call political correctness, I call progress." Let's see the agree/disagree on that number: 36 percent agreed and 64 percent disagreed. So, a room in play.

Now, we asked you how many of you are open to changing your vote over the course of debate. Are you fixed agree/disagree, or could you potentially be convinced by one or other of these two teams to move your vote over the next hour and a half? Let's see those numbers now. Wow — 87 percent said yes; 13 percent said no. So, a pretty open-minded crowd. This debate is very much in play.

As per the agreed-upon order of speakers, I'm going to call on Michelle Goldberg first for her six minutes of opening remarks. Michelle.

Michelle Goldberg: Well, thank you for having me. As Rudyard knows, I initially balked a little bit at the resolution that we're debating, because there are a lot of things that fall under the rubric of political correctness, that I *don't* call progress.

I don't like "no platforming," or trigger warnings. Like a lot of middle-aged liberals, there are many aspects of student social justice culture that I find off-putting — although I'm not sure that that particular generation gap is anything new on the record about the toxicity of social media call-out culture — and I think it's good to debate people whose ideas I don't like, which is why I'm here.

So, if there are social justice warriors in the audience, I feel like I should apologize to you, because you're probably going to feel that I'm not adequately defending your ideas. But the reason I'm on this side of the stage is that political correctness isn't just a term for left-wing excesses on college campuses, or people being terrible on Twitter. Especially as deployed by Mr. Peterson, I think it can be used as a way to delegitimize any attempt for women and racial and sexual minorities to overcome discrimination, or even to argue that such discrimination is real.

In the *New York Times* today, Mr. Peterson says: "The people who hold that our culture is an oppressive patriarchy, they don't want to admit that the current hierarchy might be predicated on competence." That's not particularly insane to me, because I'm an American and our President is Donald Trump, but it's an assumption that I think underlies a worldview in which any challenges to the current hierarchy are written off as political correctness.

I also think we should be clear that this isn't really a debate about free speech. Mr. Peterson once referred to what he called "the evil trinity of equity, diversity, and inclusivity" and said, "Those three words, if you hear people mouth those three words, equity, diversity and inclusivity, you know who you're dealing with and you should step away from that, because it is not acceptable."

He argues that the movie *Frozen* is politically correct propaganda, and at one point he floated the idea of creating a database of university course content, so students could avoid post-modern critical theory.

So, in the criticism of political correctness, I sometimes hear an attempt to purge our thought of certain analytical categories that mirrors, I think, the worst caricatures of the social justice left that want to get rid of anything that smacks of colonialism or patriarchy or white supremacy.

I also don't really think we're debating the value of the enlightenment, at least not in the way that somebody like Mr. Fry, who I think is a champion of enlightenment values, frames it. The efforts to expand rights and privileges, once granted just to landowning, white, heterosexual men, is the enlightenment, or it's very much in keeping with the enlightenment. To quote a dead white man, John Stuart Mill, "The despotism of custom is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement."

I think that some of our opponents, by contrast, bring challenges to the despotism of custom as politically correct attacks on a transcendent natural order.

To quote Mr. Peterson again, each gender, each sex, has its own unfairness to deal with, but to think of it as a consequence of the social structure, it's like — come on, really — what about nature itself? But there's an exception to this, because he does believe in social interventions to remedy some kinds of unfairness, which is why in the *New York Times*, he calls for “enforced monogamy to remedy the woes of men who don't get their equal distribution of sex.”

When it comes to the political correctness debate, we've been exactly here before. Allan Bloom, the author of *The Closing of the American Mind*, compared the “tyranny” of feminism in academia to the Khmer Rouge, and he was writing at a time when women accounted for 10 percent of all college tenured faculty.

It's worth looking back at what was considered annoyingly, outrageously, politically correct in the 1980s, the last time we had this debate. You know, not being able to call indigenous people “Indians,” or having to use hyphenated terms, at least in the United States, terms like African-Americans. You know, adding women or people of colour to the Western Civilization curriculum, or not making gay jokes or using “retard” as an epithet. I kind of get it, right: new concepts, new words sort of stick in your throat. The way we're used to talking and thinking seem natural and normal, by definition.

And then the new terms, new concepts that have social utility, stick, and those that don't fall away. So, if you go back to the 1970s, Ms. — you know, MS, as an alternative to Miss or Mrs., stuck around. And “womyn” with a “y” didn't. And I hope that someday we'll look back and marvel at the idea that gender-neutral pronouns ever seemed like an existential threat to anyone.

But I also don't think it's clear. That might not happen because, if you look around the world right now, there are plenty of places that have indeed dialled back cosmopolitanism and reinstated patriarchy in the name of staving off chaos. And they seem like terrible places to live.

You know, I come to you from the United States, which is currently undergoing a monumental attempt to roll back social

progress in the name of overcoming political correctness. And, as someone who lives there, I assure you, it feels nothing like progress. Thank you.

Rudyard Griffiths: Great start to the debate, Michelle. Thank you. I'm now going to ask Jordan Peterson to speak for the “con” team.

Jordan Peterson: Hello. So, we should first decide what we're talking about. We're not talking about my views of political correctness, despite what you might have inferred from the last speaker's comments.

This is how it looks to me: we essentially need something approximating a low-resolution grand narrative to unite us. And we need a narrative to unite us, because otherwise we don't have peace.

What's playing out in the universities and in broader society right now is a debate between two fundamental low-resolution narratives, neither of which can be completely accurate, because they can't encompass all the details. Obviously human beings have an individual element and a collective element — a group element, let's say. The question is, what story should be paramount, and this is how it looks to me: In the West, we have reasonably functional, reasonably free, remarkably productive, stable hierarchies that are open to consideration of the dispossessed that hierarchies generally create.

Our societies are freer and functioning more effectively than any societies anywhere else in the world, and than any societies ever have, and as far as I'm concerned — and I think there's good reason to assume this — it's because the fundamental low-resolution grand narrative that we've oriented ourselves around in the West is one of the sovereignty of the individual.

And it's predicated on the idea that, all things considered, the best way for me to interact with someone else is individual to individual, and to react to that person as if they're both part of the psychological process by which things we don't understand can yet be explored, and things that aren't properly organized in our society, can be yet set right.

The reason we're valuable as individuals, both with regard to our rights and our responsibilities, is because that's our essential purpose, and that's our nobility, and that's our function.

What's happening, as far as I'm concerned, in the universities in particular and spreading very rapidly out into the broader world, including the corporate world, much to what should be its chagrin, is a collectivist narrative. And of course, there's some utility in a collectivist narrative, because we're all part of groups in different ways.

But the collectivist narrative that I regard as politically correct is a strange pastiche of post-modernism and neo-Marxism, and its fundamental claim is that, no, you're not essentially an individual, you're essentially a member of a group.

And that group might be your ethnicity and it might be your sex and it might be your race, and it might be any of the endless numbers of other potential groups that you belong to, because you belong to many of them. And that you should be essentially categorized along with those who are like you on that dimension in that group — that's proposition number one.

Proposition number two is that the proper way to view the way is as a battleground between groups of different power. So, you define the groups first and then you assume that you view the individual from the group context, you view the battle between groups from the group context, and you view history itself as a consequence of nothing but the power of manoeuvres between different groups.

That eliminates any consideration of the individual at a very fundamental level, and also any idea, for example, of free speech. Because if you're a collectivist at heart in this manner, there is no such thing as free speech. It isn't that it's debated by those on the radical left and the rest of us, so to speak; it's that in that formulation, there's no such thing as free speech, because for an individualist, free speech is how you make sense of the world and reorganize society in a proper manner.

But for the radical left type of collectivist that's associated with this viewpoint of political correctness, when you speak, all you're doing is playing a power game on behalf of your group. And there's nothing else that you *can* do, because that's all there is.

And not only is that all there is in terms of who you are as an individual now, and how society should be viewed, it's also the fundamental narrative of history. For example, it's widely assumed in our universities now that the best way to conceptualize Western

civilization is as an oppressive, male-dominated patriarchy, and that the best way to construe relationships between men and women across the centuries is one of oppression of women by men.

Well, look, no hierarchy is without its tyranny. That's an axiomatic truth; people have recognized that literally for thousands of years. And hierarchies do tend towards tyranny, and they tend towards the usurpation by people with power. But that only happens when they become corrupt. We have mechanisms in our society to stop hierarchies from becoming intolerably corrupt, and they actually work pretty well.

And so I would also point this out: you know, don't be thinking that this is a debate about whether empathy is useful or not, or that the people on the "con" side of the argument are not empathetic. I know perfectly well, as I'm sure Mr. Fry does, that hierarchies tend to produce situations where people stack up at the bottom, and that the dispossessed in hierarchies need a political voice, which is the proper voice of the left, by the way, the necessary voice of the left.

But that is not the same as proclaiming that the right level of analysis for our grand unifying narrative is that all of us are fundamentally to be identified by the groups that we belong to, and to construe the entire world as the battleground between different forms of tyranny in consequence of that group affiliation.

And to the degree that we play out that narrative, that won't be progress, believe me, and we certainly haven't seen that "progress" in the universities. We've seen situations like what happened at Wilfrid Laurier University instead.

We won't see progress: what we'll return to is exactly the same kind of tribalism that characterized the left. Thank you.

Rudyard Griffiths: Thank you, Jordan. Michael Eric Dyson, your six minutes starts now.

Michael Dyson: Thank you very kindly. Wonderful opportunity to be here in Canada. Thank you so much. I'm going to stand here at the podium — I'm a preacher, and I *will* ask for an offering at the end of my presentation!

This is the swimsuit competition of the intellectual beauty pageant, so let me show you the curves of my thought. Oh my God, was that a politically incorrect statement I've just made? How did we get to the point where the hijacking of the discourse on political

correctness has become a kind of Manichean distinction between us and them?

The abortive fantasy just presented is remarkable for both its clarity and yet the muddiness of the context from which it has emerged.

What's interesting to me is that, when we look at the radical left, I'm saying, wait ahead, I want to join them. They ain't running nothing. I'm from a country where a man stands up every day to tweet the moral mendacity of his viciousness into a nation he has turned into a psychic commode. Y'all got Justin, we got Donald.

So, what's interesting, then, is that political correctness has transmogrified into a caricature of the left. The left came up with the term political correctness, shall I remind you? We were tired of our excuses and our excesses and our exaggerations; we were willing to be self-critical in a way that I fear my *confrères* — my compatriots — are not. "Don't take yourself too seriously — smile."

Take yourself not seriously at all, but what you do, with deadly seriousness. Now it has transmogrified into an attempt to characterize the radical left. The radical left is a metaphor, a symbol, an articulation. They don't exist, their numbers are too small. I'm on college campuses, I don't see much of them coming.

When I hear about identity politics, it amazes me. The collectivist identity politics? Uh, last time I checked, race was an invention from a dominant culture that wanted groups at their behest. The invention of race was driven by the demand of a dominant culture to subordinate others — patriarchy, right.

Patriarchy — patriarchy was the demand of men to have their exclusive vision presented. The beauty of feminism is that it's not going to resolve differences between men and women; it just says, men don't automatically get the last word. In the course of my career, they never did.

And so, identity politics has been generated as a *bête noire* of the right, and yet the right doesn't understand the degree to which identity has been foisted upon black people and brown people and people of colour from the very beginning, and on women and trans people.

You think that I want to be part of a group that is constantly abhorred by people at Starbucks? I'm minding my own black

business. Walking down the street, I have group identity thrust upon me. They don't say, "Ah, aha, there goes a Negro — highly intelligent, articulate, verbose, capable of rhetorical fury at the drop of a hat — we should not interrogate him as to the *bona fides* of his legal status."

No, they treat me as part of a group, and the problem — which our friends don't want to acknowledge — is that the hegemony, the dominance of that group, has been so vicious that it has denied us the opportunity to exist as individuals. Individualism is the characteristic moment in modernity.

Mr. Peterson is right. The development of the individual, however, is predicated upon notions of intelligence — Immanuel Kant and David Hume, and others. Philosophically, Descartes comes along, introducing knowledge into the fray, saying that knowledge is based upon a kind of reference to the golden intelligence, the reflective glass that one possesses. And yet it got rooted in the very ground of our existence.

So knowledge has fleshly basis, and what I'm saying to you is that the knowledge that I bring as a person of colour makes a difference in my body, because I know what people think of me, and I know how they respond to me, and that ain't no theory.

Am I mad at trigger warnings? The only trigger warning I want is from a cop — are you about to shoot me? Not funny — in America, where young black people die repeatedly, unarmed, without provocation.

And so for me, identity politics is something very serious. And what's interesting about safe spaces ... I hear about the university, I teach there. Look, if you have a safe space in your body, you don't need a safe space.

Some of that is overblown, some of it is ridiculous, I understand. I believe that the classroom is a robust place for serious learning. I believe in the interrogation of knowledge based upon our mutual understanding of the edifying proposition of enlightenment. At the same time, some people ain't as equal as others, so we have to understand the conditions under which they have emerged and in which they have been benighted and attacked by their own culture.

And I ain't seen nobody be a bigger snowflake than white men who complain: "Mommy, Mommy, they won't let us play and have

everything we used to have under the old regime, where we were right, racist and supremacist and dominant and patriarchs and hated gays and lesbians and transsexuals.” “Yeah, you’ve got to share. This ain’t your world, this is everybody’s world.”

And let me end by saying this: you remember that story from David Foster Wallace: “Two fish are going along and an older fish comes in the opposite direction. He says, ‘Hello, boys, how’s the water?’ They swim on, they turn to each other: ‘What the hell is water?’”

Because when you're in it, you don't know it; when you're dominant, you don't know it. Nothing Keyser Söze said the devil did is more interesting than to make people believe he didn't exist. That's what white supremacy is.

Rudyard Griffiths: Thank you, Michael. Stephen, you're up. We're going to put six minutes on the clock, and please start.

Stephen Fry: I'll try and be as quick as possible, because if I miss that plane to London, I won't half hear the end of it from the bridegroom's mother.

Now, in agreeing to participate in this debate and stand on this side of the argument, I'm fully aware that many people who choose — incorrectly, in my view — to see this issue in terms of left and right, devalued and exploded terms as I think they are, will believe that I am betraying myself in such causes and values that I've espoused over the years. I've been given huge grief already, simply because I'm standing here next to Professor Peterson, which is the very reason that I'm standing here in the first place.

I'm standing next to someone with whom I have, you know, differences, shall we say, in term of politics and all kinds of other things, precisely because I think all this has got to stop — this rage, resentment, hostility, intolerance; above all, this with-us-or-against-us certainty.

A Grand Canyon has opened up in our world. The fissure, the crack, grows wider every day. Neither side can hear a word that the other shrieks; nor do they want to.

While these armies and propagandists in the culture wars clash, down below in the enormous space between the two sides, the people of the world try to get on with their lives, alternately baffled, bored, and betrayed by the horrible noises and explosions

that echo all around. I think it's time for this toxic, binary, zero-sum madness to stop before we destroy ourselves.

I'd better nail my colours to the mast before I go any further than this; it's only polite to give you a sense of where I come from. All my adult life I have been what you might call a leftie, a soft leftie, a liberal of the most hand-wringing, milksop, milk-toast variety. Not a burning man-the-barricades socialist; not even really a progressive worth the name. I've been on marches, but I've never quite dared wave placards or banners.

Am I a loathed member of that band, an SJW — a social justice warrior? I don't think highly of social *in*justice, I have to say, but I character myself mostly as a social justice worrier. My intellectual heroes, growing up, were Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore, liberal thinkers, people like that, writers like E. M. Forster.

I believed, and I think I still do believe, in the sanctity of human relations, the primacy of the heart, and friendship and love and common interest. These are more personal interior beliefs than they are political exterior convictions, more a humanistic version of a religious impulse, I suppose. I trust in humanity, I believe in humanity — I think I do, despite all that has happened in the forty years of my adulthood.

I *am* soft, and I can easily be swept away by harder hearts and harder intellects. I'm sometimes surprised to be described as an activist, but over time I *have* energetically involved myself with what you might call causes. I grew up knowing that I was gay — well, in fact, from the very first I knew I was gay. I remember when I was born, looking up and saying, “That's the last time I'm going out one of those!”

I'm Jewish, so I have a natural, obvious horror of racism. Naturally I want racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, bullying, bigotry, intolerance of all human kinds to end. That's surely a given amongst all of us.

The question is how such a golden aim is to be achieved. My ultimate objection to political correctness is not that it combines so much of what I have spent a lifetime loathing and opposing: preachiness (with great respect), piety, self-righteousness, heresy-hunting, denunciation, shaming, assertion without evidence, accusation, inquisition, censoring. That's not why I'm incurring the wrath of my fellow liberals by standing on this side of the house.

My real objection is that I don't think political correctness *works*. I want to achieve, I want to get to the golden hill, but I don't think that's the way to get there. I believe one of the greatest human failings is to prefer to be right than to be effective. And political correctness is always obsessed with how right it is, without thinking of how effective it might be.

I wouldn't class myself as a classical libertarian, but I do relish transgression, and I deeply and instinctively distrust conformity and orthodoxy. Progress is not achieved by preachers and guardians of morality but, to paraphrase Yevgeny Zamyatin, by madmen, hermits, heretics, dreamers, rebels, and skeptics.

I may be wrong — I hope to learn this evening. I really do think I may be wrong. I'm prepared to entertain the possibility that political correctness will bring us more tolerance and a better world. But I'm not sure, and I would like this quotation from my hero, Bertrand Russell, to hover over the evening: "One of the painful things about our time, is that those who feel certainty are stupid, and those with any imagination and understanding are filled with doubt and indecision." Let doubt prevail.

Rudyard Griffiths: A great set of opening statements to set the scene. We're now going to go into a round of rebuttals, to allow each of our presenters three minutes to reflect on what they've heard, and to make some additional points, and we're going to do that in the same order that we had the opening statements. So Michelle, you're up first. We'll put three minutes on the clock for you.

Michelle Goldberg: First I would say that I think that the attempt to draw a dichotomy between individual rights and group rights is a little bit misleading. Traditionally, there have been large groups of people who have not been able to exercise their individual rights. And I think that a lot of the claims that are being made on behalf of what we "politically correct" types call marginalized groups are claims that people who have identities that have not traditionally been at the centre of our culture, or been at the top of our hierarchies, have as much right to exercise their individual talents and realize their individual ambitions.

When we say that we want more women in power, or more voices of people of colour in the canon, or in the curriculum, or directing movies — all of these things are not because, at least on my part, because I'm interested in some sort of very crude equity, but because there are a lot of people who have not traditionally been

able to realize themselves as individuals. That's what the women's movement was; that's what the civil rights movement was; that's what the gay rights movement was; that's in some ways what the trans rights movement was.

I mean, far from a collectivist movement, this is a kind of classical liberalism pushed to its extreme. These are people saying, "I have the right to define my identity against the one that was collectively assigned to me."

Finally, I would say that, from a lot of the things that Stephen Fry said, and particularly his temperament, we're probably in agreement. But this inquisition, this censoring. On the one hand I see where he's coming from, but I think it's a little bit virtual. I mean, who's really censoring you?

I understand what it feels like to feel censored. I understand what it feels like to be on the wrong side of a Twitter mob, or get a lot of nasty comments. And that's a bad feeling. It's a counterproductive tactic, but it's not censorship.

And again, it's especially strange, coming from a country where the president of the United States is trying to levy additional postal rates on the owner of the *Washington Post*, in revenge for its reporting. And people who have kneeled to protest police brutality at football games have seen their careers explode.

Or women who have challenged Mr. Peterson who have been hounded by threats and trolls and misogynist invective.

Thank you.

Rudyard Griffiths: Jordan, we're going to have three minutes up on the screen there. Please respond to what you've heard.

Jordan Peterson: Well, I guess I would like to set out a challenge in somewhat the same format as Mr. Fry did, to people on the moderate left. I've studied totalitarianism for a very long time, both on the left and on the right in various forms. And I think we've done a pretty decent job of determining when right-wing beliefs become dangerous. I think that they become dangerous when they, and the people who stand on the right, evoke notions of racial superiority, or ethnic superiority, something like that. It's fairly easy — and necessary, I think — to draw a box around them and place them to one side. We've done a pretty good job of that.

What I fail to see happening on the left — and this is with regard to the sensible left, because such a thing exists — is for the same thing to happen with regard to the radical leftists.

So here's an open question: if it's not diversity, inclusivity and equity as a triumvirate that mark out the too excessive left — and with equity defined, by the way, not as equality of opportunity, which is an absolutely laudable goal, but as equality of outcome, which is how it's defined — then exactly how do we demarcate the too extreme left? What do we do?

We say, well, there's no such thing as the too extreme left? Well, that's certainly something that characterized much of intellectual thinking for the twentieth century, as our high-order intellectuals, especially in places like France, did everything they could to bend over backwards, to ignore absolutely everything that was happening in the catastrophic left world in the Soviet Union and in Maoist China not least. We've done a terrible job of determining how to demarcate what's useful from the left, from what's pathological.

And so, it's perfectly okay for someone to criticize my attempts to identify something like a boundary. We could say, diversity, inclusivity, and equity — especially equity, which is in fact equality of outcome, which is an absolutely abhorrent notion. If you know anything about history, you know that. And I'm perfectly willing to hear some reasonable alternatives.

But what I hear continually from people on the left, first of all, as my opponents did, is to construe every argument that is possibly able to be construed, on the axis of group identification. And to fail to help the rest of us differentiate the reasonable left, which necessarily stands for the oppressed, from the pathological left, which is capable of unbelievable destruction.

And what I see happening in the university campuses in particular, where the left is absolutely predominant — and that's certainly not my imagination, that's well documented by perfectly reasonable people like Jonathan Haidt — is an absolute failure to make precisely that distinction.

And I see the same thing echoed tonight. Thank you.

Rudyard Griffiths: Michael, give us your rebuttal.

Michael Dyson:

I don't know what mythological collective Mr. Peterson refers to. I'm part of the left. They're cantankerous. When they have a firing squad, it's usually in a semi-circle.

Part of the skepticism of rationality was predicated upon the enlightenment project, which says we're no longer going to be subordinate to superstition; we're going to think and we're going to think well.

Thomas Jefferson was one of the great arbiters of rationality, but he was also a man who was a slave-owner. How do you reconcile that? That's the complication I'm speaking about. That's not either/or; that's not a collective identity. Thomas Jefferson believed in a collective identity — that is, during the day. At night, he got some Luther Vandross songs, went out to the slave quarter and engaged in sexual relations, and had many children with Sally Hemmings. His loins trumped his logic.

And when Mr. Peterson talks about postmodernism, I don't know who he's talking about. I teach postmodernism; it's kind of fun. Jacques Derrida — just to say his name is beautiful. Michel Foucault — Michel Foucault talked about the insurrection of subjugated knowledge as people who had been marginalized now began to speak. The "subaltern," as Gayatri Spivak talks about it in postcolonial theory.

The reason these people grew up and grew into existence and had a voice, is because they had been denied. As Ms. Goldberg said, our group identity was foisted upon us; we were not seen as individuals. Babe Ruth, when he broke the home run record, didn't bat against all the best ballplayers; he batted against the best white ballplayers.

When it's been rigged in your favour from the very beginning, it's hard for you to understand how much you've been rigged. You're born on third base, then you hit a triple. Epic Toronto Blue Jays game.

And here we are, deriving our sense of identity from the very culture that we ignore. Look at the Indigenous names and the First Nations names — Toronto, Saskatchewan, Winnipeg, Tim Hortons.

But I'll tell you, there's an envy of the kind of freedom and liberty that people of colour and other minorities bring, because we bring the depth of knowledge in our body. There's a kind of jealousy of

it. As the greatest living Canadian philosopher, Aubrey Drake Graham, says, “Jealousy is just love and hate at the same time.”

And so for me, I think it’s necessary — I agree with Mr. Fry; we shouldn’t be nasty and combative. And yet, I don’t see nastiness and combativeness from people; I see them making a desire to have their individual identities respected. When I get shut down for no other reason than I’m black, when I get categorized for no other reason than my colour, I am living in a culture that refuses to see me as a great individual.

Stephen Fry:

It’s interesting to hear that there really doesn’t seem to be a problem, but yet, I think we all instinctively know that there is some kind of problem. There isn’t censorship, of course not, in the way that there is in Russia. I’ve been to Russia and I have faced off with a deeply homophobic and unpleasant man, and there’s political correctness in Russia. It’s just political correctness on the right.

And that’s what I grew up with, political correctness, which meant that you couldn’t say certain things on television — you couldn’t say “fuck,” for example, on television, because it was incorrect to do so. And as always, the reason was that someone would appear and say, “I’m not shocked. Oh, of course, no, I’m not shocked, I’m not offended. I’m offended on behalf of others — young, impressionable plastic minds, the vulnerable.”

And that’s not good enough. So often people are saying, “See, I don’t mind being called a faggot or a kike, or whatever, or a mad person because I’ve got mental health issues. I don’t mind people insulting me.” And people say, “Well, that’s all right for you, Stephen, because you know, you’re strong.”

I don’t feel particularly strong, and I don’t know that I like being called a faggot and a kike particularly, but I don’t believe that the advances in my culture that have allowed me to be married — as I have now been for three years to someone of my gender — are a result of political correctness.

And maybe political correctness is actually just some sort of live trout, that the harder we squeeze it, the further it goes away. And you will be saying, “I’m not talking about this; I’m talking about social justice,” with which I agree, whether you want to call it identity politics, or the history of *your* people, or the history of *my* people.

My people were slaves as well. But the British were slaves of Romans, and the Jews were slaves of the Egyptians — all human beings have been slaves at some point, and we all, in that sense, share that knowledge of how important it is to speak up.

But Russell Means, who was a friend of mine towards the end, who founded the American Indian Movement, said, “Oh for God’s sake, call me an Indian, or a Lakota Sioux, or Russell. I don’t care what you call me, it’s how we’re treated that matters.” And so I’m really addressing a more popular idea.

Also in Barrow, Alaska, an Inupiat said, “Call me an Eskimo. It’s obviously easier for you, because you keep mispronouncing Inupiat.”

You know, words do matter. I’ll just end with a quick story. Gay rights came about in England because we slowly and persistently knocked on the door of people in power. We didn’t shout, we didn’t scream. People like Ian McKellen eventually got to see the prime minister.

And when the Queen signed the Royal Assent, as she has to, for the bill allowing equality of marriage, she said, “Lord, you know, I couldn’t imagine this in 1953. Really is extraordinary, isn’t it? Just wonderful!” and handed it over.

Now, that’s a nice story, and I hope it’s true. But it’s nothing to do with political correctness; it’s to do with human decency. It’s that simple.

Rudyard Griffiths: So, some brave rebuttals there, and strong opening statements. Let’s move now into the moderated cross-examination portion of this debate, and get both sides engaging on some of the key issues here. I think what we’ve heard here is a bit of a tension — let’s draw it out a bit more — between, on the one hand, the rights of groups to feel included and have the opportunity for individuality, and, on the other hand, a belief that there’s something under threat here when these groups are overly privileged through affirmative action or other outcome-oriented processes.

So Michael, to start with you. Why isn’t harm done to groups by privileging their group identity, whether it be a group identity of race or of gender, and not immediately treating them as individuals in the way that Jordan and Stephen would like you to see them first.

Michael Dyson:

Well, a couple of things: first of all, there was no arbitrary and random distinction that people of colour and other minority groups made. When I talked about the invention of race, the invention of gender, the invention of group think, that was not done by those groups that have been so named, as Ms. Goldberg said.

So first of all, you've got to acknowledge the historical evolution of that reality. The concept of group identity did not begin with them. It began with a group that didn't have to announce its identity. When you are in control, you don't have to announce who you are. So that many white brothers and sisters don't see themselves as one among many ethnicities or groups. They see themselves as, "I'm just American, I'm Canadian, can't you be like us? Can't you transcend those narrow group identifications?"

And yet those group identifications have been imprinted upon them by the very people whose group power has now been challenged. Let's make no mistake about it, there's a challenge. I agree with Mr. Fry in a kind of Neverland, of how sweet it would be to have a kingly and queenly metaphor about how it got resolved; that ain't the real deal, homie. That ain't the real world.

In the real world, there's stuff at stake. What's at stake are bodies. What's at stake are people's lives. What's at stake is that people are still being lynched, killed. What's at stake is that people, because of their sexuality and their racial identity, are still being harmed.

So, what I'm suggesting to you is not that we are against being treated as individuals — that's what we're crying for. Please don't see me as a member of a group that you think is a thug, a nigger, a nihilist, a pathological person. See me as an individual who embodies the realities.

But I'll end by saying this: what Michelle said is extremely important. The people who have individual rights did not have to fight for them in the same manner that people of colour and others have had to. When Mr. Fry talked about enslavement, he named them.

Read Orlando Patterson's comparative history of race and slavery over twenty eight civilizations. The Greeks did not have the same kind of slavery that Americans did. It was chattel slavery. In Greece you could buy back your freedom, you could teach the children of the people who enslaved you, and because of your display of prodigious intellect, you could secure your freedom.

That was not the case in America; you were punished and killed for literacy.

So my point simply is this: it's that I am all for the celebration of broader identities, and I think that often those who are minorities, and others, are not celebrated to the degree that we are.

I'll end by saying this: In America, we have the confederate flag — I don't know if you all are familiar with that — we have a confederate flag. We have white guys, mostly, in the South but others as well, flying those confederate flags, that are part of the South that refuse to cede its legitimate conquest at the hands of the North.

There has been a politics of resentment — you talk about politics of identity. They are wearing that flag, not the American flag. They are not American; they are celebrating a secession, they move away from America. And a man named Colin Kaepernick, who is a football player, saying, "I want to bring beauty to that flag," has been denied opportunity.

So we have to really set the terms of debate in order before we proceed.

Rudyard Griffiths: Thanks, Michael, good point. Jordan, let's have you jump in on this idea of what you see is the pernicious danger of group think when it comes to ethnicity, when it comes to gender. Why do you think that's one of the primal sins, in your view, of political correctness?

Jordan Peterson: Well, I think it's one of the primal sins of identity politics players on the left *and* the right, just to be clear about that. Personally, since this has got personal at times, I'm no fan of the identitarian right. I think that anybody who plays a conceptual game where group identity comes first and foremost risks an exacerbation of tribalism, it doesn't matter whether it's on the left or the right.

With regard to the idea of group rights, this is something we have fallen into terribly in Canada, not least because we've had to contend with the threat of Quebec separatism. The idea of group rights is extraordinarily problematic, because the obverse of the coin of individual rights is individual responsibilities. And you can hold an individual responsible, and an individual can *be* responsible, and so that's probably why individuals have rights.

But groups — how do you hold a group responsible? It's not a good idea to hold a group responsible. First of all, it flies in the

face of the sort of justice systems that we've laid out in the West, which are essentially predicated first on the assumption of individual innocence, but also on the possibility of individual guilt, not group guilt.

We saw what happened in the twentieth century many, many times, when the idea of group guilt was enabled to get a foothold in the polity and in the justice system. It was absolutely catastrophic.

And so, okay, fine — group rights. How are you going to contend with the alternative to that, the opposite of that? Where's the group responsibility? How are you going to hold your groups responsible? Well, we don't have to talk about that, because we're too concerned with rectifying historical injustices, hypothetical and otherwise.

And that's certainly not to say that there wasn't any shortage of absolutely catastrophic historical injustices — that's not the point. The point is how you view the situation at the most fundamental level, and group rights are an absolute catastrophe in my opinion.

Rudyard Griffiths: Michelle, come in on that point. This is something you've written about — the idea that in identity politics the identity of the group is absolutely a valid part of the discourse, and individuals could and should be seen as participating in groups as they enter into the civic space.

Michelle Goldberg: I'm not sure that we necessarily have to analogize from individual. The opposite of individual rights is individual responsibility, but I'm not sure that that analogy necessarily holds for groups.

One of the things that I think is complicated about this discussion, is that we're talking about three very different cultural contexts, three different histories, three different kind of legal regimes.

But in the United States, a huge part of our politics has been groups struggling for rights for their individual members: women in the United States seeking the right to reproductive control of their body; African Americans in the United States seeking redress from police brutality or discrimination or simply the tendency in America of white people to call the police whenever they see an African-American in a place where they don't think that they're supposed to be.

I don't see how you can contend with any of those social problems if you see society as just an ocean of atomized individuals.

And again, I don't think there's anything pernicious about people banding together on the basis of their common identity, to seek redress for discrimination and exclusion. I think that that is everything that's best about our democracy; that *is* the definition of progress.

And so again, I keep stumbling on the idea that this is somehow tyrannical, or "that way lies Stalinism." And a lot of those people who are opposed to political correctness, talk about the concept of "category creep," a concept that was originated by, I believe, an Australian academic. It's basically the failure to draw distinctions, so that you can't see the difference between, say, a KKK grand wizard and a conservative like, say, Ben Shapiro; or that you see everybody to your right as fascist, sexist, totalitarian, intolerable.

And I think that is a real thing that happens, in part, because undergraduates often think in broad and slightly overwrought categories — I know I did when I was a kid — maybe still do.

But I hear a lot of category creep in the argument against political correctness, or against seeking group redress. The idea that "that way lies dehumanization," or —

Rudyard Griffiths: Let's have Stephen come in on this — this was part of your opening remarks. You're a "category creep," Stephen. Now respond to that.

Stephen Fry: I'm still very lost about why we aren't talking about political correctness; we're talking about politics — and that's fine. And I share exactly what you think about it. I'm not an enemy of identity politics per se. I can obviously see where it goes wrong and where it's annoying.

But let's be empirical about this: how well is it working for you in America at the moment? Not well at all, it really isn't. You can answer me in a moment.

The reason that Trump, and Brexit in Britain, and all kinds of nativists all over Europe are succeeding is not the triumph of the right, it's the catastrophic failure of the left. It's our fault.

My point is not that I've turned to the right or anything like that, or that I'm nice and fluffy and want everybody to be decent; I'm saying, "Fuck political correctness. Resist. Fight. If you have a point of view, fight it in the proper manner, using democracy as it should be, not channels of education, not language."

You know, it's so silly — there's a chess rule: the best move to play in chess is not the best chess move, it's the move your opponent least wants you to play. At the moment you're being recruiting sergeants for the right, by annoying and upsetting instead of either fighting or persuading.

But political correctness is a middle course that simply doesn't work. That's my point.

Michael Dyson: Well, first of all, you said, "be empirical." Now, as far as I know, the word "empirical" means that which can be verified or falsified through the senses.

Stephen Fry: Exactly.

Michael Dyson: So if we look at it in an objective way, the reality is that people don't have equal access to the means to articulate the very moment you're talking about.

Stephen Fry: No, no, no, I'm talking about the empirical results of this political attitude.

Michael Dyson: I understand that, but my point is simply this: I'm suggesting to you that people use the weapons at hand. Now, it was Abraham Joshua Heschel, the rabbi, who said that everybody's not guilty, but everybody's responsible. Right? There's a distinction there.

Everybody clearly is not guilty, but what's interesting is to look at the flipside. If you have benefitted from three hundred years of holding people in servitude, thinking that you did it all on your own — "Why can't these people work harder? Let me see, for three hundred years, you ain't had no job."

So the reality is that for three hundred years, you hold people in abeyance. You hold them in subordination; you refuse to give them rights. Then all of a sudden you free them, and say, you're now individuals — not having the skills, not having—

Jordan Peterson: Who's this *you* that you're referring to?

Michael Dyson: I'm talking about American society first of all; I'm talking about the northern hemisphere; I'm talking about every society where enslavement has existed, but I'm speaking specifically of the repudiation of individual rights among people of colour in America, who were denied the opportunity to be individuals.

I obviously and ideally — and I think Michelle Goldberg does too — agree with the emphasis on individuals. What we're saying to you is that we have not been permitted to be individuals; we have not been permitted to exercise our individual autonomy and authority. And the refusal to do so, to recognize me as an individual, means that when you roll upon me and I'm a twelve-year-old boy in a park, and you shoot first in ways you do to black kids that you don't do to white kids, you are not treating that person as an individual.

If we're living in a society where women are subject to aberrant forms of horrid, patriarchal sexist and misogynist behaviour, you are not acknowledging the centrality of the individuality of women; you are treating them according to a group dynamic.

And if we get beyond the ability of people on the right to understand the degree to which they have operated from the basis of benefit from group identity, without having said ...

I'll end by saying this: that great American philosopher, Beyoncé Knowles, said that it has been said that racism is so American, that if you challenge racism, you look like you're challenging America. We are challenging inequality; we are challenging the refusal to see me as an individual. When we overcome that, have at it; we're all on an equal playing field.

Rudyard Griffiths: The pot is getting stirred here, I like it.

Jordan Peterson: So I've got a couple of questions. Let's assume for a moment that I've benefitted from my white privilege, okay? So let's assume that.

Michael Dyson: That's a good assumption; that's a good assumption.

Jordan Peterson: Yeah, well, that's what you would say. So let's get precise about this, okay?

Michael Dyson: Hmm, was that very individual of you?

Jordan Peterson: Let's get precise about this, okay?

Michael Dyson: Mm-hmm, let's get precise.

Jordan Peterson: To what degree is my present level of attainment or achievement a consequence of my white privilege? And I don't mean "sort of." Do you mean 5 percent? Do you mean 15 percent? Do you mean

25 percent? Do you mean 75 percent? And what do you propose I do about it?

How about a tax? How about a tax that's specialized for me so that I can account for my damn privilege, so that I can stop hearing about it?

Now, let's get precise about one other thing, okay? We'll get precise about one other thing.

Michael Dyson: Precise?

Jordan Peterson: Yeah, precise, yes.

Michael Dyson: Mm-hmm.

Jordan Peterson: And so, if we can agree — and we haven't — that the left can go too far, which it clearly can—

Michael Dyson: Mm-hmm.

Jordan Peterson: Then how would my worthy opponents precisely define when the left that they stand for has gone too far? You didn't like equity — equality of outcome — I think that's a great marker. But if you have a better suggestion and won't side-step the question, let's figure out how I can dispense with my white privilege so that you can tell me when the left has gone too far, since they clearly can.

And that's what this debate is about, about political correctness. It's about the left going too far, and I think it's gone too far in many ways, and I'd like to figure out exactly how and when, so the reasonable left could make its ascendance again and we could quit all this nonsense.

Rudyard Griffiths: Okay, Michelle, jump in.

Michelle Goldberg: Do you mind if I answer Stephen? I will answer you, but I just want to answer Stephen Fry first, because you, Stephen, talked about how we got Trump, and that it was the failure of the left.

I'm a journalist, as you know, and I went through a ton of temporalities during the campaign in different parts of the country. You're right. Everywhere I went, I heard complaints about political correctness far more than I heard complaints about, say, NAFTA.

But when you asked people what they meant by political correctness — they would complain that they called a woman they

worked with “girl” and she got mad at them. And that you couldn’t in public wonder aloud whether the president of the United States was really a Muslim. They didn’t like that they couldn’t make gay jokes anymore.

And so, on the one hand you're right, and I've written about this. I think that when people have these kinds of prejudices and you try to suppress them, it can create a dangerous counter-reaction.

But, again, to go back to the title of this debate, I also think that what they were reacting to — what they called political correctness — was the fact that they had to have this urbane black president who they felt talked down to them, which is really what they meant. I don't see a way around that, because as I said, that's progress.

So to the question of when the left goes too far, to me it's pretty easy — violence and censorship. I'm against violence and I'm against censorship.

But also — looking around the world right now, I understand that there is a problem of a kind of left-wing annoyance. There's a lot of ways in which random people on the internet, in particular, are able to swarm individuals and turn stray remarks into social media campaigns.

This is often conflated with political correctness, and it's a bad phenomenon. I wish there was a way to put an end to it. But I don't think there is a way to put an end to it simply by having reasonable liberals or reasonable socialists denounce it. It's just a kind of awful phenomenon of modern life. And if you want to have a debate about whether social media is terrible for democracy, I will be on the “yay” side.

But, when you see stuff like actual fascism ascendant all over the world, the idea that the radical left poses a greater threat than the radical right strikes me as something that you can literally only believe if you spend your life on college campuses

Rudyard Griffiths: Mm-hmm. So Mike, I want to come to you on Jordan's point. How does he get an equal voice in this debate back, if it is implied that his participation brings with it this baggage of white privilege that doesn't allow him to see clearly the issues that are before us.

Michael Dyson: But that is to be complicit in the very problem itself, terminologically. You're beginning at a point that's already

productive and controversial. You're saying, how can he get his equality back. Who are you talking about? Jordan Peterson, trending number one on Twitter? Jordan Peterson, international bestseller? I want him to tweet something out about me and my book.

Jordan Peterson, right, this is what I'm saying to you: why the rage, Bro? You're doing well, but you're a mean, mad, white man and you're going to get us right.

I have never seen so much wine and snow-flaking. There's enough wine in here to start a vineyard. And what I'm saying to you empirically and precisely, when you ask the question about white privilege, and ask it in the way you did — dismissive, pseudo-scientific, non-empirical, and without justification — is that, first, the truth is that white privilege doesn't act according to quantifiable segments; it's about the degree to which we are willing, as a society, to grapple with the ideals of freedom, justice, and equality upon which it's based.

The second thing that was interesting to me was that you were talking about not having a collective identity. What do you call a nation? Are you Canadian? Are you Canadian by yourself? Are you an individual? Are you part of a group? When America formed its union, it did so in opposition to another group.

So the reality is that those who are part of group of identities in politics deny the legitimacy and validity of those groups and the fact that they have been created thusly, and then have resentment against others. All I'm asking for is the opportunity.

The quotation you talk about — the difference between equality of outcome and equality of opportunity — that's a staid and retriend argument, hackneyed phrase, derived from the halcyon days of the debate over affirmative action. "Are you looking for outcomes that can be determined equally, or are you looking for opportunity?"

If you free a person after a whole long time of oppression and say, "Now you are free to survive," if they have no skills, if they have no quantifiable means of existence, what you have done is liberated them into oppression. And all I'm suggesting to you — as Lyndon Baines Johnson, one of our great presidents, said — is that if you start a man in a race a hundred years behind, it is awfully difficult to catch up.

So I don't think Jordan Peterson is suffering from anything except an exaggerated sense of entitlement and resentment, and his own privilege is invisible to him, and it's manifest with lethal intensity and ferocity right here on stage.

Rudyard Griffiths: Jordan, I'm going to have to let you respond to that if you will.

Jordan Peterson: Well, what I derived from that series of rebuttals, let's say, is twofold: the first is that saying that the radical left goes too far when they engage in violence is not a sufficient response by any stretch of the imagination, because there are sets of ideas in radical leftist thinking that led to the catastrophes of the twentieth century, and that was at the level of idea, not at the level of violent action.

It's a very straightforward thing to say you're against violence; it's like being against poverty; generically speaking, decent people are against poverty and violence. It doesn't address the issue in the least.

And with regard to my privilege or lack thereof, I'm not making the case that I haven't had advantages in my life, and disadvantages in my life, like most people. You don't know anything about my background or where I came from, but it doesn't matter to you, because fundamentally I'm a "mean white man."

That's a hell of a thing to say in a debate.

Michael Dyson: Let me just say that the "mean white man" comment was not predicated upon my historical excavation of your past; it's based upon the evident vitriol with which you speak, and the denial of a sense of equanimity among combatants in an argument.

So, I'm saying again, "you're a mean, mad white man," and the viciousness is evident.

Rudyard Griffiths: Okay, we should change the decks here. Let's talk about another big factor of the so-called politically correct movement right now, which is the Me Too movement and the extent to which we've seen this resurgence, this awakening, around what had been a horrible series of systemic abuses and injustices towards women.

Some people, though, Michelle, would say that we're in a cultural panic now, that the pendulum has swung too far and that there is a dangerous overreaction going on, where people's rights, reputations, and due process have been thrown to the wind. How do you respond to that?

Michelle Goldberg: Well, first, people started saying that within two weeks of the first Harvey Weinstein stories breaking – the minute Harvey Weinstein and other men started actually losing their jobs. This was something quite new, that men with histories of really serious predatory behaviour were suddenly losing their jobs.

You know, everybody had known about it for a long time and there had been a sort of implicit impunity, and suddenly that was taken away, and it created this cultural earthquake. And as soon as it did, it created a lot of anxiety. “What if this goes too far?”

You know, the Me Too movement was only a couple of months old when my newspaper started running columns from people saying, “Why can't I criticize Me Too?” which they were doing, in my newspaper?

So on the one hand, yes, of course. Is due process important? Obviously. I think that when you look at who has actually lost their jobs, who's actually lost their livelihoods, look around. It's not people in general on a McCarthyist rumour; it's people who took their dicks out at work; it's people who got tens of millions of dollars of settlements, and lost their jobs for four months, and now they're staging comebacks.

Bill O'Reilly is about to get a TV show on a new network. So, the idea that men everywhere feel like they can't talk anymore, and everybody's walking on eggshells, maybe that's true in your offices, but it's not true where I live.

And the Me Too movement has been particularly active in media. I don't know how many of you guys read about the “Shitty Media Men” list? A woman started the sort of open-source document, where women could list men in media that everybody knew about but nobody had ever done anything about. And it very quickly went public.

But there was something disturbing in it. You don't like these anonymous accusations floating around. Most feminists I know, including myself, were kind of freaked out by it and thought it was unfair to have people's reputations held up like this.

But, if you look at what happened to the men on the list ... nothing. They still have their jobs. I know men on that list; I work with men on that list. As far as I can think, the people in media who have actually lost their jobs and lost their careers, have done so for

extremely serious misbehaviour, documented by multiple women who had corroborating witnesses.

And so, I understand this anxiety that relations between men and women are changing. Of course that causes a lot of cultural anxiety. But I don't know that it's rooted in anything real.

Rudyard Griffiths: I'm going to bring Stephen in here and get his view on this. Are we in a cultural panic? Is the response commensurate with the moment?

Stephen Fry: I'm very confused by this. Of course I recognized the bestiality of Weinstein and the monstrosity of his behaviour, and it was shocking to me. I actually worked for him — script-doctoring, as it's called — and I never had the bathroom towel, but for pretty obvious reasons.

But it's grotesque, and I can't imagine how vile it must be for such a powerful man. And he was. We used to play a game at the Cannes Film Festival in his years of power. We would walk from one hotel at the end all the way up to the Palais des Festivals. You would get ten points every time you heard the word "Harvey."

Usually, in a ten-minute walk, you'd have three hundred points, because it was, "Yeah, Harvey's got the script ... Harvey's got it ... Yeah, I've got a meeting with Harvey at the Majestic in the afternoon." He was immensely powerful, and I think it's obvious that someone in that position abusing and threatening and hindering the livelihood of women is grotesque in the extreme.

But I have to tell you, there is genuine feeling amongst many people I know, that "Shhh," we can't speak our minds, that we can't actually speak to the true nuance, the true depth of sexual romantic feeling between men and women. It's not a subject I'm absolutely expert on, but it counts between men and men as well, though I know that when it's men and men, you might say, "Well, that's different, because women have had a different experience in history," and I don't want to enter that particular field.

But I would say that there is real fear. In my business, where this all started — show business, acting, and so on — people are rather afraid to speak about a piece of publicity that's come out, or a statement that's been made. You just go, "Yeah, absolutely," and wait for the people to leave the room before you can speak honestly with your friends.

And I've never experienced that in my entire sixty years on this planet, this feeling that — and I'm not characterizing feminists as East German — but it's like the Stasi listening: you'd better be careful; they're listening.

And that's a genuine feeling. I'm saying that with my hand on my heart. I'm not saying it to make a point other than the fact that it's true and it's worrying. But the sexual misadventure and horror experience is worrying too; so there are two worries, and they're not solved.

Rudyard Griffiths: Let's bring out Jordan on this, because you've written and commented about a lot. But Stephen, thank you for that.

Jordan Peterson: Well, I think I'm going to point out two things again. The first is that my question about when the left goes too far *still* hasn't been answered. And then the second thing I'm going to point out is that, it's conceivable that I am a mean man — maybe I'm meaner than some people, and not as mean as others (although, I think that's probably more the case). But I would say that the fact that race got dragged into that particular comment is a better exemplar of what the hell I think is wrong with the politically correct left than anything else that could have possibly happened.

Michael Dyson: Imagine the hurt, the anxiety, the insult that you might genuinely feel, according to what I felt was an appropriate comment of description at the moment of its expression. But imagine now, those hurt feelings and—

Jordan Peterson: I'm not hurt.

Michael Dyson: Okay, you feel great! You feel great about it!

Jordan Peterson: That's really different. I'm not a victim. I'm not hurt. I'm appalled.

Michael Dyson: You're not hurt, okay. You wouldn't be a victim. So what's interesting is that whatever non-traditional feelings of empathy you endure at this particular point, imagine, then, the horrors that so many other “others” have had to put up with for so long, when they are refused an acknowledgement of their humanity.

Now, I take your point, seriously. What I'm saying to you is that, when you said you were upset that I added the element of race when I said, “mean, mad white man,” what's interesting is that you may have felt that you were being ascribed a group identity to which you do not subscribe. You may have felt that you were being

unfairly judged according to your particular race. You may have felt that your individual identity was being besmirched by my rather careless characterization of you.

All of that qualifies as a legitimate response to me. But it also speaks to the point we've been trying to make about the refusal to see our individual existence, as women, as people of colour, as First Nations people and the like.

My point simply has been: the reason I talked about race in that particular characterization is because there's a particular way in which I have come to a city — I don't know if there are a lot of black people out here ... I'm not sure. But I constantly come to places and spaces that are not my natural habitat — other than for intellectual engagement and the love and the fury of rhetorical engagement, yes.

But I often go into hostile spaces, where people will not vote in favour of my particular viewpoint, because I'm interested, as an individual, in breaking down barriers so that people can understand just how complicated it is.

So, what I'm saying to you is that I would invite you, in terms of the surrender of your privilege — to give you a specific response — to come with me to a black Baptist church. Come with me to a historically black college; come with me to an indigenous or First Nations community, where we're able to engage in some of the lovely conversation, but also to listen and hear.

And when I added race to that, I was talking about people's historical inability to acknowledge others' pains equally to the ones that they are presently enduring.

So, as a human being, I love you, I promise, but I stand by my comment.

Jordan Peterson: Well, I've seen the sorts of things that you're talking about. I happen to be an honorary member of an indigenous family, so don't tell me about what I should go see with regard to oppression. You actually don't know anything about me.

Michael Dyson: You asked me a question, I gave you a response.

Jordan Peterson: Yeah. You gave me a generic response, a generic race-based response.

Michael Dyson: It's tailored towards you. Jordan Peterson, I would like for you to come with me, Michael Eric Dyson, to a black Baptist church. You've been to one of those?

Jordan Peterson: I would be happy to do that, but —

Michael Dyson: Okay, all right, I'm going to hook you up, I'm going to hook you up.

Rudyard Griffiths: Okay, good, and make sure that happens.

One more quick round, then we're going to go to closing statements.

Stephen Fry, I want to get your response as to whether, a generation from now, looking back on this debate, we're going to see this so-called politically correct movement in the same way, let's say, that we now understand the positive contributions of the civil rights movement.

That was a movement that advanced a series of ideas about human dignity to people who previously didn't have that dignity. We're now having another debate, another social debate, about different groups and communities — that we're trying to convey a sense of new dignity to them. Why won't this be looked back upon as something positive, a generation from now?

Stephen Fry: I think people will look back on this debate and wonder why political correctness wasn't discussed.

I said it was slippery. It's interesting to hear talk about race and about gender and about equality, and it's something that I've thought about a lot and I can learn a great deal about, but that's not why I came to this debate.

I was interested in what I've always been interested in: the suppression of language and thought, the closing down, the rationalist idea that seems beguiling, that if you limit people's language, you may somehow teach them a different way of thinking, something that delighted the inventors of George Orwell's Newspeak, for example.

And it seems to me that it's just implausible, that it doesn't work. And that's what I mean by empirical. It doesn't stand an empirical test; it isn't experientially validated, as we see from the political landscape now and I worry that we may in the future.

So, I'm sort of disappointed that the subject has just revolved around academia, which was predictable, because that's the sort of crucible in which these elements are mixed. But even more disappointed that really, I haven't heard from Michelle or from Professor Dyson, as to what they think political correctness is. Because what they've talked about is basically saying, "Progress, in our view, is progress." Well, I agree. Yeah. So it is, too. And good on progress!

But how is it that what we call political correctness, you call progress? That's what you're supposed to be arguing. I want to know what you mean by political correctness.

Michelle Goldberg: Well, again, a few months ago, when you, Rudyard, contacted me and asked if I wanted to do a debate about identity politics and presented me with this resolution, I said there are a lot of things that people call political correctness that I'm not going to defend.

But then I realized who I was debating, and saw that there were a lot of things that you, Jordan Peterson, call political correctness that I call progress. And to some extent, you too, Stephen Fry. You know, when you talk about it being outrageous — or not "outrageous"; I won't put words into your mouth — but that we shouldn't be tearing down statues of notorious racists; that we should just instead be throwing eggs at them. Those sorts of things, if you call them political correctness, I call them progress.

Now, as for this feeling of being silenced, which I understand, although it seems very vague: you are not quite putting your finger on who is silencing you, except for a vague fear that if you say something untoward, you're going to be the subject of —

Stephen Fry: Shaming, yes.

Michelle Goldberg: Shaming is a right too, but by what? By the internet?

Stephen Fry: I'm not going to tell you the names. That's the whole point, I'm scared. I wouldn't. That's the point. It's a culture of fear.

Michelle Goldberg: You're right, I understand there's that element of fear. What I'm saying is that it's a feeling that is the intangible result of—

Stephen Fry: Okay, but we've all seen the sort of show trial thing, where the person then apologizes — "I have so much to learn about sexual politics, I am really sorry." Signed ... the lawyer. Crossed out ... the name of the person.

The real mistake of our Left is that we underestimate the Right. The Right isn't as stupid as we'd like them to be. If only they were. If only they weren't so cunning, so sly, so smart, so aware of our shortcomings.

And I just fear that political correctness is a weapon that they value; that the more we tell the world how people should be treated — how language should be treated, what words are acceptable, what attitudes are acceptable, what HR meeting is going to tell you in a long bullet-pointed list about how you look at people — all of this is meat and drink to bad people, to malefactors, to bad actors.

I'm not including myself as one of those "bad actors" in that sense; I mean "bad actors" in the other sense!

Michelle Goldberg: There are a lot of ways in which I agree with you, although, to turn it back on you, I'd like to hear you say what are the words that have fallen into disrepute that you think we should be resurrecting. To me, this is the area of hotly contested social change right now, where a lot of people feel'—

Stephen Fry: I have to say this about words that have gone into disuse: it's very often phrases, jargonistic slogans, "heteronormative," "cisgendered," those kind of things. They're just an insult.

Imagine you're a young student arriving at university and someone's bombarding you with this preposterous hermeneutical nonsense from misread textbooks and misread Foucault, if I may say — a misread Derrida, and so on. Because, you know, I was at Cambridge, England, doing literature. We had our French phase, and there's value in that. It's an interesting game.

I think I'll just say that the ghost hovering over for me is a letter Oscar Wilde wrote, and he said to Bosie, his lover, "The fact that you didn't get the degree is nothing, but you never acquired what is sometimes called the Oxford manner." And I'll say to that, the university manner.

Oscar said, "I take that to mean the ability to play gracefully with ideas." I think that's disappearing from our culture, and I think it's a terrible thing.

Michael Dyson: It's hard to be the self-deprecating Englishman, isn't it?

Stephen Fry: You've *no* idea.

Michael Dyson: But no, I got a pretty good idea here today. All of us have studied history, but what's interesting is that I don't recall these debates about political correctness happening when people who were in power were in absolute power, unquestioned power.

Stephen Fry: Yeah, yeah, there were definitely—

Michael Dyson: Political correctness becomes an issue when people who used to have power, or who still have power but think they don't, get challenged on just a little bit of what they have and don't want to share toys in the sandlot of life. So, all of a sudden it becomes a kind of exaggerated grievance.

Now, the things you named — the bullet-points and the cisgender and the heteronormativity and the heteropatriarchy and the capitalist resurgence and the insurrection of subjugated knowledges, to give Foucault some more love, or the Derridean deconstruction — all that stuff; the French phase is still going on with the French fries in America.

What's interesting is that I didn't hear many complaints of political correctness at the height of the dominance of one group or another, but when Martin Luther King Jr., who argued for group identity, as a black person, to provide an opportunity for individual black people to come to the fore, they began to make that claim.

Now, they didn't call it political correctness. "You're siding with those who are against free speech; you're siding with those who don't want me as a white person to be recognized in my humanity." And what I mean by political correctness is the kind of politics of *ressentiment* that are articulated by various holders of power at certain levels, at various levels.

One of the beautiful things about Foucault that I take, as opposed to Max Weber, is that Foucault said power breaks out everywhere. I would think a person who is critical of political correctness like you would appreciate this. As opposed to Max Weber, who said that power is over there in a hierarchical structure, where subordination is the demand, Foucault said, "No, power breaks out even among people who are disempowered." So you can hurt somebody in your own community.

What's more politically incorrect than a black Baptist preacher identifying with a first-century Palestinian Jew and still loving atheists? What's more politically incorrect than a black intellectual

going on Bill Maher and defending his ability to continue to have his show, despite using the N-word.

I, sir, believe in a politically incorrect version. When I go as a black Baptist preacher to chastise my fellow believers about their homophobia, that goes over like a brick cloud. When I come into arenas like this, I understand that my back is up against the wall, but—

Stephen Fry: Then come and sit over here!

Michael Dyson: So, what's interesting is that when we look at what is seen as political correctness in our societies — in a free Canadian society, in a free American society — when I look, to me it has been a massive jumble that has been carved together out of the politics of resentment that powers once held are no longer held; freedoms once exercised absolutely must now be shared.

So I am in agreement with both of the gentlemen to my right, who believe that political correctness has been a scourge, but not necessarily the way you think so. I think it's been a scourge because those who have been the deployers of power and the beneficiaries of privilege have failed to recognize their particular way.

And at the end of the day, I think that those of us who are free citizens of this country, and of America, should figure out ways to respect the humanity of the other, to respect the individual existence of the other, and also respect the fact that barriers have been placed upon particular groups that have prevented them from flourishing.

That's all I mean by political correctness.

Rudyard Griffiths: Okay. Before we go to closing statements, I'm going to give the final words on this topic to Michelle and then you, Jordan.

Michelle Goldberg: So I think part of the frustration here is that both of you have radically different ideas of what we're talking about when we talk about political correctness. It seems to me that when you're talking about political correctness, you mean the kind of feeling of anxiety that a lot of people feel, because we all live now in this terrible crowd-source panopticon that makes you worry that any straight phrase you utter might be used to defame you, right?

And I think that a lot of people feel that anxiety. I disagree that that is something that is being solely perpetrated against institutions — kind of Oscar Wildean figures, by a censoring left-wing core, because it's coming from all directions. This phenomenon, which sucks, is all over the place. I mean, I get it when I write something critical of the way that the IDF behaved in Gaza.

It's coming at everyone, and I think that there is a way in which, when it comes at a certain sort of figure and there's a certain set of complaints, and you feel unjustly criticized, and you feel silenced — which again, I think is really different from *being* silenced — you call it political correctness.

And I would also like the culture to be more free-wheeling. You're not going to get the left to put an end to this, because it is much more of a mob social-media phenomenon than it is some diktat coming up from on high.

And so, really, the only way to break through it is to say what you are — what you say that you're afraid to say, right? I mean, that's the only way to sort of pop this bubble, or end this anxiety, or at least diffuse it a little bit.

What I hear Mr. Peterson talking about as political correctness is something much broader, and much more fundamental to social change. And you want me to define — or one of us to talk about when the left goes too far. And I certainly don't want to be a woman putting words in your mouth, but if I hear you correctly, what you're saying is that you want me to renounce Marxist categories, or to —

Jordan Peterson: It's up to you. I just want you to *do* it. I want you to define when the left goes too far. You can do it any way you want.

Michelle Goldberg: I think that the left goes too far when it is violent or censoring, when it tries to shut people down, or “no-platform” them, or when it acts violently. I'm not sure what you expect beyond that.

Jordan Peterson: Something deeper.

Michelle Goldberg: Something deeper? How?

Jordan Peterson: Well, I'd like you to contend with the set of left-wing ideas that produced all the left-wing pathologies of the twentieth century, and to define how you think standard left-wing thinking, which has a valuable place, goes too far, since it obviously does.

Michael Dyson: Has the right gone too far?

Jordan Peterson: Of course the right has gone too far.

Michael Dyson: How? Tell us how?

Jordan Peterson: Well, how about Auschwitz?

Michael Dyson: I mean ... what else? More recently, what has gone wrong with the right?

Jordan Peterson: Look, I don't like identity politics players at all. I don't care whether they're on the left or the right. I've been lecturing about right-wing extremism for thirty years. I'm no fan of the right, despite the fact that the left would like to paint me that way, because it's more convenient for them.

Michael Dyson: How have they gone too far recently?

Jordan Peterson: Well, where? It's threatening to go too far in identitarian Europe, that's for sure. It's gone too far in Charlottesville; it went too far in Norway. How long a list do you want? And why am I required to produce that? To show you that I don't like the identitarian right?

Michael Dyson: You asked me, so I just thought I'd ask you.

Jordan Peterson: I was actually asking you a question. So your assumption is somehow that I must be on the side of the right. Look, the right hasn't occupied the humanities and the social sciences. It's as simple as that for me. If they had, I'd be objecting to them.

Michael Dyson: Say that again, I didn't hear.

Jordan Peterson: The right has not occupied the social sciences and the humanities, and the left clearly has — the statistical evidence for that is overwhelming.

Michael Dyson: So what about IQ testing in terms of genetic inheritance?

Jordan Peterson: Sorry, we're here to talk about political correctness, and we've done a damn poor job of it.

Michael Dyson: Oh, I see. I gave you an example and you can't answer. Okay, all right.

Rudyard Griffiths: Okay. Let's all redeem ourselves with our closing statements. I'm going to put three minutes on the clock, and we're going to go in the reverse order of the opening. So Stephen, you're up first.

Stephen Fry: Oh, lordy, lordy. Here we are. Well, I'll hide behind the lectern in that case.

Well, I've been fascinated by this conversation. There's been an enormous clash of cultures in the conversation. We've had classic, if I can call it that, huckstering, snake-oil pulpit talk. It's a mode of discourse, a rhetorical style that I find endlessly refreshing and vivifying, but I'm not sure that we actually focused on the point in question. And my objection has always been towards orthodoxies — I'm a heterodox and a contrarian, and I can't help myself.

And I think there's been an underestimation of the fact that language does affect people. It does make the young, in particular, very anxious, as they're starting out on their educational, or their work careers. It makes them very angry, very upset, very alienated to feel that they don't know any more how to operate in the world, how to engage in relationships, how to think honestly.

So they accrete more and more to their own mini-groups. And I think that's dangerous and unhappy for society. I think it's reflected in a paucity of cinema and literature and art, and the culture generally is that there's a fear that's pervading it. And while people can talk to academics and they'll say, "You should come and see our lessons; our lectures are open and free, and ideas are exchanged," I'm sure that's true.

I'm sure it's true, but I don't think we should underestimate how much this feeling is prevalent in the culture of ... It's a strange paradox, that the liberals are illiberal in their demand for liberality. They are exclusive in their demand for inclusivity. They are homogenous in their demand for heterogeneity. They are somehow un-diverse in their call for diversity — you can be diverse, but not diverse in your opinions and in your language and in your behaviour. And that's a terrible pity.

So, I would say that I'm sorry that it got a bit heated in places, because I was hoping it wouldn't. I was hoping it would be a shining example of how people of all different kinds of political outlooks can speak with humour and wit and a lightness of touch. As G. K. Chesterton said, "Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly."

And I think it's very important for us, who are privileged — all four of us, privileged to be here, to be asked to be here — to take ourselves a little bit more lightly, not to be too earnest, too pompous, too serious. And not to be too certain.

It's a time, I think, for really engaging in emotionally fulfilling, passionate and positive doubt. That's what I would urge. Thank you.

Rudyard Griffiths: Michael, I'm going to put three minutes on the clock for you. Please, your closing.

Michael Dyson: Thank you so much for that compliment, Brother Fry. I'm used to not exclusively white men, who see black intelligence articulated at a certain level, feeling a kind of condescension. But a kind of verbal facility is automatically assumed to be a kind of hucksterism and snake-oil salesmanship. I've seen that. I get it. I get hate letters every day from white brothers and sisters who are mad I'm teaching their children. "You are just trying to co-opt our children; you are trying to corrupt them." Yes, I'm trying to corrupt them so that they will be uncorrupted by the corruptibility that they've inherited from a society that refuses to see all people as human beings.

The death threats I have received constantly for simply trying to speak my mind. It's not about a politically correct society that is open-minded and that has some consternation about my ability to speak, I'm getting real, live — you want empirical — death threats that talk about killing me, setting up to hurt me and harm me, simply because I choose to speak my mind.

I agree with my *confrères* and my compatriots that we should argue against the vicious limitations and incursions against speech. I believe that everybody has the right to be able to articulate themselves. And the enormous privilege we have to come to a spot in a space like this means that we have that privilege and we should be responsible for it.

No matter where we go from here, me and Brother Peterson will go to a black Baptist church. I'm going to hold him to that; he said it on national TV. We're going to go to a black Baptist church and have an enlightening conversation about the need for us to engage not only in reciprocal and mutual edification, but in criticism — even hard and tough criticism. But in a way that speaks to the needs and interests of those who don't usually get on TV, whose

voices are not usually amplified, whose ideas are not usually taken seriously.

And when they get to the upper echelons of the ability of a society to express themselves, they are equally subject to vicious recrimination and hurtful resistance.

There's an old story about the pig and the chicken going down the street and saying, "Let's have breakfast." The chicken just has to give up an egg, the pig has to give up his ass in order to make breakfast. We have often been the pigs, giving up our asses to make breakfast. Let's start sharing them asses with everybody else. Thank you.

Jordan Peterson:

So, I'm not here to claim that there's no such thing as oppression, unfairness, brutality, discrimination, unfair use of power — all of those. Anyone with any sense knows that hierarchical structures tilt towards tyranny, and that we have to be constantly wakeful to ensure that all they are isn't just power and tyranny.

It's interesting to hear Foucault referred to; it's unfortunate, but it's interesting, because Foucault, like his French intellectual *confrères*, essentially believes that the only basis upon which hierarchies were established is power. And that's part of this pernicious politically correct doctrine that I've been speaking about — that when a hierarchy becomes corrupt, then the only way to ascend it is to exercise power — that's essentially the definition of a tyranny.

But that doesn't mean the imperfect hierarchies that we have constructed in our relatively free countries, which at least tilt somewhat towards competence and ability, as evidenced by the staggering achievements of civilization that we've managed to produce. It doesn't mean that the appropriate way of diagnosing them is to assume, without reservation, unidimensionally, that they're all about power, and as a consequence, that everyone who occupies any position within them is a tyrant or a tyrant in the making. And that is certainly the fundamental claim of someone like Foucault. And it's part and parcel of this ideological catastrophe that is political correctness.

I'm not here to argue against progress. I'm not here to argue against equality of opportunity. Anyone with any sense understands that, even if you're selfish, you're best served by allowing yourself access to the multiplicitous talents of everyone; and to discriminate

against them for arbitrary reasons unrelated to their competences is abhorrent.

That has nothing to do with the issue at hand. It isn't that good things haven't happened in the past and shouldn't continue to happen — that's not the point. The point is the point my compatriot Fry had made, which is: well, we can agree on the catastrophe and we can agree on the historic inequity, but there's no way I'm going to agree that political correctness is the way to address any of that. And there's plenty of evidence to the contrary, some of which I would say was displayed quite clearly tonight.

Michelle Goldberg: I think that one of the irresolvable issues that we're all coming up against is the role of feelings, right? Stephen Fry has asked us to recognize and empathize with his feeling of being silenced, of being threatened, and I do, and I get it.

I feel it sometimes too in my columns. I hate it when I write something that then gets an irate Twitter mob after me. But if, say, I stood up here and said: recognize how threatened so many women feel when one of the best-selling and most prominent intellectuals in the world right now, says in an interview that maybe the Me Too movement has shown that this whole experiment of men and women working together is just not working?

Or, you know, that maybe, if women don't want the workplace to be sexualized, they shouldn't be allowed to wear makeup?

Jordan Peterson: I didn't say that.

Michelle Goldberg: Well, Google it.

Jordan Peterson: I didn't say that.

Michelle Goldberg: So, if I say I feel threatened, then I'm being "politically correct and hysterical." So much of the debate about political correctness, so much of the condemnation of political correctness, is about people saying, "respect my feelings, or accommodate my feelings." And to some extent we can accommodate everyone's feelings.

But there's one group that really does think its feelings should be accommodated, and that is what we keep coming up against. There is a group of people — and to some extent I'm part of it — that feels uniquely that our feelings of being silenced, marginalized, censored need to take primacy; that we can sneer when these *other* groups ask us to take seriously their feelings of being threatened, or

their feelings of being marginalized. Then we call those demands “political correctness.”

And I would finally say that I think there’s a fair amount of research that people become more close-minded, more tribal, when they feel threatened, when they feel that their group identity is at stake. And so, as much as you want to blame the left for the rise of the right, I think that the rise of the right – the rise of people who are questioning the fundamental ideal of pluralistic liberal democracy – the more *those* views are mainstreamed, the more people are going to shut down in response, because people are *really* scared.

Rudyard Griffiths: Thank you. Well, first of all, I think on behalf of all the debaters, I think we want to thank the audience. You were engaged, you were mostly civil and, not so civil in ways that I think we enjoyed. So on behalf of the debaters, everybody, thank you, audience. This was a challenging topic and you did a great job.

Also a big thank you to our debaters. You know, it’s one thing to give regular speeches, as you all do, but it’s a very different thing to come on a stage in front of a live audience and a large television audience, and have your ideas contested in real time. So again, to all four of you, thank you for accepting our invitation to come here tonight.

So a few final notes: first, thank you to the Aurea Foundation and the Munk family for once again convening us here at Roy Thompson Hall. We’re going to do it all again this coming autumn.

All of you here in the hall have a ballot — you can vote on your way out. We’ll probably have those results for you soon after 9:15.

And let’s just quickly review where your opinion stood at the beginning of tonight’s contest. On the motion, “Be it resolved: what you call political correctness, I call progress,” 36 percent agreed, 64 percent disagreed. And again, we saw a large percentage of you willing to change your mind — 87 percent.

So let’s see how tonight’s cut and thrust affected your voting here. You’ve got your ballots, and again, to those of you who are watching online, we are going to have all these results for you on our social media feeds around 9:15.

So enjoy the long weekend. Happy Victoria Day everyone. Thanks for coming out to the Munk Debates.

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Rudyard Griffiths: We're going to go right now to Stephen Fry and Jordan Peterson, to get their thoughts on how the evening played out. Some hotly contested moments here, so we'll be curious to see what happens with the audience vote over the course of the next few minutes. And also, for those of you watching online, we have had a running poll. That poll, again, was [www.munkdebates.com/vote](http://www.munkdebates.com/vote), so go there, check it out, see how each of these debaters did in terms of their opening statements, their rebuttals, the moderated section, and the closing statements. Did we see any changes there?

Gentlemen, thank you. We're just going to do a quick discussion with the online audience watching right now, just to get your reactions to the debate. And maybe we'll just start with you, Jordan.

There were some heated moments here. Did that surprise you, the exchanges that you had with Michael Eric Dyson?

Jordan Peterson: Well, I wouldn't say it surprised me ... well, I suppose it probably did. It just didn't seem like a very good tactical move, you know, and I stand by what I said. I don't see any reason at all that my racial identity needed to be dragged into the discussion, independent of my personality proclivity.

I would say what I just said to Mr. Fry here, is that it was a pleasure sharing the stage with him. I've rarely heard anyone ever deliver their convictions with such a remarkable sense of passion and wit and forbearance and erudition — it was really something.

Rudyard Griffiths: And Stephen, a challenging debate, because in a sense we were trying to mesh two different views here, two different world views, one very focused more on identity politics, group identity. You, in a sense, having an argument really more about the larger culture itself and the tenor and tone of the conversation.

Stephen Fry: Yes, I worried that I was being a little scattergun really, but scattergun and too specific — that I had just taken very literally the popular idea of political correctness as being a kind of control of language and a shutting down of certain phrases, or an introduction of others. And the kind of day-to-day human resource departments

of corporations and that sort of thing. So I was slightly disappointed that it just became a debate about race and about gender and so on. But that was natural, I guess. And the fact is that I'm still a leftie, but a soft one.

Rudyard Griffiths: You're not too soft!

Stephen Fry: I'm flabby and squashy in every sense. And I realize that that's not a political point of view; it is a personal one.

Rudyard Griffiths: Right.

Stephen Fry: And the gap between the personal and the political, which is a space you're obviously very interested in as a psychologist, is one that is rarely explored. People are either so personal that it has no application in the outside world and the organization of human affairs. Or, they're so political and so much to do with structure and distinction between hierarchies and networks and so on, that they forget the individual.

And that's the space in which the impassioned liberal lives, and it's not easy to do, because you often do sound rather wet. And I'm aware that I did. But I enjoyed it.

Rudyard Griffiths: No, no, no. Yeah, thank you for coming. Just finally, before I free you both to a well-earned drink, is there anything you felt was left unsaid, Jordan? Any point that you wanted to make that you didn't feel you had the time or the opportunity for?

Jordan Peterson: No, I don't think so. I said my piece.

Rudyard Griffiths: Same question to you, Stephen?

Stephen Fry: No, I think I got across — I mean, there's so much you can talk about in that field, and I just wanted to leave the point that I do want — like everybody, it's a no-brainer — we want the world to be fairer, juster, sweeter, kinder.

But it's a question of how you get there, and I felt that wasn't really addressed.

Rudyard Griffiths: Okay. Well, gentlemen, thank you both very much. From our online audience, a big thank you also, I know, to Jordan Petersen and Stephen Fry for participating in a debate with some stakes on the table, for sure.

Thank you gentlemen, I'll see you in the reception room.

Several: Thank you, yes.

Rudyard Griffiths: Again, online viewers, we now have Michael Eric Dyson coming into the camera range here, with Michelle Goldberg, to get their reactions to the debate.

So Michael and Michelle, thank you for being part of this.

Michelle Goldberg: Thank you.

Rudyard Griffiths: You know, it's a complicated subject, it's got a lot of different moving pieces and elements. I think we addressed some of the constituent parts. Maybe we can start with you, Michelle. Was there something that you wanted to say on stage that maybe we didn't have the time or the opportunity for? Now is your chance.

Michelle Goldberg: Well, the only thing I can think of is that I wish we could have drilled down a little bit more into the gender piece of this. And again, particularly with Mr. Peterson, what we were really arguing about, and the kind of range of feminist progress that he considers political correctness.

I think part of the frustration is that he and Stephen Fry are talking about and defending a fairly discrete set of ideas with some overlap. And one of the difficult things about political correctness is that it's a slippery term that's deployed to talk about a whole range of phenomena.

Rudyard Griffiths: Yes, and close-down conversation and open-up conversation.

How did you feel, Michael? There were some points there, some points of sharp exchange. We appreciate that at the Munk Debates; this is not a place for shrinking wallflowers. But do you have any unsaid thoughts, anything that you want to put a point on now?

Michael Dyson: Well, I think you have to hold people intellectually accountable, and for Mr. Peterson to deny to Michelle some of the things that he said, and to present himself in a certain way, without saying some of the abhorrent things he has said about women and other minorities, I think demands an engaged response to him.

And, I think, the frustration, as Michelle and I said — and Mr. Fry talked about — that we talked about everything but political correctness. Well, the reality is that political correctness rests upon some serious political work in this culture in Canada and in America that needs to be done.

And what I tried to express was that we didn't have political correctness as long as white straight men were in charge. There was no argument about "Let's get this right." But when people who no longer exercise absolute power still have predominant power, then there's an argument.

And to Michelle's point — about gender, the workplace, race, sexuality and the like — I just think that it was an unnecessarily vigorous, and sometimes sharply worded debate between us all.

Rudyard Griffiths: Michelle, final word to you?

Michelle Goldberg: Well, if you are curious about the quote that I mentioned about how this experiment with women and men working together is maybe not working, I mean, please do Google it.

Rudyard Griffiths: Did you put him on your account?

Michelle Goldberg: I don't know. But I guess Stephen Fry and I could probably have sat on the same side of another debate. But again, I feel like the phrase "political correctness" has expanded to cover a whole range of challenges. I found it was really interesting how much people were talking about their feelings, because when women talk about their feelings, that is "politically correct excess." And when men talk about this feeling that they can't empirically define, we should all change in deference to that.

Rudyard Griffiths: Okay, guys, great thoughts. Let's go get a drink in the reception.

Michelle Goldberg: Thank you.

Michael Dyson: Let's do that, yeah.

Rudyard Griffiths: Online viewers, thank you for being part of this Munk Debate. As I mentioned, these debates are semi-annual, we'll have another one this fall. We've got a whole archive of past debates on our website, on a whole range of topics, going back over a decade now.

And you can access those debates free simply by becoming a member at [www.munkdebates.com](http://www.munkdebates.com). Go to the basic membership; it's free. And we have a rock-solid privacy policy there; we respect your privacy.

So finally, check us out on Facebook. Thank you for the twenty-six thousand new follows in the last ten days. We appreciate it. This

debate will be archived on our website for the next while, again, for free, so share it with friends and family.

I'm Rudyard Griffiths from downtown Toronto, Canada, at the Munk Debate on political correctness. See you again in the autumn.

Take care, good night.