

Senator Tim Scott Educates 'The View' Host on Black Progress in America

Tim Scott, the Republican senator from South Carolina and now a Republican presidential candidate, recently appeared on *The View* and had a lively and candid conversation with the hosts about a number of hot-button issues, in particular the question of systemic racism in America today.

In the midst of extended and respectful interaction with host Sonny Hostin (herself an African American), Scott differed with Hostin's assessment that his own story was an exception to the rule.

He stated, "That is a dangerous, offensive, disgusting message to send to our young people today, that the only way to succeed is by being the exception."

Then, when challenged by Hostin about whether systemic racism currently existed in America, Scott pointed to the great progress we had made, including having national leaders like Barack Obama and Kamala Harris as well as local leaders in South Carolina who were African American.

He also noted that, "In 1975, there was about 15% unemployment in the African American community and for the first time in the history of the country it is under 5%."

When Hostin responded, "40% homelessness of African-Americans as [compared to] 13% of the population," Scott answered, "Here's what I'm gonna suggest... The fact of the matter is that progress in America is palpable. It can be measured in generations. I look back at the fact that my grandfather, born in 1921 in Sally, South Carolina, when he was on a sidewalk, a White person was coming, he had to step off and not make eye

contact. That man believed then what some doubt now: in the goodness of America. Because he believed that having faith in God, faith in himself and faith in what the future could hold for his kids, would unleash opportunities in ways that you cannot imagine."

He continued, "Every kid today can look—just change the stations and see how much progress has been made in this country. ABC, NBC, CBS, MSNBC, ESPN, CNN and FOX News, all have African-American and Hispanic hosts. So what I'm suggesting is that yesterday's exception is today's rule."

Hostin then asked, "So America has met its promise?"

Scott responded, "No, of course, the concept of America is that we are going to become a more perfect union. But in fact, the challenges that we faced 50 years ago and 60 years ago should not be the same challenges that we face today."

Then, getting specific, he said, "And here's the way that you measure that. When my mother was born, about 10% of African Americans got a high school degree, diploma, today it is over 90%. When we look at the income success"—Hostin interjected here, "That's an HBCU [Historically Black Colleges and Universities] stat"—and Scott continued, "The HBCU stat is a good one. One of the reasons why I took the funding for HBCUs to the highest level in the history of the country, and then I helped make it permanent, is because I believe that education is the closest thing to magic in America. So I'm about making sure that our kids have as many opportunities to succeed as possible."

May Scott's vision come to pass, and may it come to pass speedily. Well done and well said.

But here's what struck me—and I write this from the perspective of a White Jewish American who was born in New York City and grew up on Long Island where I encountered very little anti-Semitism and was raised in a non-racist home. (As

a young boy, my second organ teacher was a Black man married to a White woman, and they would sometimes dine with us. They had lost many friends because of their marriage, something that my father found utterly appalling in that day and age, meaning, in the mid-1960s; I was born in 1955.)

The bottom line is that I did not grow up in the South. I did not witness firsthand the outrage of segregation. I did not come from a major slave-owning state. And, although in retrospect I'm sure it was happening on Long Island, I was unaware that Blacks were subject to racial profiling by the police. This was not a conversation I remember having with any Black schoolmates or friends in high school or college, even in my days as a teen drug user, when fear of the police was a reality to me and my fellow-druggies. (For context, I was born in 1955.)

What struck me, then, in Scott's comments was not his emphasis on how much better things have gotten for Black Americans today, although I do believe he is right, and I believe we are continuing to head in the right direction, the efforts and attitudes of White Supremacists notwithstanding.

Instead, what struck me was *how recent* Scott's examples were.

To be sure, none of this was new information to me in terms of the picture that he painted. I was just jarred to hear it stated again, especially lines like this: "When my mother was born, about 10% of African Americans got a high school degree, diploma" How devastating. Inequities that run that deep are not quickly reversed. And to think of what his own grandfather suffered. This is not ancient history.

That's why I was not surprised to read that a 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances found that, "White families have the highest level of both median and mean family wealth: \$188,200 and \$983,400, respectively Black and Hispanic families have considerably less wealth than White families. Black

families' median and mean wealth is less than 15% that of White families, at \$24,100 and \$142,500, respectively. Hispanic families' median and mean wealth is \$36,100 and \$165,500, respectively."

So, what struck me the most in Scott's comments was how far we still need to go to right the wrongs of the past—and I write these words as someone who is not trying to prove my wokeness, who feels zero "White guilt" (why on earth should I?), and who is not arguing for reparations.

I'm simply saying that: 1) our ugly past is more recent than some of us realize (or care to realize); and: 2) while I do not believe that systemic racism is by any means pervasive in America today, the legacy of systemic racism can still be felt in many tangible ways.

All that being said, I applaud Senator Scott's attitude and I agree with him that we are heading in the right direction.

Let it truly be that "yesterday's exception is today's rule."
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