



Episode 1,264: Going to College? Everyone Congratulates You. Not? You're Probably a Loser

Guest: T.K. Coleman

WOODS: Tell me about what this tour is all about, the name of the tour, and where it's going to be taking you.

COLEMAN: So the name of the tour is T.K.'s Tour of Bad Arguments for College. And just as Rod Serling said, of *The Twilight Zone*, this is a tour of the mind. This is an ideological tour, a philosophical tour, and I am the guide. And the nature of the tour is it's a video series produced by Praxis, and each episode, I will be focusing on a specific argument that is typically set forth as a reason for why people should go to college or as a reason for why opt-outs should think long and hard about their decision to opt out. And I will be making light of these arguments; I will be criticizing them.

And the inspiration comes from the work that I do at Praxis, where, as the education director, I'm kind of on the front lines when people are going through this journey of saying college isn't right for me. I'm usually the person they talk to or the person their parents talk to when they have lots of questions. And one of the patterns that I see coming up over and over again over the past five years is they are certain that there's kind of an initiation ritual that you have to go through if you want to opt out of college. And that initiation ritual is you have to address certain arguments and objections that are going to be raised by family and friends who are genuinely worried about the life choices you're making. And so this series is designed to give a little ammo to the people that are on the brink of opting out and help them be able to articulate their journey and in a way that's sensible to others. But it's also to challenge the people who do the challenging and to make them think twice about the way they react and respond to someone in their lives who might be looking to make an unconventional choice.

WOODS: So this tour, then, is going to take you through all the kinds of arguments that we hear conventionally about why people should just go along with the status quo and apply it to their own lives and go through the four-year process of college. Now, I'm sure there's nothing I can raise that you haven't heard before, but all the people listening right now, and you and I have to reckon with these arguments. And sometimes we need good ammunition, and that is a good chunk of the reason why you're here.

But I'm going to start off with a little bit of a curve ball. Last time you were on, it was quite some time ago, and the subject of race did not come up at all. And I don't know if I told you this, but when I had Walter Williams on — the last time I had him I was quite a while ago — I said, "You know, by the way, here you are a PhD economist, I've looked at the exams you give students" — he used to have them posted on his faculty page, and it's super, like, I don't know

how to answer these questions — "and so, you know all these different fields of economics, yet every time you're on the radio or television, all people want to do is talk about race. Doesn't that bother you?"

COLEMAN: [laughing]

WOODS: He said, "Yeah, I mean, because, you know, there are other things about me other than that I'm a black man. I have other things to say." But yet in this context, though, I can't help mentioning it, because I can't imagine that you wouldn't be subject to the following criticism: look, T.K., we in the black community have been urging kids to think about college, because a lot of their parents didn't get to go, and this is their chance to break out of this life they've had where they've been trapped in it, and college is their ticket out. So what would you say to them in particular?

COLEMAN: So first, let me address that broader issue of race. So it's funny, I think I feel the opposite of Walter Williams here, where I don't get to talk about race enough. And I actually find it to be a very philosophically interesting topic to discuss. And I think the greatest problem with race in America today is that everyone is so afraid of the subject, partly because we put race on a pedestal. We put it on a pedestal. And the subject is so heavily politicized that everyone is incentivized to run away from it. And I'm running towards it. I encourage your listeners to check out the series of conversations that I had with Steve Patterson about race, where we delve into a variety of topics.

So I'm going to put this out there right now: if you ever want to just take some time to take a deep dive into a lot of things related to race, that's a conversation I am chomping at the bit to be a part of. Because yes, I am a black man. And yes, there is more to me than my blackness. But I also know how to handle myself. And if there's a question that I'm not interested in answering, I take responsibility for making that known. And I am neither offended nor insulted nor made uncomfortable by people wanting to talk with me about race. It's just like any other topic in philosophy. It's like talking about space; it's like talking about time; it's like talking about art. It's a reality. It's part of the world that we live in. It affects people, and it's very interesting. So I'm totally fine with that.

But let's get to your more specific question. What would I say to people who say, "Hey, look, we fought so hard to be in this position?" Well, the first thing I would say is that how hard you had to fight to get into a position says nothing either way about the value of the position once you get there, right? It may very well be the case that what you fought for is valuable; it may be the case that what you fought for never was valuable. It also may be the case that what you fought for was valuable at one point, and by the time you're able to attain it, is not as valuable as it once was. All of those things are possibilities. And we can't assume one answer over the other, just because we put a lot of effort to get into this position.

So I think one major problem in many black communities — and I say "many" black communities, just because there is no monolithic way of thinking for black people. There is no single black community with a single black leader. But in many black communities, one major problem is this sort of tendency to think that we have to hang on to something just because it took us a lot of time and energy to get into that position. And I say that's a terrible way to think about anything, not just college.

But let's push the envelope a little further. I would actually say that thinking about opting out is even more important for black people. And here's why: because most black people would actually make the argument that the ability to take financial risk might be a bit less in black communities, right? So it's commonly said, things like: well, I don't have a rich uncle, or I don't come from a privileged environment. Okay, well, that's fine. So if you don't come from a privileged environment, you don't have a lot of financial resources to play around with, you don't feel like you have a backup plan, and what you choose to do really needs to work, then that means you owe it to yourself to think far more critically than other people do about the investment that you choose to make in your future.

And I think it's exceptionally dangerous for black people to subscribe to this notion that college is some kind of ticket. In fact, black people have had a more difficult time than anyone else with fitting into traditional schooling. And I think it's time for black people to start saying: hey, maybe the problem isn't that I'm not good enough for school. Maybe the problem is that school isn't good enough for me. Maybe I have a sense of entrepreneurialism and a sense of creativity that needs to find the right context to flourish. And maybe the way for me to find that right context is for me to abandon definitions of success that require me to emulate white people and to just be true to myself and create my own path. That's my two cents. We can keep going on this if you want.

WOODS: Well, what about the more general question that would apply to people of all races, that it may be the case that the situation we have now is to say, the least sub-optimal, and if we were to start over again, we may want a whole different system, but given that this is the system we live in now, and given that employers do expect you to have that degree, then it seems like you're shooting yourself in the foot by not getting it? I think that one comes up a lot.

COLEMAN: Sure. So the first thing I would say to that is, even when people make that argument, they tend to bring it up as a kind of necessary evil, right? They say, well, hey, look, I mean, it'd be great if we didn't need college degrees, but the fact of the matter is, you've got to have it. You've just got to have the college degree, and that's that. So even if that's true, we should all accept that that's a very tragic truth. That's a very sad truth, that a world where college degrees are not necessary, a world where we could signal our capacity for value creation far more efficiently than college degrees, would be much better than a world where they are necessary. If you agree with that premise, then that means you should not trump out, "Well, you've got to have a college degree," as if that's the end of the conversation. You should be actively fighting for a world where we have better ways of signaling value creation. You should be actively supporting people that are trying to figure out this hard problem.

It's sort of like the topic of the privatization of money. We don't have to deny the existence of fiat currency, but we certainly shouldn't talk about the existence of fiat currency as if that's the best way things could be. We should actively support efforts to innovate around that outdated, terribly inefficient system, even if we can't help but have to put up with some of its difficulties in the here and now. That's the first part of my answer.

The second part is, I actually push back on the notion that this is the way it is, and this is how it has to be. First of all, I'm not a theoretician. I'm not arguing on the basis of a hunch or on the basis of a hypothesis. I'm not someone here that's saying, "Hey, I think this is the way the world works, and what I'm going to try to do, Tom, is launch a program that may or may not

work and possibly we can help a couple of people launch their careers without a traditional credential." No. While the academics are busy arguing about the way the world is, I'm busy as an entrepreneur, building the world that I want to exist. And in that world, we've already helped launch over 200 careers. We're already working with real people that are actually finding a way to innovate around that credential.

Let me give you a specific example. This was just a few days ago. Isaac Morehouse, the CEO, just shared this post on his Facebook page. But on LinkedIn, one of our business partners for a startup called Launchpeer wrote the following on LinkedIn. He said:

"I just hired a 19-year-old with no college degree and no experience. He had a perfect interview. He had done research on our clients and prepared his own marketing plan. 'When you run medical ads,' he told me, 'make sure you only target people interested in cancer as medicine, not astrology.' I hadn't thought of that. 'Why isn't your education on your resume?' I asked this young man. 'I didn't go to college,' he said. 'I'm 19.' My jaw dropped. But I wanted my team to interview him before making a decision. They were just as impressed. The next day, he sent a 15-minute video of him breaking down the marketing tactics he'd use for one of our prospects, complete with a PDF of his marketing plan. I called him and I asked, 'How soon can you start?' Last Monday was his first day. He sends me a message after every client call, 'Want me to get started on that?' I'm not here to hand out favors. I'm here to deliver for our clients, and what clients need isn't someone over or under a certain age or with a Harvard degree on their resume. They need someone who can do the work." End quote.

Now, that's not a testimonial from a Praxis participant. That's not one of the guys who works for Praxis, bragging about the work that they do. That's one of the business owners who makes hiring decisions and chooses to accept apprentices from our program. That's something that is happening and something that we see over and over and over again, every week.

The world is changing. Yes, it is true that we live in a world where many people still require IT degrees. But you have to understand why that is. You can't just point that out and accept that as a brute fact, built into the fabric of the universe itself. Why does the world care about college degrees? The answer is very simple: because a degree is a differentiator. A degree signals very important things in the marketplace. A degree signals things like you have the ability to show up, you have the ability to complete what you started, you have the ability to get things done, you have the ability to follow instructions, and so on.

Well, if that's the value of a degree, and now we've understood why that matters, it now becomes possible to compete with that by signaling those very things in a more efficient way. And we live in an era where that sort of thing is happening. If anybody wants to read more on this topic and just kind of educate themselves on the different ways that our ways of signaling value are changing, I would encourage you to read a series of articles by Venkatesh Rao called "Breaking Smart," based on the Marc Andreessen quote, how software is changing the world. And then I'd encourage you to read a book by Taylor Pearson called *The End of Jobs*, that talks about the way the marketplace is changing, the way that we work is changing, and the way that we prepare people for work is changing.

So Tom, I would absolutely object that the system is not as people assume it to be. It is not one where degrees are required in some non-negotiable sense. As a matter of fact, yes. As a matter of principle, no. If a degree is the best thing that you can say about yourself, then,

yes, you need a degree. But we have proven over and over again that if you have a superior way of signaling value creation, the degree is negotiable, every single time.

WOODS: I want to quote something you wrote in a Facebook thread. There's a scary line. *Oh my gosh, that could be anything.* But this is really, really great. You were having a distance question about this tour that you're doing, and you were inviting people to suggest to you the types of arguments that you might take on. And somebody actually said, just straight out: look, college may not be a good option for some people, but for others, it's very important. And that's the kind of argument you'll get a lot, is that, yeah, okay, maybe for some people it's not good, but for others, it's integral to their success.

And I thought the way you handled this was just perfect. You said, "This is precisely why it's useful to point out bad arguments for college. As you say, 'College is not a good option for some people.' But those same people are frequently bombarded with bad arguments for why they need to go to college to be successful. This whole discussion is not on an equal footing. We do not live in a country where we respond equally to college opt-outs. Our default reaction to most people who say they're going to college is one of support and enthusiasm. The default reaction to most people who say they're going to opt out is skeptical counterarguments. And those skeptical counter arguments, which are often terrible, is what I will be taking on."

Wow, perfect.

COLEMAN: You know, it's funny, Tom, because when a lot of people hear about my series, T.K.'s Tour of Bad Arguments for College, they say things like, "T.K., this is like negative political campaigning. Why can't you just be more positive? Why can't you just focus exclusively on the positive things that Praxis is doing or the positive things that other college alternatives are doing?" And I say to them: okay, I promise to stop criticizing and mocking the bad arguments that people make for going to college as soon as the hundreds of college opt-outs I work with on a daily basis let me know that the people in their lives have finally stopped interrogating them with those very same arguments.

Here's the thing: to be a college opt-out is to be someone who has to address certain kinds of skeptical objections and concerns. And this doesn't mean they are victims. This doesn't mean that some form of injustice is happening. But this is essentially what comes along with deviating from the status quo. Any time you make a decision to go along with what is popular with what the majority of people do, you tend to face less scrutiny, which is why, when people go on Facebook— and I see hundreds of these kinds of posts every year — and they say, "Hey, I just got accepted into the University of Such and Such," you see 30+ comments that say, "I'm so proud of you. Congratulations," right? Because that's something that we have learned to accept as a legitimate way of taking the next step after high school.

Can you imagine — well, you don't have to imagine. These are people that I work with all the time, and I let them speak for themselves. If you take a look at that same Facebook thread you just quoted, you have tons of comments from college opt-outs, speaking for themselves about the sorts of things that people say to them. The default response for those people is not, "Yay!"; it's, "Uh oh, I'm really afraid for you. I'm really afraid for you."

So you know, this series isn't about me harassing people that love college, it's not about me walking up to some guy who is enjoying his experience, and me saying, "Hey, listen here,

knucklehead, why are you here?” And then he says, “Oh, I love it,” and then I say, “Well, that's a stupid reason. Ha ha ha” That's not what it's about. You know, if you love college, and that's what you want to do, by all means, go do it. But this series is for the people that don't love college, but they're so afraid because they know the default response is going to be very, very different. And I want to encourage those people. I want to give them some inspiration, some tools for not only thinking critically about their own journey, but standing up for themselves.

And as a broader point, Tom, I will say, this has to do not just with opting out of college, but it has to do with living freely in general, that a huge part of living freely is having the ability to stand up for yourself in the face of those who will oppose your philosophy. That's a very important thing. And I'm looking to do that specifically for people that seek to live freely by way of opting out of a school system that's not right for them.

WOODS: As somebody who addresses a lot of these arguments on a regular basis, would you say there are one or two arguments in particular that just are like fingernails on a chalkboard to you when you hear them?

COLEMAN: Oh my gosh, there are like about nine or ten, but I'll give you one that comes up quite a bit, and it bothers me so much. And I'll get to why, but it's the income statistics argument.

WOODS: Oh, yeah.

COLEMAN: Yeah, this is an argument that says, on average, the lifetime earnings of a college-degree-holder are greater than the average lifetime earnings of a non-degree-holder. And this isn't just put out there as a basis for thinking about it. You know, it's not like the people who use this are always just saying, “So, you know, that's something important to keep in mind. It doesn't mean you need to go to college, but just keep it in mind, and if money isn't that important to you, then fine.” No, no, no.

In fact, Dave Ramsey has a video where he was pretty passionate in this video, because someone had misunderstood him as endorsing the college opt-out position, and he wanted to make it very clear that he was not some adamant supporter of opting out of college. He did concede the point that college isn't for everybody, that some people just aren't right for college. He did concede that point. But he wanted to make it very clear that he thought, for most people, college is the best decision. And he even made the point to say that he's brainwashing his kids. Yes, I quote him, literally. He did use the term “brainwash.” He's brainwashing his kids to go to college. And one of the things that he whipped out with, something that a lot of people whip out. It was this income statistic argument. And he presented that, as you know, *this is why*. You know, this is a strong argument for why you should go to college.

Now, what's interesting to me about that argument, and there are lots of people who have argued about it on factual grounds. They challenge the claim itself. But what bothers me about this argument is that, even if it is true, it's a very hypocritical, disingenuous argument. Because no one dares to bring this argument up for anyone other than those who choose to opt out. I believe that if you really cared about this argument, if you really accepted it is true — first of all, let's back up and let's look at the actual, logical structure of it. The logical

structure of it is: if X has a greater income potential than Y, then X is a more reasonable and responsible choice than Y.

Okay, now, apart from Floyd Mayweather and Conor McGregor, I don't know anyone who really believes that, when it comes to career choices, because if we really believe that, we would not allow people to go to college and major in elementary education. If we really believed that, we'd be a lot more critical of people who say, "I'm going to go to school and study philosophy or economics, and I'm going to be an economics professor or a philosophy professor." Are you kidding me? Is there anyone on this planet who's prepared to step up and argue that the best way to maximize your income earning potential is to be an econ professor or a philosophy professor or an elementary school teacher? I mean, how many times do we have to hear people complain about teachers not being paid enough, about them doing such important work, and we hear so many sob stories about teachers living in poverty or not making a wage necessary for a good quality of life? And, and yet, this is a field that has a reputation for not paying enough, and we're silent when someone says, "I want to go to school and major in elementary education."

And let me be clear, Tom. I have no problem with people majoring in those things. I have no problem with people saying, "The money isn't that important to me. I'm not trying to make as much money as I could possibly make, so I'm not going to choose business or engineering over economics or education." I have no problem with that. Follow your heart. But I do have a problem when we only raise arguments like this towards people who are opting out of college. I have a major problem with that.

I think it's hypocritical, and I think the inconsistency with which people use it actually proves that there's something deeper going on in the way they react to opt-outs. It's not about the money, because people are willing to accept "I don't like X" as a basis for not doing X all the time when it comes to career. It's actually considered quite rude in everyday life to tell people that they could have made a lot more money or that they wouldn't be struggling financially the way they are if they had made different career choices. We don't allow people to say that kind of stuff, because we understand that people care about things like finding the right fit, finding things that they feel called to do, finding things that are fulfilling.

And when people decide to opt out of college, they're not just saying, "I'm opting out of college for no reason at all." They're saying things like, "I don't want to go into debt." They're saying things like, "I don't want to give four years of my life to something that I want to do. There's something else that I enjoy and that I love, and I want to pursue that, and that's my number-one priority. "And if it's valid for a school teacher, it ought to be valid for an opt-out. I don't even need to address the income statistics argument. I can concede the point for the sake of debate and just focus on that aspect of things.

WOODS: I'd like to share one other thing — oh, and by the way, one of the key things in that whole income thing, I really do think, is they don't bother to think maybe they've got the causality reversed. Like, these ambitious people are the type of people who would have earned a lot of money anyway, regardless of whether they went to college, or did this and that. And that's just such a common way of screwing up a lot of arguments.

COLEMAN: Yeah.

WOODS: So in other words, the college system is going to take credit for this guy's increased income, but it could be that the guy's increased income and the fact that he's in college, these are signs of his ability. It's not that the college gave him that; it's that he already had that. That's why he's successful in college. He's going to be successful anywhere.

But also, government is always looking to take credit for things. There'll be some already-existing trend, and then when they create a regulatory agency and the trend continues, they give credit to the regulatory agency. They can never give credit to the actual people involved. So if you'll forgive me, I want to read another passage, just because you've got so many good ones. And I just like the way you dealt with this, because sometimes — I have to be honest — when I encounter people who disagree with me, sometimes I'm able to have a nice, friendly conversation with them, as I do here on the show, and other times, I just want to rip their heads off [laughing]. And so you are such a model to me as to how to handle these situations. So you wrote this, and I thought this was just beautiful. You said:

"Something new has become clear to me. People instinctively react to criticisms of bad arguments for college, because their framework can't make sense out of why you would do such a thing unless you were, one, trying to make people feel bad for going to college or, two, trying to convince people who are happy with college that they should do Praxis instead. My daily work with dropouts has blinded me to the fact that most people just don't have a clue about what opt-outs really go through. They don't realize that to be a college opt-out is to be a person who constantly has to answer bad arguments for why they should have gone to college instead.

"It's always been obvious to me that college opt-outs can benefit from some training on how to deal with bad arguments for college. But this isn't obvious to everyone else, because they rarely see how much of a nuisance these bad arguments are to the average dropout. So when they hear someone like me point this stuff out, they feel like, 'Why are you picking on the college kids?'

"But I couldn't care less about changing the minds of people who are happy with college. I'm interested in preparing opt-outs for the real world. And in the real world, you're going to get grilled for being an opt-out with all sorts of challenges that your college-attending peers won't typically have to face. Knowing how to deal with that is a part of the education experience."

Wow, yeah, there's so much that you and I do — the Praxis thing is the most obvious in your case, but you and I have very unconventional ideas about a lot of things. And not just unconventional, but they really go against a deep-seated grain. They go against what everyone has been taught is good and right and acceptable and normal. And yeah, you've got to go through your whole life, explaining yourself to people like this. I just learned the concept — Michael Malice has to explain everything in the world to me half the time. I'm so non-hip. But the idea of the —

COLEMAN: I'm glad you brought him up, though, by the way, because Michael Malice is one of the best at knowing how to handle trolls, knowing how to stand up for himself. Yeah, but go ahead, go ahead.

WOODS: That's right, but he doesn't do it in a T.K. Coleman style [laughing]; I'll put it that way. But anyway, I bring all this up, because Michael was just telling me the other day about

— I only now see it. I've seen it, but I didn't know what the NPC meme was, the non-player character, like in one of these role-playing games. He's the guy who, you know, it's totally unrealistic. It's a game, so 24 hours a day, he's in the weapons store, ready to sell you a weapons, but he's not really a playing character, so he doesn't really have thoughts of his own. And so we've adapted that to talk about people who, every word out of their mouth, it's like a government cliché. And every word out of their mouth is just an unexamined premise. And so this whole college thing is like the ultimate expression of the of the non-player character, the NPC, and you've got to learn how to deal with that. And I think the way you answer this person just speaks to a profound issue that the opt-out has to deal with, which is that you're not just saying the minimum wage is too high or something; you're really going at what some people consider to be almost a sacred kind of commitment. The education system at any level is the closest thing we have to an established church in this country.

COLEMAN: I totally agree with you. And if you truly want to say I support alternative education, it's not enough to just give lip service to the idea of multiple ways of educating people or lip service to the idea that, hey, different people have different needs. It also means you support the process of equipping people who take alternative paths, equipping them with the ability to articulate and defend their point of view, so that they can develop a sense of confidence towards the resistance they will face from a society that's been conditioned to react to them in a fear-based matter.

So something — I think we talked about this in my first episode, but I'm the son of a pastor, and I grew up in the church, and I had an interesting experience with religion. Growing up in the church, I was pretty sheltered and only interacted with Christians for the most part. And so my beliefs were for the most part unchallenged by the kind of skepticism that you would face if you go on a college campus or you have a philosophy professor that's an atheist. I didn't encounter that kind of stuff in my early childhood or in my teenage years. I went to Catholic school in high school, and so I was pretty insulated from belief. Wherever I was, I was a part of the majority as far as my Christianity was concerned.

Then when I went to college, it was an entirely different environment. My faith was challenged and tested on all sides. And that's when I discovered this discipline or philosophy known as Christian apologetics. And Christian apologetics is, you could say, a branch of theology, rather, that focuses on offering a defense of the Christian faith. It helps equip Christians with the kinds of things they could say to someone who challenges their faith. And it's based on a verse in the Bible that says, "Always be ready to offer a defense or an answer to those who demand an explanation for the hope that is in you."

And this concept of apologetics, it doesn't just extend to Christianity; it extends to any kind of point of view, whether it's homeschooling or unschooling, college opt-outs, libertarianism, anarchism — to any view that is expressed in or lived out in an environment where you are not the majority and you do not have the luxury of just blending into the background. And I think that's an absolutely vital need that we have: to teach people how to stand up for themselves, how to assert themselves. And the better you can do that towards others, the more confident you feel in your own life choices.

Here's something else I want to say about this, Tom, because this actually brings together your earlier topic of race and this whole bit about how the conversation isn't on equal footing and people who opt out tend to face more scrutiny. I sat back, and I thought about this for a

while, because I had a number of people react to me by saying, "I don't get it. Like, do people really ask you this kind of stuff? Is this really a problem?"

In fact, I just recently had a conversation with someone who works for Ted Talks, and they were talking to me about possibly doing a talk. And we're talking about the work that I do with Praxis, and one of the questions that came at me was, "Do you really think in this day and age that someone who chooses to opt out of college is really stigmatized? Everyone that I talk to seems to be pretty open-minded. They accept the fact that the world has changed, that things are different, that there are lots of different alternatives to college. I don't see who's making a fuss about this." And that was a really tough challenge for me, because I had taken it for granted that what's obvious to me based on the work that I do is obvious to everyone else.

So here's an analogy based on my own personal experience that I think captures it pretty well. So I'm in an interracial marriage. And I think opting out of college is a lot like being in an interracial marriage. What do I mean? If you were to take a survey and ask people if they thought it was okay for two people of different races to marry each other, most people would say the politically correct, the popular, the acceptable thing, which is: I don't care. It's not my business, right? As long as two people love each other, whatever. You know, it's a pretty uninteresting question. This is 2018. This isn't the 1950s. We're at a time where it's no longer illegal for people, you know, in certain states, for people to engage an interracial marriage. We're at a time where a couple of different races can walk down the street and be unharassed in any major city. So why is that even a topic?

However, if your son or your daughter comes home and says, "Mom, Dad, I'm in love with this Arab person," or, "I'm in love with this white person," "I'm in love with this black person," you might find that the way you're inclined to worry about them or respond to that might be a little bit different than how you react and respond when you're answering the question in general, because now you have skin in the game. As someone who was involved in an interracial marriage and has talked to many other interracial couples, there are certain kinds of questions and concerns that get expressed to you by the people who love you, by the people who care about you, by the people who know you, when you say things like, "Hey, I'm going to marry this person, and they happen to be of a different race."

And the concerns are pretty predictable. Some of them are really funny, some of them are really annoying, and some of them are borderline offensive. But you talk to anyone in an interracial marriage, and they'll tell you, "Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, I know exactly what you're talking about." But you don't see that stuff when you're having the conversation at the level of theory.

And it's similar when you're dealing with college opt-outs. If you just go talk to a college professor or an average parent and say, "Are you okay with the general idea of college not being for everyone, and some people dropping out and pursuing alternatives?" everyone's going say, "Yeah, I mean, you know, different strokes for different folks." But where the rubber meets the road is when one particular person comes home and says, "Mom, Dad, I don't think college is for me." When it's your son, when it's your daughter, when it's your nephew, when it's your niece, when it's your neighbor's kid, the instinctive responses you have are a bit different, because you have skin in the game.

And so going back to that quote that you reference, my career is a blind spot, because every day, I'm the guy that's talking to these parents. I'm the guy that's talking to these people that are on the brink of dropping out. And they're the ones who are telling me: this is the stuff that people are saying. How can I deal with that? How can I respond to that? How can I explain myself? And then after having those conversations, I go out into a broader world that says: oh, yeah, I don't care if people drop out or not. Because in that broader world, they don't have that skin in the game. Does that make sense?

WOODS: I think that's a brilliant analogy. Absolutely. It's easy for people where it's not somebody who's close to them involved. Of course, in the abstract, sure, do what you want. But as soon as it hits home, it becomes, "Not my kid." Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. So as we close, let me first ask: the videos you're going to be making, how do people view them?

COLEMAN: So you can go to the Praxis channel on YouTube. You can actually subscribe to our Discover Praxis YouTube channel, and I'll share the link with you, so you can post it whenever you share the podcast. We just launched the series last week, and we have one episode out, where I address the argument that you need to go to college in order to find meaning, because if you don't go to college and you do some training program, you might become skillful, but you'll risk becoming just another well-paid drone. So I actually address that argument in the very first episode, but you can check them out on our YouTube channel.

WOODS: All right, so that I'll link to at TomWoods.com/1264. And then give us — I mean, I can't have you here and not say a little something about Praxis, which I support wholeheartedly. Can you give me a 60-second elevator pitch for Praxis?

COLEMAN: A 60-second elevator pitch. So Praxis is a career-launch program that helps people launch their careers without a traditional credential. We believe that the world is changing and that there are superior ways to signal your ability to create value for others without jumping through the hoops of the traditional gatekeepers and without relying on a credential. And we believe that it's difficult to do on your own, and because the world hasn't fully caught up with this view, it can be a challenging thing to do well, which is precisely why we created a program that offers community support, coaching, and an apprenticeship experience, and a professional development curriculum that helps people do this with guidance, with structure.

And so participants go through a six-month boot camp, and after the boot camp, they do a six-month apprenticeship at a startup, where they learn how to create value in the real world by actually doing it. And the whole time they're getting coaching and support, so that they can learn how to do that for the rest of their lives. So it's not just: we're going to give you a job, but we're going to help you develop a mindset that allows you to create value and create opportunities for the rest of your life.

WOODS: Wow, pretty good, pretty good. I've had a number of success stories from Praxis who've been guests on the show and whom I've known in person and people who found out about it through my podcast and were really excited about it. It's a brilliant idea. It's one of those ideas that when it — how old is Praxis now? Years?

COLEMAN: Yeah, so we've been at this thing for about five years now.

WOODS: Okay, five years. I mean, when you hit five years, then you kind of feel like, okay, this thing really does have legs. Because when it first emerged, I was crossing my fingers for Isaac Morehouse, thinking I want to live in a world where this thing succeeds. And it turns out, I do live in that world. So congratulations to you guys on your hard work in getting the word out and making this thing happen.

And I'll say another thing. I had a guy on a few weeks ago, who started something called the Liberty Coalition for Disaster Relief, and he coordinates voluntary efforts, obviously, in the wake of natural disasters. And he and you are very similar in that we could sit around all day arguing with each other about who understands libertarian theory better, or we could actually go out and make a real change in the world that helps to get us closer to where we want to be, even if the political system is still screwed up. And it's really, really admirable to see that in both cases. So T.K., thanks so much for your time and for what you're doing. Everybody appreciates it.

COLEMAN: Oh, man, it's great being here. And if you're listening to this and you're a college opt-out or you're thinking about being a college opt-out or you're a center-of-influence in the life of a college opt-out, you don't need to take my word for anything. You don't need to do anything in life by blind faith. Think critically about everything that you do. But if you're looking for a community, a coaching experience, a real-world professional experience, if you're looking for a place that you can call home, where you can get the support that you need, because your dreams are just as important as the dreams of all of those college students who get the easy praise when they announce that they're going to college — if you're looking for an environment where you can be supported and you can be guided, all I ask is that you look into Praxis and give it a hearing.

WOODS: All right, fair enough. And it's [DiscoverPraxis.com](https://www.discoverpraxis.com/)?

COLEMAN: .com, yeah, you got it.

WOODS: Okay [DiscoverPraxis.com](https://www.discoverpraxis.com/). So we'll have that, we'll have the YouTube channel with the video series linked at [TomWoods.com/1264](https://www.tomwoods.com/1264). And thanks again, T.K., always appreciate it.

COLEMAN: It's always a pleasure. I hope we can talk about race someday.

WOODS: Yeah, that'd be great. Thanks so much.

COLEMAN: Cheers.