



**Episode 526: Making People Think Without Bashing Them Over the Head, with
Comic Dave Smith**

Guest: Dave Smith

WOODS: Dave, you realize there's a lot of pressure when you're a comedian as a guest on somebody's podcast, right? I mean, I'm expecting you to carry the whole darn show.

SMITH: People are already like, this guy isn't that funny.

WOODS: Yeah, he's not funny. I've been listening for 10 seconds; I haven't heard any jokes. All right, I want to introduce you to people. I knew a little bit about you, and I'll be perfectly honest; I didn't tell you about this before we went on, but I knew a little bit about you, and then I checked out some of the podcast and I thought it's not really quite my style, but then I thought there are a lot of things that aren't totally my style that I still can find room for and I know are making a difference in their own way, so what the heck?

SMITH: So not your style would be what? The incessant cursing?

WOODS: (laughing) Yeah, pretty much. That would be pretty — see, that's what I do when I'm not recording.

SMITH: (laughing) Okay, fair enough.

WOODS: No, no, no. It depends on how outraged I am about something, but by and large, it's how I used to be but am not anymore. So as we get started, I want you to introduce yourself to people. I want people to know who you are. I'm going to talk about how you came hold your views and stuff. We'll do that separately, but who you are and how you make your living. Do you in fact make your living full-time by being funny?

SMITH: Yeah, I do. I mean, I basically at this point split making my living between standup comedy, where I make a little bit in the city, I do like the club scene, and then I go out on the road, and I'll make a little bit more money working the road. I also — it's split basically between standup comedy and podcasting. I have a couple podcasts. I have one that's on the Anthony Cumia network. I don't know if you know who he is, but he was part of the big —

WOODS: Oh, Gavin McInnes is on his network.

SMITH: Gavin McInnes is also on his network, yes. So we make some money off that, some money off the standup stuff. I do a little bit of radio stuff here and there, a little bit of TV stuff for Fox News. So kind of like yourself, I make some of my money on online content, and then just kind of hustling around, I have a few different sources of revenue coming in.

WOODS: It's tricky, though, isn't it? You've got to really be on your toes when you don't have a full-time employer and a typical salary relationship.

SMITH: Yeah, it is, but I guess as we were talking a little bit about before, that's kind of what keeps you feeling alive.

WOODS: Yeah, that's how I feel. And once you get to a certain plateau where you feel like I'm comfortable and I don't have to worry that I'm going to be out on the street, then it does make me feel more alive and not so much like I'm going to have a nervous breakdown or whatever. I feel comfortable with my life. I've reached a point where I feel really at home. So you do standup. That has got to be — before we even get into libertarianism and stuff, that's got to be on the one hand extremely exhilarating — because I like being onstage in front of people.

SMITH: Oh yeah.

WOODS: I love that. And I love when I say something that I didn't even think was that funny and people think it's really funny, and then I say something that I think is hysterical, and it's crickets, but it's fun to try it. But on the other hand, there's got to be a part of it that's a little terrifying. Like, we've all seen that comedian who bombs, and once you bomb, there ain't no coming back.

SMITH: Well yeah, but bombing is part of it. I mean, every standup comedian's bombed. You do this every single night, and you start when you're terrible. You have nothing. You start, you don't have any jokes; you're like yeah, I guess I could maybe do an impression of a standup comedian. But it is, it's very exhilarating. It's a lot of fun to crush. It really hurts to bomb. But it's a great thing to bomb. It helps your soul. It's good for you. It's like getting your heart broken.

WOODS: Okay, I want to hear — elaborate on that.

SMITH: It's like getting your heart broken when you're young. It brings you back down to Earth, and it makes you re-question everything, you know?

WOODS: Okay, all right, fair enough. But now once you get to a certain level of experience —

SMITH: (laughing) Yes, then you don't need to bomb anymore.

WOODS: (laughing) Yeah, that's right, exactly. I've already grown.

SMITH: Yes, exactly, now I need to just kill. But as you said, killing in any capacity, whether it's like giving a speech or being funny or whatever, it's great to get up there, risk that, put your ideas out there in front of people, and get that reward. I remember one of your favorite moments ever that I love watching, it's on YouTube, that speech you gave, I think it's in Las Vegas? The one where you go into the end about being anti-war, and it's a very kind of pro-war crowd.

WOODS: Oh, Los Angeles, yeah.

SMITH: Los Angeles, I'm sorry.

WOODS: Yeah, yeah.

SMITH: And by the end, you've got them like cheering for you, and that's a great feeling. So I feel the same way when I do kind of — any comedy I do that's challenging liberals or their worldview, you go in very much in the standup comedy world as being like, ooh, what's he doing here.

WOODS: But not all your comedy is political, is it?

SMITH: No, but I do talk about that a lot. I mean, I'll make jokes out of eVerything, but I'm such a passionate libertarian that that's kind of seeped into everything in life.

WOODS: But yet I've seen enough standup to know that it seems like if you just attack politicians in general, everybody feels like it's okay. Only the real partisans will say, now wait a minute, I like Joe Biden.

SMITH: (laughing) Right, that's for sure. Only real partisans like Joe Biden, period.

WOODS: Yeah, that's a good point too.

SMITH: Just leave it with that. But yeah, I'll go more at just attacking the way liberals think about government, attacking that really liberals themselves are the privileged ones. I like to talk about the contempt for free markets and capitalism that liberals have and how funny it is that you could only feel that way if you're really privileged. Like, if you walk through Times Square and you think to yourself like, "Man, the consumerism and the marketing; this is terrible," just realize that no one from Central Africa would come here and look around and be like, "Oh my God, this CEO making a profit?"

WOODS: I'm disgusted!

SMITH: They would just be like, "Food, yes!"

WOODS: (laughing) Exactly.

SMITH: "And I don't have to catch it or hunt it! This is incredible!"

WOODS: Yeah.

SMITH: And I would always resent, around 2008 when Obama first came in, and there would be this like politically correct line of thinking where they'd go, too bad for comedians George W. Bush is out, because there's nothing funny about Obama. You know, like he's just so competent and brilliant; what's funny about that?

WOODS: (laughing) Yeah, right.

SMITH: I was like, yeah, okay, George Bush is dumb, but that got old in like 2001. You know what I mean? It was like, okay, he doesn't speak well. Now that joke's over.

WOODS: Right.

SMITH: And Obama was like a limitless pool of funny. Everything about him, his middle name is *Hussein*. I mean, how can you not?

WOODS: (laughing)

SMITH: This is the funniest thing I think I've ever seen in my life. He was a Nobel Peace Prize and has expanded the two longest wars in our history. I mean, I know that's kind of dark funny, but there's definitely irony there. And there's just so much — he's a constitutional liar. You know, it's hilarious.

WOODS: Well, you know, when you talk about the capitalism stuff, I don't know if you've seen the Louis C.K. bit on The Tonight Show or one of these things where he's talking about how people don't appreciate the unbelievable world they live in.

SMITH: Yes.

WOODS: You know, like you're complaining up on an airplane; there's something wrong with your drink or whatever, but you're sitting on a chair in the sky.

SMITH: Yep.

WOODS: Stop and think about that. And it seems to me that one ingredient of at least some good standup comedy is when the comedian articulates a truth that everybody basically knows but has never heard stated before.

SMITH: Yeah.

WOODS: Like for instance, the incredible nature of everything we experience every single day, and as a free market guy, you have a ton of material there.

SMITH: No, it's so fascinating, and I think you've made this point before, but it seems to be only in the free market we take these things for granted. You know, when government does something, it's like we've got to celebrate this forever. Like, we put a man on the moon. Oh my God. Well, what did that really do for anybody except kind of beat the Russians and waste a lot of money? Who knows? But we're going to celebrate that for life. But when the market does these amazing things, like, oh, you feel like going to LA? Here, jump in a seat; fly through the sky; you'll be there in a couple hours. You know, it's like, why is my beverage warm?

WOODS: Yeah, exactly. This Coke is flat. How often do you have to come up with new material?

SMITH: Um, it's not so much that you have to come up with new material. It's kind of the rate —

WOODS: Well, how often do you feel you need to come up with new material?

SMITH: I always love to. I love to talk about topical stuff and what's going on in the news this week. Like, I like to talk about the election; I like to talk about the last debate and kind of riff on that. But then I'll also build material that's timeless out of it. So I talk about a lot of topical stuff, and then you just kind of get rid of that. So just examples off the top of my head, but like when, do you remember at Nelson Mandela's funeral when there was that fake sign language translator?

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SMITH: For a couple months, I had this whole long bit on that guy. But now at this point, it's just kind of like, hey, who cares that it was a fake sign language translator three years ago?

WOODS: (laughing) Right. Oh, but it must hurt to have to give that bit up.

SMITH: I mean, the man was a sign language translator who made it to the top without learning sign language. I mean, I had that for a little piece of time, and now it's gone. Sure. But that's what keeps you on your toes, and now I've got to write something about how hilarious Bernie Sanders is and how the guy who just got pulled out of my Jewish grandpa's pinochle game probably isn't going to be the next president. You know, there's always something there.

WOODS: (laughing) Yeah, there's always something. You must — well, actually I was about to say you must have a website, but I'm not seeing one in the notes.

SMITH: I do have a website. It's ComicDaveSmith.com. I only just got it rebuilt, so it's not — I don't know, my brother-in-law's building it for me. It's not on Google and stuff yet, but you can go check it out. ComicDaveSmith.com.

WOODS: And is that where people in the New York area can find out where you're going to b?

SMITH: Yeah, you can find out where I'm going to be. My upcoming TV stuff and also, you know, on Twitter @ComicDaveSmith, I tweet most of my stuff out.

WOODS: Okay, all right, that's good. So we're going to put your Twitter; we're going to put your website, put all of that up at TomWoods.com/526. All right, I'd love to just keep asking you about comedy. Maybe we'll come back to that later, because I'm just fascinated. I watch a good standup comedian, and they make it look so easy, that they can just get up there, and it just seems like a stream of consciousness, but it's not. I mean, no doubt there's some ad libbing, but it's meticulously planned, the transitions between two radically different topics.

SMITH: Sure.

WOODS: Sometimes the transition is incredibly ham-handed and awkward, but they make you feel like you've just been sitting there through a seamless presentation. That's really hard.

SMITH: Yeah, I get what you're saying, but at the same time, I feel the same way about like what you do. I mean, particularly when I first found libertarianism and the whole idea, and I look at someone like you give a speech, and you're like, man, this guy just gets it. But of course at one point, you just had questions and you're reading and learning, and it's just like any other job. You just kind of become a professional at it.

WOODS: Yeah, I guess I knew that was the answer, but yet, I guess I'm impressed at every professional out there who does something that seems amazing to me. I know we all started at zero. But all the same, not everybody — it's not just a matter of learning the craft. Not everybody is cut out to do what you're doing, and it impresses those of us who are not cut out for it. I have people say to me sometimes because they like the jokes in my speeches that I should do standup, and they don't understand these are two entirely different genres.

SMITH: I'll tell you, there's a video of Peter Schiff doing standup —

WOODS: I heard.

SMITH: — at The Comic Strip, which is a club I've played for years here in New York City. I've got to say, he was pretty goddam funny.

WOODS: Wow, that is good.

SMITH: Peter's a funny guy. I think you're very funny too; you may — and I often use — I mean, I give you credit, but I use a lot of your analogies. Like I love the Wal-Mart school thing. That's brilliant.

WOODS: Oh yeah. That's one of the best analogies I've ever come up with.

SMITH: That's incredible. And I'll tell you another one that I think is amazing that you don't use enough — I forget where I heard you say this, but this is one of your best analogies ever —

WOODS: Oh, okay.

SMITH: — is the idea of the drone campaign, if we just policed America that way. Like you know, if we were just like, so in Chicago, some suspected criminals broke into a school, so we're going to drone bomb the school.

WOODS: Oh that's right, yeah.

SMITH: But isn't that not an option? No.

WOODS: Yeah, like wouldn't that be — that wouldn't even be like 1,000th on the list of things you would consider. You would think like you'd bring in a hostage guy — like, you'd think of something. You wouldn't do that.

SMITH: Yeah, like wait a minute. Have we exhausted every single possible option?

WOODS: Exactly, exactly. Yeah, okay, because — now I remember it, because as you were describing it I thought, oh, I'm going to have to embarrass poor Dave and say the reason I don't use that one enough is that I have no idea what you're talking about; I never said that. But I did actually say that.

SMITH: Yes.

WOODS: (laughing) I do remember that. All right, let's see; let's see what we can talk about. There are so many things here. Tell me about your podcast, first of all. What do you talk about on it?

SMITH: It's called *Part of the Problem*, and I think — I talk about a lot. It's a libertarian take on philosophy and pop culture and politics, and I try to talk about it from a very non-academic, just kind of common sense point of view. And I try to be funny with it, and as you mentioned, I curse a lot and am probably very inappropriate. But I do try to refer people to more serious academics such as yourself and everybody at Mises and stuff like that. So my thing is that I'm in a very — like, a lot of my listeners are just people who listen to comedy podcasts in general who know me from other stuff, like the stuff over at The Anthony Cumia Network, other shows that I do, and I try to just kind of provoke their own thinking with what kind of our worldviews are, at least on politics and stuff like that, and get them interested in that and just have a conversation. So that's kind of what we do. I'm very interactive with the fans. There's a segment where I take listener comments and respond to anybody's problems with the idea of anarchocapitalism, and I'll do things like — so on my last episode, what I did was we just played — because I was getting a lot of people kind of asking like why I'm

being so hard on Rand or why I'm so disappointed by his campaign, so we just played audio clips of his answers at debates and then played clips of Ron Paul answers at debates.

WOODS: Oh, very interesting. Very interesting.

SMITH: And I think by the end of it there's no question why someone would be more passionately supporting Ron.

WOODS: Yeah, well I've talked about this on the show. Boy, we got some pushback in the third of the debates when Lew and I did the analysis, and I went back and listened to it – everything we said is 1000% defensible, so I don't know what the sensitivity here is.

SMITH: First of all, I loved it, and those are some of my favorite episodes. And by the way, I listen to the show religiously, and those are I think some of my favorite episodes are anytime Lew Rockwell is on. By the way, Lew Rockwell is such a hero in this movement and does not get anywhere near the credit he deserves.

WOODS: Oh yeah. I mean, first of all he's a boss just in the way he handles himself.

SMITH: Just everything about the guy. He's like – look, if I had to list heroes in this movement, it's like Mises and Rothbard and Ron Paul are just at the top, and then it's Lew Rockwell. That's it.

WOODS: Yeah, absolutely.

SMITH: The guy created the Mises Institute. He's the reason why we're all able to do what we do, and they've made him like such a shady, controversial –

WOODS: Oh yeah, he's the most unjustly maligned person I know of, and believe me, I know a lot of unjustly maligned – I am an unjustly maligned person.

SMITH: Yeah. You know, my family's Jewish, and my grandfather was a Holocaust survivor, so that very much like plays a role in my family's history. And I remember when I first, like, came out of the closet to my mother – I was a libertarian probably for a full year before I told her, like, hey, I'm a libertarian; I've been completely convinced – and the first thing she said to me was, "Just be careful. I think a lot of those guys are anti-Semites."

WOODS: Oh, wow.

SMITH: And it's just like this is just seeped into the culture, and I had to explain to her, I was like, mom, the two people who they hold in the highest esteem are Ludwig von Mises and Murray Rothbard.

WOODS: And you know what's funny, Dave, actually is that if you actually read the real live anti-Semites, they hate libertarianism, because they say it's a Jewish ideology.

SMITH: That's right. That's right.

WOODS: That's their complaint. And in fact, they call Lew, "Jew Rockwell." (laughing)

SMITH: Well, it's like when they would call Rothbard like a commie, *The National Review* guys and the people like that —

WOODS: Oh yeah.

SMITH: He's the most anti-communist person ever.

WOODS: Yeah, what are you talking about? Yeah, it's totally crazy. You've been on Kennedy quite a bit on the Fox Business Network, but you've never been opposite Michael Malice?

SMITH: No, I have not, and I'll tell you —

WOODS: Ah, we've got to — if she's not going to make that happen, I'll have to make that happen right here on the show.

SMITH: I'm going to be on — I'll be hanging out and I think doing some warm-up for your debate with Michael Malice in New York City.

WOODS: Yeah, that's going to be fun. Everybody, that's December 3rd of this year. Details on my Events page, TomWoods.com/Events. If you're in the New York City area, we're going to be debating Alexander Hamilton, and then Dave will be there too. I mean, come on. Why are you not coming?

SMITH: If you're a libertarian and you're in New York, you've got to be there.

WOODS: Yeah.

SMITH: Now, I think I shared something on the Facebook page, because I'm a proud member of The Tom Woods Show elite —

WOODS: I love that — you're the first guest I've ever had who's a supporting listener of the show. Awesome.

SMITH: Wow, look at that. I did not know. That's a nice feather in my cap. All right, so I think I posted something about the first time I met Judge Napolitano on the show, and you said you should request to be opposite Michael Malice. So I said something to one of the producers at Kennedy. I go, oh, I'd love to be on with Michael. And she

looked shocked at me and said you are the first person who's ever requested to be on with Michael Malice.

WOODS: (laughing) I'm going to tell him that as soon as we finish today. He's going to love that.

SMITH: But no, I'm very fascinate by his argument. I didn't — you know, it's such an intriguing argument to me that he's making about Hamilton, so I'm very interested.

WOODS: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah. I mean, he's totally sincere about it too. He's not trolling. He absolutely believes it. But what I love about him is he's really — he's even smarter than he seems — and he knows it; you know, there isn't a problem with excessive humility with Michael Malice — but he always makes me think and he challenges me, but we really, really enjoy each other's company very much, and the fact that in 2006 he had a graphic novel written about his life, I mean, what — by Harvey Pekar. And I was totally absorbed by it. It's incredible.

All right, other things we can talk about: I want to know how did you get to be who you are. I'm always and I know the listeners are also interested in people's individual stories. What was the light bulb for you? Was there one?

SMITH: Um, yeah, the spark was — it's almost hacky to say at this point, but the spark was the Ron Paul-Giuliani moment. I was never very into politics. I was a typical liberal New Yorker who just kind of thought — you know, there's like this underlying thing in liberal culture that's just kind of like you're so obviously right, you don't really need to check up on this. Like, you don't really need to read a tremendous amount; conservatives are just idiots.

WOODS: Yeah.

SMITH: So I was kind of just operating in that world, and a lot of things seemed plausible, like oh yeah, the rich people should pay a little bit more so poor people have healthcare. Sure. Why wouldn't we be on board with that? But I became very anti-war in the George W. Bush years, for obvious reasons. And then when I saw that Ron Paul-Giuliani moment, I was like oh my God, this guy is breaking down the anti-war position better than anyone I've ever heard. And he just made the most brilliant points that it seemed like nobody else had ever made, which I think for some of your younger listeners, they might even forget that this is not — this was actually something politicians sold after 9/11, was the idea that they hate us for our freedom. This was a real thing that was pushed by our leaders, and Ron Paul just said, "How would we feel if someone else was occupying us?" And it was just such a light bulb moment for me, and then the fact that he was arguing for the free market too was just very intriguing. I had never really heard that position before, so I just felt like I needed to learn more about it. And then through a couple clicks online, I found you and Peter Schiff, and then through you I found Rothbard, and as Kane said on your program once from the WWE, you know, you find Rothbard, and then it's just kind of over from there.

WOODS: Wow, that is an incredible story.

SMITH: And I'll tell you the first two pieces from you that you recommended to me — not personally to me, but to everyone — that I read of Rothbard — like I had just heard the name Rothbard so much, I was like I've got to check this guy out. And I read *Anatomy of the State* and *War, Peace, and the State*.

WOODS: Oh sure, that's a great essay.

SMITH: They're just the two greatest essays — to this day, I think they're the two greatest pieces of writing I've ever read in my life. I mean, it's completely lucid, completely logical and it takes you step by step to the obvious conclusion. And then I've just been — that's been it. I've been converted since then.

WOODS: I'm going to definitely link to those; for anybody who hasn't read them, we'll have those on today's show notes page also.

SMITH: If you listen to The Tom Woods Show and you haven't read *Anatomy of the State* and *War, Peace, and the State*, that's insane.

WOODS: Yeah, that's totally insane. We can't allow that to go on.

SMITH: Yes.

WOODS: We can't allow that to go on. Tell me about a time when you were engaged in — you were doing a standup routine and it got political and you were saying something that obviously had a libertarian tinge to it and it just didn't work.

SMITH: Hmm, that's a good one.

WOODS: Oh wow, hey, if that's a hard one to answer, that means you're really doing well.

SMITH: Well, I think I'm able to — with standup, I mean, I'm able to approach it from a kind of I'm just being funny and being logical with it, so it's almost like I try to open you up into it. I did — okay, so I did this bit about — now, this isn't necessarily an example of it not working and bombing, but I did this bit about, it was when there were a lot of protests against the cops going on in New York City over the Eric Gardner thing, and I actually had a friend of mine who said this to me — he's a very smart guy, but he's pretty Left. He was like, the messed up thing about the cops is that the cops work for us. And I just had a lot of fun onstage dissecting that idea. Like, the cops work for us. I was like, really? Do they work for us? How about we test this out? Why don't you go round up a few cops and just start bossing them around a little bit, and we'll see who works for who? And then I take it to this level where I just make the point about taxes, where he said to me, he goes, well I pay my tax dollars, and that pays their salary, so they work for us. And I was like, yeah, but you don't choose to pay your taxes. You have to. So that's like if someone mugged you, and then you were like

all right, that guy works for me now. I wasn't even planning on hiring a new employee; this has been a pretty good day.

WOODS: (laughing)

SMITH: So I do a bit about that. And this one guy, this older guy who was clearly a very liberal or leftist kind of guy, he stood up and started heckling me over the difference between a government and private robbery.

WOODS: (laughing) Of course.

SMITH: And it was such a fascinating moment. Now, he was kind of being a jerk, so the crowd got behind me, so maybe this isn't a great example of what you were asking. But this just came to mind, where I remember he goes it's different if it's a government; if it's a government, they do work for you; they represent the people. And I remember I just said to him, I said okay, so what if that guy mugged you and then he has your money, and then as he's running away, he goes I'm a government!

WOODS: (laughing)

SMITH: Then is it okay? Then is it legitimate? So anyway, I don't know, that's the first story I think off the top of my head.

WOODS: That's a good one; that's a good one. Well, what about a case where you were going in and you thought — again, with a libertarian kind of message — and you thought, this one might be pretty edgy, and then it actually wound up doing even better than you thought. Was there a case of that?

SMITH: Yeah, there's been a bunch of those. I mean, I thought some of the stuff, like going hard against Bernie Sanders, I was a little bit concerned about that, you know, because he's so — I mean —

WOODS: He's popular.

SMITH: Oh my God. It is terrifying. I do shows down in like the Village and the super liberal areas in New York, and he's like a cult figure to them. He is — tragically, they feel like the way we felt about Ron Paul.

WOODS: Yeah.

SMITH: And it's so interesting that, you know, they call him like — but the big difference to me between Bernie Sanders and Ron Paul is that people like myself and younger people, the college kids who got behind Ron Paul, you know, the thing they wanted to do was read. They wanted to learn. You know, when kids are chanting, "End the Fed," they've read something about monetary policy.

WOODS: Yeah.

SMITH: You don't just get to having a passionate view on monetary policy without picking up a book. Bernie Sanders doesn't encourage these kids to read at all; he just encourages them that what they know is already right, which is, you know, what a propagandist does. But anyway, I think I'm digressing from your message. I think there's been a lot of things that I've thought, you know, going after capitalism, going after — what I really try to — I try to make fun of college kids, like the lefty college kids who talk about privilege. You know, you're in 2015 in a first world country on a college campus; you're about as privileged as any human being has ever been in the history of the world. They're obsessed with who else has more privilege than them. I like going at that. And I think a lot of it has been more successful than I would have thought.

WOODS: Well, that's good. I mean, I'm glad to hear that. Has any of your experience in standup, has any of that influenced the way you think about how libertarians might package what they're saying effectively?

SMITH: Yeah, absolutely. That's been a very — yeah, because you get to test it in front of an audience every night. I think the biggest — this Rand Paul campaign versus the Ron Paul campaign to me has demonstrated to all of us what the move is, and that is to be completely unapologetic. That's — you have to come at it from a position where you clearly believe that this is right, and what Lew Rockwell always says — it's like, we have the truth on our side. That's like this big weapon that Rand for some reason refuses to use, but we have the truth on our side. Do you remember — did you ever see when Rand Paul, when he got into the thing with Rachel Maddow over the civil rights —

WOODS: I knew that it happened, but I didn't — I just couldn't bring myself to watch the clip.

SMITH: So he, you now, she just argues with him for awhile over it, and then he eventually comes out like two days later in the press and just goes I would support the Civil Rights Act of 19 — like, he just bailed on it, and there's nothing that looks worse than that. Nothing looks worse than if you take a position that could be seen as possibly racist, and then you walk it back, like oh yeah, you got me; I'm sorry.

WOODS: Because basically everybody knows that's not correct —

SMITH: Exactly.

WOODS: — because why would he have said the first things in the first place? And what's so interesting is that Ron took a principled position on that, even though he knows it is the most sacred piece of legislation of the past 100 years. And he knows that he would get a lot less grief from the Left — and from the Right, for that matter — if he would just shut up about it, and he just quietly refuses to. And there is — obviously, given the fact that he had millions of supporters — there is something to that that does draw people in.

SMITH: Absolutely, absolutely, there's something to it. Look, Ron Paul proved it. In a kind of sad way, Donald Trump is proving this again, but this PC culture or the sacred cows, these are all artificial creations. They're not real. You could go ahead and just say – you can say any of this stuff. Donald Trump called Mexicans rapists, and he's still doing great in the polls. Ron Paul exploded libertarianism onto the scene by being unapologetic. When Rand Paul got that question about Medicare, you can just say we shouldn't have Medicare. You can say that. You can. They've just convinced you you can't go after these, you know, third rails. I don't buy it. I think if you're completely unapologetic and you have the truth on your side, you can convince people, and in fact, I think that's the only way you're going to convince people.

WOODS: Especially when the alternative is to sound exactly like the others.

SMITH: Yeah.

WOODS: They're all saying we have to have some reforms to the entitlements and this and that. If they all sound the same, then I'm going to go with the frontrunner.

SMITH: That's true, and that's Rand's biggest problem, particularly in that last debate, where it seemed like he's just given up, like he's just saying what every other Republican for my entire life has said. You know, like we need a balanced budget and something like that. I do – look, I feel a little bad inside – I feel bad almost just being on your program saying negative things about Rand Paul –

WOODS: Yeah, I hardly ever talk about him, you know? And people who are big partisans of his get upset at me. I hardly ever even bring the guy up.

SMITH: And look, just out of the fact that Ron Paul is my hero, I don't want to be saying anything negative about his kid. I mean, just on that level. But the thing is, Ron Paul, all we needed in the movement, as far as I see it – you're talking about what we can do in the future. The only thing we really needed was Ron Paul to be younger. That was just what was unfortunate, is that his age did not line up very well with when his movement exploded. You know, if in '88 his movement had exploded, that would have been much, much better for us. If we could have another Ron Paul campaign, that would have been amazing. And then with Rand we thought we had that. We were like, oh, we have another Ron Paul, and that's – look, I do think it's fair, just to play devil's advocate to being hard on Rand, there's two thought experiments that we should I think play, which is number one, how would we feel about Rand if his last name wasn't Paul. Like, if he was just Rand Johnson.

WOODS: Yeah, people would be saying, look, he's got a few ideas that we like that make him stand out a little bit from the Republican pack, but otherwise, he kind of sounds like one of these people.

SMITH: Yes.

WOODS: That is what you would say. That absolutely is.

SMITH: I still think you might — maybe you'd give him a little more credit for his voting record. He does have a pretty good voting record, you know, I mean —

WOODS: Oh yeah, we'd say he may be the best senator there is, and we would say all these things, but we would say, but, I'm not going to take nine months off my job to go campaign for him.

SMITH: Sure. No, I agree with that. Now, the other thought experiment that's worth playing is what if he had been right. Like, Rand Paul was in first place in the polls like a year ago, and this was already after endorsing Mitt Romney, voting for sanctions for Iran —

WOODS: Yeah.

SMITH: — you know, a lot of the things we don't like that he did. What if Rand Paul was still in first place right now? Maybe — and I don't know; I'm just playing kind of devil's advocate with myself, but maybe if that had worked out, then I would say hey, well, he is in first; it does look like this is going to work, and I sure would love to get a Paul in the White House.

WOODS: Yeah. I mean, that is an interesting thought experiment. I mean, I would still feel like it was a missed opportunity, because I've never seen an example of somebody who stealthily holds a view, then gets elected, and then imposes it on everybody. I've never seen that happen.

SMITH: Oh that's right; that's a good —

WOODS: Because then there would have been a reason why, well, we can't do it, because we've got to get reelected, and now we can't do it for this, and —

SMITH: And the other thing is that, and I don't mean to come off like too conspiratorial of this, but the thing that I've come to realize that I did not realize in 2012, when I genuinely had my heart broken — I thought we were going to win it. Like, I really got into the Ron Paul 2012 campaign. But in hindsight, Ron Paul was never going to win that campaign, and Rand Paul would never win this one. They just simply won't let that happen. They have too much in their arsenal that they'll never let that happen. The only — but what this is is an opportunity to get in front of 25 million people —

WOODS: Yeah.

SMITH: — and do what Ron Paul did for me for countless other people.

WOODS: Yeah, okay, here's the big question for me about Rand — and then I want to talk about something else. Here's the big question: how many people years from now will say watching Rand Paul in the debates changed my life? Do you think it'll be a non-zero, positive number? I mean, I don't —

SMITH: I don't know if it'll be zero, but it's not going to get —

WOODS: But I mean it's negligible. Negligible.

SMITH: I do hold on to a little bit of hope that maybe even if he just says one thing interesting — I mean, his dad is always one click away from him online —

WOODS: Well, that's true. That's true.

SMITH: — and you're one click away from him online, so maybe there can be some effect on that, but there's no question, he missed a humongous opportunity to convert thousands and thousands more like his dad did.

WOODS: All right, I want to ask you about, you were talking about political correctness for a moment. You must have heard what Jerry Seinfeld had to say about that, about college audiences and they're so PC. And you know, I don't know what effect this has on comedians, but what did you think about that?

SMITH: Oh, I mean Jerry Seinfeld has been voicing something that comedians have been talking about forever. This has been something that's been going on for a long, long time, but it's worse than it's ever been, and just to give that a little bit of context, Jerry Seinfeld is not like a dirty, edgy comic.

WOODS: Yeah, I know.

SMITH: You know, Jerry Seinfeld is telling jokes about peanuts on airplanes. He's coming out saying, I can't tell my peanuts on airplanes jokes anymore because these college kids are out of their minds. They only see things through the lens of, you know, white male privilege versus everything else, so it's a very interesting — look, you can go back on YouTube; there's an old clip of Dennis Miller and Bill Maher talking about how politically correct college kids had gotten, and this is like in the '90s. It's gotten so much worse, and this is to me — like, where the Ron Paul college kids were like the best hope for the future, the most terrifying part of the future is what is just prevalent on college campuses now is trigger warnings, safe spaces, the idea of offending someone with your words being the worst thing you can do. So it's definitely dominant; it's gotten — I haven't gotten in enormous amounts of trouble over it, but I know a few friends of mine who have gotten like written up in Salon.com and Jezebel.com and they'll try to end comics' careers for saying something insensitive or making a joke about Cosby now is you're contributing to rape culture or some other nonsense.

WOODS: Wow, that is something else. Well, I'm glad that comedians — at least some — I like to see some sub-group in America realize what's going on and how hard it is to speak your mind about important issues because you're afraid of who's going to try to destroy you.

SMITH: Yeah.

WOODS: And for that matter, I've always been curious about — you mentioned a heckler. I've always been curious about how comedians deal with hecklers. Of course you can handle them on a case by case basis, but do you have a — you don't have to reveal to us what it is, but do you have some kind of a canned response ready for in case you do get heckled? Just a general kind of response or an attitude?

SMITH: Yeah, it's not so much of a canned response; it's just like a way to — you know, like, I think the thing that used to be the thing like in the '80s and stuff like that, it's always like a, "I don't come down to your job and blah blah blah," — it's not so much of a canned response as it is you kind of know how to deal with them. One of the big things with a heckler is you have to learn how to let them hang themselves. Most people who are heckling at a comedy club have had a couple drinks in them; they're being kind of obnoxious, and if you let them talk, they'll give you something very easy to shut them down.

WOODS: Oh yeah.

SMITH: It's also very important to know whether you've got the room on your side or not.

WOODS: Right.

SMITH: Like if I've already done a couple jokes and they've gotten big laughs and then someone heckles, you know everyone's kind of with you, like you're the funny guy. If you tell a couple jokes and they don't go over and someone heckles, that's a different situation. But usually someone heckles, you know, kind of like whatever, they'll say something, and then you can always go like, oh, what'd you say, buddy? Expand on that. And they'll pretty much hand it to you.

WOODS: That's interesting. Do comedians ever sit around and, like everybody in every other profession, talk about stuff like this? Oh, I got heckled and here's how I handled it.

SMITH: Oh yeah, war stories and you know, comics always love to sit around and talk about what we call hell gigs, where you know, just some nightmare show, particularly early in your career, when you'll literally take any gig that pays. So you know, I'll be like, okay, I'm going to Massachusetts to some bowling alley to go tell jokes for \$300 or whatever, and the lights go out on you or the mic doesn't work, and you know, we've all got stories like that. Bad hecklers, all that stuff, always fun to trade those stories.

WOODS: Well, I'm going to — this has been great, and we could just go on forever, but I want to get people to visit your site, ComicDaveSmith.com. Do you have links to the podcast there yet?

SMITH: Yeah, there are links to the podcast, some videos from TV stuff, and all that jazz.

WOODS: Okay, so we'll have that; we'll have your Twitter; we'll have the Rothbard essays that you talked about; lots of fun stuff to watch. If there's a particularly good clip from Kennedy or from TV that you're happy with, send it to me and I'll put it up there.

SMITH: Okay, great.

WOODS: Show notes page for today will be TomWoods.com/526, and it'll have everything that I just mentioned. Well anyway, a lot of fun, Dave. Great to talk to you. You lived up to the billing.

SMITH: Oh, well thank you, that means a lot. Truly, it's an honor to be on the show. As I said, I listen to the show religiously. I love reading your stuff. *Real Dissent* was incredible. I read it twice. And thanks for doing all the work you do.

WOODS: Well, guess what now is also going to be on the show notes page. (laughing)

SMITH: (laughing) There you go.

WOODS: Dave, thanks so much for your time. It was great.

SMITH: Thanks, Tom.