



Episode 550: Lunatics Running the Asylum: University Edition

Guest: Ilana Mercer

WOODS: I've been wanting to talk to somebody — it's taken me forever to finally think of this topic, even though it's been staring me right in the face — to talk about education and in particular to talk about the propaganda, the political correctness. And no, it's not just conservative myth that there's political correctness. It's so — it permeates everything to the point where people don't talk about it, because it's just part of the landscape. And now we've got these crazy goings-on and these various universities over the past five or six weeks, and I don't see these things being fixed. I see them getting much worse, especially because the idiots who run these places, anti-civilizational institutions, are giving in on everything and taking for granted that every premise advanced by these students is correct and well founded, and I feel like every single thing they're saying is preposterous and absurd.

I don't even see a way out of this other than people in one way or another trying to withdraw from the system the best they can. I would say — especially before college. There I don't think there's much hope of just going down to the Parent Teacher Association and arguing over textbooks is going to yield you anything other than at best a temporary band-aid for a system that is designed to inculcate certain ideas into your children's minds. This is not simply there to teach arithmetic and give them physical education. The point of it is to get people to think a certain way, and you're not going to change that.

MERCER: Well, exactly. The propaganda is process-oriented more than — look, there's a lot of substantial context that goes into it, but it's process-oriented. That's why it's so hard to undo, and you can do — actually you provide amazing homeschooling courses. That's one thing that every parent, because parents are busy, and the schooling system relies on it, whether it's primary or secondary, they rely on the fact that, look, division of labor, parents are busy, even if they sense that something is wrong, they don't have the expertise. We do this for a living, right?

WOODS: Yeah.

MERCER: Well, a living, a very meager living (laughing).

WOODS: (laughing) Yeah, put in quotation marks.

MERCER: But first of all, parents have to know, if they're liberty-minded, they must know this is happening. They mustn't be in denial. I'm almost describing a 12 step program. And they must know they have to deprogram the kids daily. And that really means present parents, doesn't it? And what I would say that what happened with my child, I don't think it — it took so well. I'm just hoping she's in — she's much older. Just when your child comes home Socratically start deprogramming through questions, then access resources like your homeschooling literature, put it in print for those of us who don't like reading online, and a coordinated effort between all liberty-minded people so that you have lists of literature — literature too. English literature. Not only books about liberty and economics. Literature excites the minds, but what your kids are getting is not classical literature. In my columns I have lists of books that children should be reading, even from Scheherazade's *One Thousand and One Nights*. Remember those beautiful tales that are now practically — because the other day, a child came to me and said, oh, we have been prescribed a very good book, and that's about a Nigerian child soldier. Now, you know that's not literature; that's public advocacy. That's political advocacy, right.

WOODS: Yeah, no question about it.

MERCER: Kids are not being allowed access to classical literature, and so in addition to lists of liberty-minded books, we also might want English literature. And also, myth busting is very important, such as deconstructing, as you do in your history books, all the myths that kids are inculcated in, including approaches to the Constitution, approaches to the War Between the States, and my own Mandela myth busting, very important. So we can collaborate and through division of labor help parents to actually deprogram their children when they come home.

WOODS: Now of course, as you say, the best way to do this is not to have them programmed in the first place, and one of the benefits of the Ron Paul Curriculum that I've worked on is that it's self-taught. You don't have the teachers — the parents don't have to be teachers; they don't have to provide lesson plans; they don't have to do any of that stuff. It just teaches itself; it runs itself. It's videos plus Q&A forums, and it just runs itself, so they don't have to spend all their time doing all this work. Now I —

MERCER: Parents are often in denial. They think their kids are faring well —

WOODS: Yeah.

MERCER: — getting high marks, and they're in denial to accepting that going to a public school — and a private, by the way. I think the libertarian mistake is that, oh, free market schooling, go to a private school, all is good. No. The Left controls the intellectual means of production.

WOODS: And it controls the whole idiom in which we speak. Just before you and I started talking, I was clearing out my spam folder. And I don't know how I get on these lists, by the way. I have no idea who's putting me on these lists, but I certainly did not sign up for any list to get any emails from Allen West. But I had one in there; it was

either from him or from somebody supporting him, and the subject line was "Alan Grayson" — who's I guess the former congressman in Florida I think he's running again or something like that — "Alan Grayson is Sexist" was the subject line. I thought that sums up the conservative movement right there. They're going to take a leftist word; they're going to try, as always, unsuccessfully to apply it to one of their opponents, and they really think they've scored a victory, whereas they look like complete idiots. I don't even know what they were saying about Alan Grayson, but I guarantee you it was stupid and low IQ, because that's how these people are. They accept the whole leftist premise of the world.

MERCER: Yeah, and these are more than just words. More than just semantics, these are political concepts. They're abstractions that have no relationship to reality. That's why these kids in Missouri and Yale and, you know, across the campuses can talk about these strange feelings and sensations they have, and you ask them where, where have you been hurt, how many times, what happened, and there is no evidence adduced as harm. So these are political abstractions. They're not useful as evidence. That's why I say there is a process-oriented propaganda. So you know, there's nothing — these are just abstractions that break reality, and this is how it is so complicated and complex to actually deprogram and defuse. But as I say, the parent has no option but to actually delegate.

WOODS: What exactly is it, though? Let's get specific. What exactly — let's leave the colleges for later.

MERCER: Mm hmm.

WOODS: What are the kids being taught, other than — recycling is annoying, but if that was the worst of it, I could at least talk to them about recycling when they get home from school. But it's really, it's not just that we're going to give them certain ideas masquerading as facts; we're going to make them think a certain way. We're going to affect their worldview so that they interpret the facts that come to them will make them — again, will flavor the way they understand what's going on around them. So what are examples of this?

MERCER: Well, I think the general principle is that — critical race theory is very important, and it permeates the entire system. And in fact, I was shocked to know, thanks to Colin Flaherty, who collects all these stories, that critical race theory is being propagandized in schools to your own children, if they go to public school, to millions of children. And of course it's always an industry, and when we say that the Left controls the intellectual means of production, they control textbooks and they control this program.

A gentleman by the name of Glen Singleton has a program called "Courageous Conversations," and it begins with teaching that white racism is everywhere, permanent, and it explains everything in a post hoc, logically fallacious way, of course. That's why I say it's a construct. It's a political construct, and this is a very difficult idea to accept. It has no way of verification or evidence. It's a feeling; it's a

construct; it's a way to beat people into submission. And basically every white person is guilty, never to be proven innocent, and that's the premise. So children, black, brown, all minorities are learning this — and whites — at the primary level schooling, secondary level. And of course, when they act out, as we've been seeing in the news in tertiary schools, that's just the end product of what we've seen happen in the education system.

And so how do you come to this? This is very dangerous to white children. I hate to be blunt about this. It benefits blacks and browns, because they have power, but it's very dangerous for young children. When you hear all the violence also covered in Colin Flaherty's collections of thousands of news items about the violence visited on white children in schools in these forcibly integrated schools, it's heartbreaking and it's very dangerous. And parents have a duty to protect their children from this violence.

WOODS: There's an interesting incident that occurred, well, probably within the past month or so at Vanderbilt University. I don't know if you heard about this. Apparently there was a bag of dog feces that was left outside the black cultural center on campus, and this was immediately, of course, interpreted as an act of hatred and implicit violence, and the official response was, "We are sitting in grief over this." Grief over a bag of — it's a college campus; there's a bag of dog doo, and you're in grief over it. We are taking things too seriously.

Well, it turns out it was a blind student with her seeing eye dog, and she was new to campus; she didn't know where all the garbage cans were, and she didn't want to leave dog doo in a building where it would stink up the place, so she left it outside a building, figuring that was the best solution she had. So then she took to the campus paper and said, well, I don't like the way I was automatically assumed to be some terrible racist. I think you are making life very difficult for blind students on campus who are discriminated against and excluded, which was beautiful, right? I mean, beautiful. She appropriates their language. So then they were forced to issue a retraction.

MERCER: But she probably believes the language too.

WOODS: That's — but you know what? I can even overlook that in this case because of the sheer beauty of it.

MERCER: Okay, yeah.

WOODS: And the response was, well, it's true, we were misinformed about the situation. But that's not true that they were misinformed. There was this bag. That was true. The only misinformed part was the spin they put on it, which was we're being victimized once again. Before investigating anything, they had the narrative all ready. They had their red phone to call up Al Sharpton. All they have to do is pick up that receiver.

And then — let's see, just the other day, it was another college campus where there was a tweet — in New Jersey, it was a tweet that went out saying I'm going to go kill some black students. Turns out it was a black student, who in the middle of an anti-racism rally, went to the library, created this Twitter account, posted the tweet, then went out and said, hey, look at this terrible tweet.

Then there was just the other day — I mean, these are all just within the past two weeks. Just the other day, there was the case of the black police officer who said look at this terrible racist letter that's been written, and it threatens my life. And he wasn't speaking like he really felt frightened, which should have tipped people off. Of course he wrote the letter. There are case after case after case of this.

Now, that's not to say that there aren't terrible people who want to do terrible things to other people. There's no questioning that. But in my — but even to say that maybe this is being exaggerated is itself enough to get you — if I said I think these cases are being exaggerated, I'd be fired as a university president. Immediately.

MERCER: Definitely. That's why you're not a professor at Columbia. You're an alumnus —

WOODS: And I'm glad.

MERCER: (laughing)

WOODS: I'm very glad, because I can speak my mind, and I can do what I want and not be terrified all the time.

MERCER: Exactly. But I don't look at it as a continuum, exaggeration. These words suggest a continuum. I look at it as something that is completely wrong, manufactured. It's a concept without any validity in fact, because even if that doggy doodoo was intended to insult someone, so what? When you see big, burly black men lock arm in solidarity against the thing they call oppression, racial turmoil, systemic oppression, and you ask yourself, poor guys, what, where what, how much, who was hurt, what's wrong — I mean, do we need to take you to a hospital — physically, emotionally? Oh no, but feelings are hurt. Now, that's the purpose of freedom. You can hurt feelings; you can express ideas. That's the idea of the republic, isn't it? Freedom. And so the idea that you can, well, investigate these silly incidents — so what? Someone leaves feces as an insult. Big deal. That's a racial incident, but no one was harmed except feelings. But yet we have these whole little sheltered safe spaces to shield these poor huge, black, burly football players who lock arms and are supposed to look very sad and intimidating. And we have these safe places to shield them from this sort of microaggression. It is not even a real thing. That's what I would argue.

WOODS: There was that incident in the University of Missouri where we got the YouTube clip of a professor, and I remember she had a weird status with the university; I don't remember exactly what it was, but it was a Professor Click. And you remember this? She was telling the —

MERCER: She was evicting someone from reporting.

WOODS: Yeah, "You've got to get out of here; you've got to get out of here." And there are many cases now where the media is only being allowed into these whatever types of sessions these are if they will somehow pledge that they're going to portray them in a favorable light. That's the only way they'll be allowed to cover them.

MERCER: And increasingly you see these middle-aged white males retreating obsequiously, apologizing for their existence, and it's interesting to see more white females, often extremely liberal, do these sort of evictions. So there's a lot going on, Tom, in terms of feminization of the schooling system, down to most of our kids are taught by very liberal females. I would suggest not the crème de la crème in terms of IQ and ability, but —

WOODS: Well, in fact, I'm going to link at — TomWoods.com/550 is the show notes page for today; I misspoke earlier, 550 — I'm going to link to a funny article that I tweeted out about a week ago that goes through — it might have been from *Breitbart* — that goes through Professor Click's CV and pulls out all the great research she's been doing. And it turns out basically she writes about TV shows and how diversity is reflected in them. It shows no scholarly rigor whatsoever. There's nothing of any enduring value in any of it at all. It's preposterous and absurd. And this is a person who somehow has gotten herself into a position of authority that she is able to stand there and order people with — and her word was "muscle"; "I need some muscle over here" — to get rid of this young journalist — young Asian journalist, by the way, so it wasn't even a case of terrible white oppression. This was Asian oppression.

MERCER: But then again, I jump the mess a little and ask what is critical race theory. Is it a discipline? And I go back to — who bequeathed us — you're an historian. Who bequeathed us the study of disciplines, which is being broken down? In other words, the creation of these new so-called disciplines, these bogus disciplines, is another thing. Critical race theory is not a legitimate scholarly endeavor. It isn't. Not in the least. So who — I think it was the Romans or the Greeks created disciplines for us, and these are being broken down. And this is very important, because our kids cannot think unless they can approach things, can approach history, can approach literature, can approach mathematics. And now you have critical race theory. What is that? It is not a field of study. And that's another thing that the schools are breaking down, and that's legitimate fields of study.

WOODS: Well, if I look at other fields, like so-called women's studies or whatever it is, queer studies, whatever's going on —

MERCER: Mm hmm, that's a political construct. They're not legitimate fields of study.

WOODS: Moreover, all I have to do to conclude that, in case it wasn't obvious, is to see what would happen if somebody right of center went in there and tried to explain his point of view in these things. This would not even be allowed. There'd be a hunger strike; there'd be candle light vigils; there'd be reeducation camps set up everywhere,

because the very purpose of these disciplines is to discourage independent thought. The very purpose is to churn out people like Professor Click, is to churn out people who are automatons who are just going to repeat propaganda lines and platitudes over and over again. That's what they're there for.

MERCER: Well, this brainwashing and decivilizing kids, it's robbing them of their intellectual heritage.

WOODS: And exactly — and of course, anybody going through a program like that is totally unprepared to deal with criticism, because you've never encountered any, then yeah, you would in real life have to retreat to a safe space as soon as you get a hint of a rational argument coming from somewhere.

MERCER: Yeah, and because you view criticism as an assault and a danger to your person and to the political order, basically. I mean, this is a servile system, and we should call it that.

WOODS: Well, of course in a situation like this when you and I would be having a conversation like this, the question people would want to answer is what exactly can be done. Now certainly, as I say, at the lower levels, like from high school on down, you know, they — basically, the system was created by our enemies, created by people who want to replace all the decent things we have in our civilization with something altogether different.

MERCER: Mm hmm.

WOODS: But when you get to the university system, well, I mean the university system does have an ancient — well, if not ancient, then certainly a medieval and honorable lineage, and I hate to just relinquish the whole thing, so what do we do? Just try to focus on keeping a few of them sort of decent or telling our kids not to go, but then maybe that puts them at a competitive disadvantage? What do we do?

MERCER: Well, you know, I think there's going to be a lull where increasingly kids don't attend these completely corrupted universities. There's going to be — and Tom, we can hope that chaos prevails and the institutions collapse like a black hole upon themselves and that free market schooling emerges. But you know, this is a malady that affects private schools just as much as government schools, because once again, you go back to the fact that the Left has appropriated the intellectual means of production, if I can put it that way. So things are going to be very slow if you want to change them structurally. Free market schooling of course is the libertarian choice. And of course you have our like-libertarians always promoting these vouchers, which is more like tweaking the Gulag. I mean, if you introduce some competition into the educational Gulag, you'll get some change, and then it will plateau, right?

So free market schooling is obviously the end result, but for now we have to realize that liberty has a civilizational component and that you have to just get in there and get dirty and start deprogramming kids and realize that you as a busy parent — not

you, Tom, because you know all, and I have a good handle on this. However, even for me it was very hard to deprogram my child. I had to be there all the time, and present parenting is not something that is encouraged. In fact, the little boy that I actually speak about in my column, "Continuum of Propaganda," which brought me onto the show – very brilliant little boy, but what hurt me is that one day he's going to think of his Auntie Ilana as a kook, because she likes the antifederalists, you know? So that actually inspired things, because I realized I would be losing these magnificent minds to the system of propaganda.

And can I just briefly relate what this particular child had experienced in school, and I think it's process-oriented and emblematic. For instance, he's in a gift program. His project was praised, but not his identity. That was submerged. And if you go back to this program of critical race theory that is spreading in the schools, in the Singleton curriculum, it specifies there that identity of the child, that individualism is a racist concept. In other words, the child's individual identity should not be associated with his achievement. The attitude is every child, given the right nurture, you know – nature means nothing to these people – can achieve what this particular child has achieved. So immediately he learns to be humble and not to attach his own self to his work, right? When I went to school in Israel, it used to be, oh, go to him; his work is excellent; he'll teach you. You know, if you have difficulties in math, go to X. So we always attached achievement to the individual child.

And then second thing is the bias that I found between the way the school – very simple women, you know, usually the white, female, liberal is inculcating the child a bias against the Occident, the West, and a preference for the Orient, the East. So basically he was told not to do a project about Rome, because Rome was boring. And as a historian, what is a teach telling a child – a Christian child – about Rome by saying that it's boring? Western civilization, the foundation comes from there, right? Christianity was spread by Rome. Boring? Foundation of our republicanism. The idea of republicanism. The notion of equality under the law, boring? I don't know, are those improvements? I think there's a nice sketch in *Monty Python*, what have the Romans ever done for us. Aqueducts, engineering, public health, you know (laughing).

WOODS: (laughing) I remember that.

MERCER: Yeah, you remember. So literature, poetry, there's the fine art of argument and oratory, which is what we do. So all these things, the child just got a message – and that's a very smart child. He took it home and said Rome is boring; I'm going to choose India. That's a big deal, I think.

WOODS: Yeah, and it's not to take anything away from India, but they would not have said India is boring. I mean, they would have dropped dead a million times before saying something like that.

MERCER: Yeah, I know. So you have that. And these sort of things are very subtle. Parents, however smart, can't really be hip to this, can they?

WOODS: Because how are they going to know most of what goes on? I mean, only the most egregious examples are ever going to come to their attention, if even those.

MERCER: Exactly, the sensationalism, not the meta process that is there to tell them to be ashamed of their heritage, tell them to be quiet about Christianity, tell them there are only certain literary allusions they can make without being said, well, that also is a white male who was sexist. I used to, when I first started out in Canada writing my weekly column, I used to get heartbreaking missives from young men who were going to SFU and British Columbia University, and they would say to me, you know, taking a liberating course in the liberal arts, they would say every time they'd do something, the teacher would be on them about phallic imagery and oppressive imagery. These kids were broken. So there's an emotional component to that that we want to shield our kids of.

WOODS: And so this is why, to make a long story as short as possible, that the idea that we should make sure and win as many political offices as possible is really, regardless of what you think about politics, putting the cart before the horse. If people all think the wrong way or they're being taught to think in ways that are non if not anti-rational —

MERCER: Sub-intellectual, yeah.

WOODS: — then — but I mean, really to reject a civilization on the grounds that it's boring? What does that mean? I mean, I suppose she means that it's too familiar to us. But you know, to a kid that age, none of these civilizations are familiar. What does a kid that age know about Rome?

MERCER: You're being charitable, Tom. You're being charitable. You think she meant that?

WOODS: I'm sorry. See? I'm a softie.

MERCER: (laughing)

WOODS: I'm a softie.

MERCER: Yeah, I think —

WOODS: I try to find a reasonable way to interpret what these people are doing.

MERCER: Oh, you're being charitable. No, I think we have enough evidence to deduce praxiologically that they need to demonize the West. I think it's safe to say that.

WOODS: Yeah, I think it is too, especially given that all they can think to do is to catalogue the crimes of the West. And again, not to say that the West hasn't committed crimes —

MERCER: No, of course, but you learn about those.

WOODS: But oftentimes, the crimes that are listed are crimes that — like slavery, for example. Well, what civilization was it — and I'll give people time to pause the recording and go think — what civilization that ended slavery in the world?

MERCER: Absolutely.

WOODS: I mean, that's a reasonable question to ask, but yet, I bet most of these kids haven't got the slightest idea.

MERCER: And slavery is still ongoing in the wonderful cultures the teachers are promoting.

WOODS: That's right; that's right.

MERCER: You know, so the thing is that the column that I wrote about education — I don't really delve into that very often — it really was inspired by the fear of losing these wonderful minds that I enjoy. These kids, they're so brilliant; what we're doing to their minds is criminal. These people should be burnt at the stake, these teacher. And you know, I was told that, yes, they do learn about the Constitution. Not to worry, Ilana; don't be so paranoid. But what they learn, when I looked at what they learn about the Constitution, yes, they will go into theories of constitutional interpretation, but they will come away knowing that originalism is for kooks. You know what I'm saying, right?

WOODS: Right, of course they will. Of course they will. And that was what I was taught in school. That's what I learned. I learned about the Elastic Clause in the Constitution. But actually, to the contrary, now that I think about it I don't think we were even presented with the idea of strict construction. I did not know what that was. I was not — I absolutely was not taught anything about the 10th Amendment. Cornerstone to the Constitution, according to Jefferson; not a word.

MERCER: Wow, how do you do that? How do you teach the Constitution without that, the 9th and the 10th?

WOODS: Yeah. And you know what's funny is when, you know, in my early years after getting my PhD, I taught for a while, and I had kids who transferred to other universities, and they'd get there, and they'd write back to me and say — I mean, I had this case after case. They'd write back to me and say it's fun taking history and political science here, because thanks to you, I'm the only one who knows anything. (laughing) Okay, good, but it's a shame that all through your other 12 years of school, you had to wait till you got me as a professor to learn anything.

MERCER: But Tom, there are also heartbreaking incidents and increasingly prevalent that tell of students that have to conform to the liberal mindset, or else they don't get marked well. And that is — how do you deal with that?

WOODS: Now, it's true, in a case like —

MERCER: You can't —

WOODS: Yeah. With stuff like this, this does vary from professor to professor. I knew people — for example, my own PhD dissertation advisor, Alan Brinkley, was very much a guy on the establishment Left, very predictable things that he would say. But he directed my dissertation. He did a terrific job with it, and I got the book published with Columbia University Press, and he was very helpful, and he genuinely just wanted to good scholarship done. And you know, I don't know if he's the exception or not, but I did have that good experience. But on the other hand, I knew who the propagandists were, and I knew the people you could not dissent from. And I sometimes get people writing to me, and they say I'm stuck in this crazy class and my professor's teaching all this nonsense, and I don't know if I should speak up so that the students learn the truth. And I feel like you have to go on your instincts there, and also bear in mind there is no moral obligation for you to be a martyr to students who maybe aren't even going to care what you say. They're looking at their watches about when they can get to lunch, and meanwhile you're sinking your academic career. You don't owe that to them. Once you get out of college, you'll be able to teach all the students in the world you want through the Internet.

MERCER: But what about the fact that they say that 99% of college faculty are left-liberals? And when you challenge the Left, they even respond with illogic. When you challenge the Left about the presence only of — where are the libertarians, classical liberals, conservatives, they say to get into college, you need to be super smart, and we, our faction, is simply — well, yeah right — our faction is simply not as smart as the Left. So basically, the argument is you're stupid because you're not like me.

WOODS: It is that way, and yet when you look closely, I have seen highly qualified people on our side who speak and write in numerous foreign languages, who have actually bothered to research things that would be necessary to draw a conclusion. For instance, I can think of feminist scholars who will talk about the life of women in various ancient societies; they don't even read the relevant languages. There's no reason this scholarship should count for anything. And yet, we have people on our side who can run rings around them, but they're not writing about the right things and they don't draw the right conclusions. They don't think the right way.

MERCER: Well, we work on the margin, and I think collaboration between ourselves, despite disagreements — and our disagreements are minute, but because we are such clear thinkers, we often amplify them, right? And I think working together is very important, between ourselves.

WOODS: I do too.

MERCER: But it's —

WOODS: It's actually an interesting —

MERCER: By the way —

WOODS: Oh, go ahead.

MERCER: Sorry, Tom. By the way, when you saw the Paris attacks, Obama blah blahed about the American affinity for the liberty, equality, and fraternity — you know, the French national motto — do you think our public schools actually know that the French national motto is in direct opposite to the American founding principles of life, liberty, and property? They don't learn that sort of thing.

WOODS: I rather think that the distinctions between the American and French Revolutions are lost on the students and probably lost on the faculty too. I mean, no doubt some of them know better, but I've talked to some of these people, and not a lot of them really impress me all that much, to be perfectly blunt about it. They don't impress me as people who know an awful lot, and they're going to suppress some of it so they can push their agenda. It's that they know little. But all they know reinforces their agenda, so that's what they teach.

MERCER: Well, I mean, the shift has been to emotionalism rather than away from reason. So what you see is an ability to use adaptive logic, to use analytical tools, and even downplaying the importance of that, so they wouldn't really be capable of — when we were kids, we had to analyze things, compare systems, write in full sentences, you know? So I really think that it really goes down to a very basic level of a preference to emotionalism over reason and rationality.

WOODS: Well, we can hope that, given the innovations in technology, it will be possible for people who are libertarians or people who dissent from the mainstream to build parallel institutions now, because the barriers to entry are going to begin to fall. It won't cost that much. Salman Khan is educating 26 million people, and they're getting all his materials for free. If somebody would take the time to sit down and produce the materials, we could be educating countless people in the same way. All that stands between us and that are some big grants from some big time donors and the time of some of our people. The prospects for changing things are actually greater than they've ever been before.

MERCER: That sounds insurmountable almost.

WOODS: I don't think so, because in the past, there was zero — there was no plan from getting here to there. But today — I mean, as I say, Salman Khan did this entirely on his own. He was just a — he was a guy with some time on his hands, so he produced videos. And now everybody learns mathematics from him, and now he's gone to teaching economics; he teaches all these other subjects, and he did it just offering videos for free. He was just a guy. And now suddenly he's got tens of millions of people following him. It goes to show that you can reach people. And that's another thing — and I think we should wrap up — but if we think of all the money that's been spent — can you imagine the idiots who would donate \$100 million to an empty suit like Jeb Bush? Could you imagine what \$100 million — \$100 million could produce what I

described 100 times over, and it would have a lasting, permanent effect on Western civilization if we did it. Instead, the money gets thrown to all the shysters who give pretty speeches every four years, and it's all wasted. It's wasted on media consultants, on polling people, on — Heaven help us — Frank Luntz. It's blown on nobodies and nothingness. And it could be spent on this.

MERCER: Yes, but — the entire comatosis that surrounds Rome is dependent on Rome and on its institutions, whether they be schools, think-tanks, the lot. Intellectuals like Chuckie Krauthammer, they all depend on Rome and the edicts that come out of Rome, so really you're looking at the collapse of a system more than just infusing good thinking with money. What comes first?

WOODS: That was your best line I think of the whole conversation. I've never heard anyone call him Chuckie Krauthammer —

MERCER: Chuckie Krauthammer.

WOODS: — but from now on, that is —

MERCER: He looks like the doll, the vicious doll. He looks like Chuckie, you know?

WOODS: Okay, from now on, he is Chuckie Krauthammer. I mean, his name is Charles; I think I can get away with that (laughing).

MERCER: Chuckie's fine.

WOODS: Anyway, Ilana, if people want to read more of your material, where can they go?

MERCER: IlanaMercer.com and must reading is *Into the Cannibal's Pot: Lessons for America from Post-Apartheid South Africa*, which you were so kind to offer advance praise for.

WOODS: I'm going to like to all this stuff — and your column archive while I'm at it, which I'm sure is also at IlanaMercer.com, but why not?

MERCER: Yes, can I just add one more thing? I think clear thinking is extremely important, and for instance, what I try to do in my work, and I think, you know, we have it with David Gordon, a must thinker, is teaching, even when you approach, let's say, the issue of global warming, I am quite happy to leave it to some magnificent people out there who look at the thing. But when your listeners come to my columns, what they will learn is good, deductive, rational thinking. For example, if they read something about global warming, they will be introduced to the concept of the falsifiable theory, the preparian need to actually set up the null hypothesis. So in other words, they'll learn thinking that I think a high school kid can actually absorb, that in order to prove a theory — global warming is an unprovable theory. Evidence

adduced for global warming, they take as evidence for the theory, and evidence against it supports the theory. So basically, you teach kids logic.

WOODS: Well, how about that?

MERCER: Did I make sense? Vaguely (laughing).

WOODS: Indeed, indeed. All right, well listen, I appreciate your time today and the conversation. I'll direct people also to the show notes page, where I'll have all this stuff linked as well, and that's TomWoods.com/550. Thanks so much, Ilana; I appreciate it.

MERCER: Thank you, Tom. Lovely talking to you.