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CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD
OBAMA: IN PURSUIT OF A MORE PERFECT UNION
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Charlamagne Tha God
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Interviewed by: Teddy Kunhardt
Total Running Time: 43 minutes and 59 seconds

START TC: 01:00:00:00

MATTHEW HENDERSON:
Charlamagne interview, take one. Marker.

Introduction

01:00:12:05

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:
Lenard McKelvey, AKA Charlamagne tha God, radio personality, TV personality, I guess you can just say multimedia personality, author, father, husband.

The Breakfast Club

01:00:26:15

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:
The Breakfast Club is a nationally syndicated radio show through iHeartMedia. We're on in 90 markets and I think 150 countries through the armed forces network. So, we're a pretty- pretty big deal.

Earliest memory of Obama

01:00:46:07

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

My earliest memory of being aware of Barack Obama, I think I heard President Barack Obama on the Wendy Williams radio show. This is before I was even Wendy William's cohost. I think I became Wendy William's cohost in '06, so whenever his book came out. I remember being in there late one night and listening to Wendy lust over Barack Obama, just describing him like he was Denzel Washington, just like tall, dark, handsome. She was just literally, you can tell she was like visibly lusting over, then senator, Barack Obama. I don't even remember what the interview, I don't even remember the interview per se. I just remember that's the first time hearing the name Senator Barack Obama, was on Wendy Williams show, and you knew that his voice was so distinctive.

Obama's 2004 DNC speech

01:01:38:15

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I remember him giving the speech and everybody saying like, "Oh, this guy could be the first black president." I remember when that speech happened and everybody was having that conversation, like, "Yo, this guy could be the first black president," but he still wasn't like on my radar, radar yet, because you got to understand, I'm a black man in America. I don't trust government. You know, what Jay-Z said, "Government, F government. We politic ourselves." I never was into

the political process like that, so I didn't really care to be totally honest with you.

01:02:09:09

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I was like, "Nigga, please. America will never elect a black president. It's not happening, no way, shape, or form. We know what this country is about. We know what this country was built on, racism, bigotry, hate, bloodshed on the back of slaves. They'll never let a black man be a president of the United States of America."

Rev. Wright Controversy

01:02:34:13

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I thought that was going to kind of derail his campaign in a way, but then again, I was upset too, because I'm like, "Why is he being held responsible for the words of his reverend, his pastor?" I mean, there's nobody on this planet that I agree with 100%, even if I do look at them as a mentor, even if I do look at them as a parental figure.

01:02:59:07

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I don't agree with nothing. I don't agree with everything somebody says. You know? So it's just like, some things you may agree with that come out of the person's mouth, some things you may not agree with. So I don't understand why they were taking the worst of whatever Pastor Wright said and trying to apply that to President Obama, because what they should've been doing is paying attention to him

and saying, "Well, what gravitated," what made President Obama gravitate towards Jeremiah Wright in the first place. That's what they should've been paying attention to. I think also, too, now with somebody like Reverend Wright, you can denounce what the person's saying without denouncing the person, and I think that's the problem I have a lot of times with mainstream media when it comes to these politicians. They want you to denounce the whole human being, not even just with politicians, with people. You know? They want you to denounce the whole person. "No, I'll just denounce his rhetoric. I don't have to denounce the whole man."

01:03:53:12

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I would hope that that was a phone conversation that President Obama had and said, "Look man, this is what I got to do in order to be the first Black president, to get in the White House to really change some things." If Reverend Wright was a real friend, I think he kind of would've understood that. It's kind of like being the dude from the hood who got a real bright future, but all your homeboys that you grew up with are drug dealers, and killers, and gang bangers, and you're like, "Look man, I got to distance myself from y'all to get to where I need to be." You know, "Y'all can understand that, right?" If they really did love you in any way, shape, or form, they will understand that. By the way, a lot of those people will distance themselves from you. I mean, The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan is a great example of that. People don't know, there was a picture of

Barack Obama and Minister Farrakhan that they took together way back in the day.

01:04:45:19

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

And, you know, they buried that picture on purpose, because they didn't want it to interfere with his chances of being president of the United States of America. That picture just came out maybe this year, or maybe, no, it was last year. Like last year, that picture just came out of President Obama and Minister Farrakhan. Minister Farrakhan had to weigh with all the, say, "Look, you know what? I'm a distance myself from you, because I know what it is that you can be."

'Birtherism'

01:05:12:09

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I don't know if it was humiliating for President Obama. That's nothing that should humiliate him. If anything, it should humiliate the person that's throwing that kind of rhetoric because they were wrong. You know what I'm saying? President Trump is the person that should be humiliated by that, or I like to call him the Celebrity in Chief. The Celebrity in Chief should be upset about that, because he threw that out there and he was dead wrong.

01:05:35:22

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

So, you know, I don't understand how he's able to even garner people that listen to him and believe him, because clearly, he been slinging

bullshit since day one. So why would you ever believe him when that was a clear-cut lie that he told?

The 2008 election

01:05:56:18

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I was one of those people who, that was my first time ever voting, period, ever. I never voted for any local elections, no presidential elections, nothing. Barack Obama was the first person that energized me and made me say, "I want to go out here and vote," and I don't remember the level of racism, because I was on the other side. Like, I'm not a racist, I'm not a bigot. I wasn't on the right. I didn't have any party. I still don't consider myself to be part of any party, but everything that I was consuming, I was more left leaning with it.

01:06:31:19

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

So when you're more left leaning with it, that's what you hear. You just hear about how great President Obama is, and you see everybody loving President Obama, and all of these black people, white people, Jewish people, Asian people, whoever, they were just energized by Barack Obama, and they just wanted to go vote for him. So to me, I was actually on the opposite end of the spectrum, because I was like, "Man, we must really be living in a post-racial society." I honestly had drunk the Kool-Aid and was like, "Damn, racism must really be over if everybody's behind this black president." So my perspective of it was

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totally different. I didn't see the racism on the other side at all, I mean, no more than usual. You know what I'm saying? I'm a black man in America from South Carolina, so I didn't see it any more than usual, but boy, was I wrong.

01:07:20:07

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I was living in New York at the time, so it was like 2008, New York was Barack Obama country. You know? It just seemed like the world was Barack Obama country, and you had Young Jeezy out here with, "My president is black. My lambo is blue." We walking around with Obama t-shirts on, and jackets before he even was president. We was making our own merch. We bought into President Barack Obama, and it seemed like everybody was into Barack. It didn't matter what color you were, doesn't matter what gender you were, it didn't matter what your sexuality was, it just was like Barack Obama mania, so I didn't see it.

01:07:56:17

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

To me, President Barack Obama was one of the first black men that I saw America really, or at least half of America, judging by the content of his character. Like, I didn't see it as a black thing or a white thing. To be honest with you, I didn't even look at Barack Obama as black, black until I saw his family. When I saw Queen Michelle Obama and I saw his two daughters, I'm like, "Oh, he's a brother for real." I didn't know what his background was. Of course, you heard about him being

biracial, and you know he had a White mother, but then you're like, "Okay, this guy grew up in Hawaii, but then he was in Chicago." But until you saw his queen, that's when I said, "Oh, he's a black man." That's when it dawned on me, like, "Oh, this is a brother for real, for real." I didn't look at him as anything other than a solid presidential candidate before that.

Hip Hop and optimism about Obama

01:08:58:04

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

It was all optimism. I mean, I was one of those people who really was like, "We are living in a post-race society." I was one of those people like, "Racism is dead," and it wasn't just Barack Obama. It was just the way that the culture of hip hop was being embraced. In my mind, I was like, "Man, all of these older white racists, they can't teach their kids racism because their kids love black people, and they love our culture." They love hip hop. Their idols are the Jay-Z's of the world, and the Snoop Dogg's, and even when you got somebody like Eminem. Even though he's a White guy from the Midwest, what is the culture that he embraces? Hip hop. So you just felt like hip hop was changing the world, hip hop was bringing everyone together, and sort of, in an odd way, hip hop created the love that people had for Barack Obama, because hip hop made it cool.

Election night 2008 victory

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01:09:55:03

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

Yes. I remember it vividly. I was in a club here in New York City. If I'm not mistaken, Kevin Powell had hosted a party, and that shows you right there the difference in the way Barack Obama connected as opposed to other presidential candidates, because we were in a nightclub for watching the presidential election.

01:10:22:12

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

This wasn't, it wasn't like a sports bar. We were in a club, a club where on any other Friday night the bottles are coming out with the sparkles, people in there standing on couches. We was in there watching the elections, watching it like it was a fight or something. TVs were everywhere, and I remember every time they announced Barack won a state, everybody yell, and scream, and go crazy. Then, it just happened man. I don't know if it was around 10:00 at night, 11:00 at night. You just saw, "President Barack Obama is the next," or, "Barack Obama is the 44th president of the United States of America," and I remember it sort of being, for like a split second, like a silence, almost like a disbelief shock. You're like, "Wait up, they really let this nigga win?" Like, "No, huh?" Then jubilation, just everybody overjoyed, yelling, screaming, hugging, and then the DJ played Young Jeezy, My President is Black, and I remember immediately walking out that club, and all you heard people saying was, "I ain't going to work tomorrow. We got a Black president."

01:11:31:17

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I remember the next day, Terrence J. and Rocsi B. on 106 & Park, and Terrence was like, "I'm not doing nothing today. We got a Black president now." It's just, it was just, it was an unbelievable experience. I remember that night so vividly. Older people couldn't believe it. They were like, "I never thought I would live to see a Black president." I mean, you got people that were born in the 30s and raised in the 40s and 50s, in the middle of Jim Crow Segregation. Before there was a Civil Rights Act of 1964, when Black people couldn't vote period, they didn't think they was going to see that. We're acting like this was so far removed. So it's like, why would they ever think they'd see a Black president 50 years removed from that?

01:12:18:00

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

Then everybody thinks about the 2Pac line, when he said, "Even though it seems heaven sent, we ain't ready to have a Black president." Maybe we weren't at the time, but we clearly were at '08.

Opposition To Obama

01:12:36:04

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

Oh yeah. I mean, a lot of that, being totally honest, I started to see in hindsight because like I said, Barack Obama was the first person I ever had voted for, period, so I didn't even really understand democracy

like that. To me, I was just happy with the symbol of having a Black man in the White House. So to me, that was enough for me, and then you started seeing him have parties at the White House, and they was in there drinking cognac and eating whatever they was eating, and having a good time. So to me, that just looked cool, the fact that now, we can sing Young Jeezy's song, "My President is Black", and it was true. He really was Black, so I didn't even pay attention to the other side and see how infuriated the other side was by the fact that we have a Black president, because in my mind, you got to remember, I'm thinking, "We're in a post-race society." That's the weird thing about elections. You don't ever realize like, "Yeah, 40 million people may have voted for this person, and he may have won, but another 40 something million people voted for the opposition, and they lost."

01:13:41:18

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

Those 40 million people weren't happy at all, and a lot of those people worked in government. Those guys, like Mitch McConnell, and those diehard old White men who can't understand change or hate where this country is going, of course they wanted to stop President Barack Obama. They're like, Thanos has this line in Endgame where Thanos says, he says, "You know what? I can't wipe out half the planet. I got to wipe out everybody, because as long as there's people around who remember what was, they'll never believe in what can be." That's what guys like Mitch McConnell represent for me. Like, they don't want to believe in what can be. They don't want that. They want what

they're used to. So of course, he was going to try to block President Obama at every turn, but there definitely was the white anger aspect of it too, because that's when you started seeing more police killings. You know, and not even just policing killings, there's situations like George Zimmerman and Trayvon Martin, and the Michael Browns of the world, you know, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, like Eric Garner.

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CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

We all know that stuff had been happening, and maybe social media put more of a highlight on it, and we started to actually see it, but it does seem like a lot more of that was happening under President Barack Obama. It probably was because that was white people's way of letting us know, "We're still in control. Don't y'all get too sporty, and have too much optimism, and think that all of y'all can be the next presidents of the United States of America, and all of y'all can be in these power positions, because we still run this shit."

2016 election

01:15:23:00

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I was voting for Hillary Clinton simply because President Obama endorsed her, and I was voting for Hillary Clinton because the person who they say was the first black president, which is complete nonsense, was Bill Clinton. You know?

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CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

The only reason people said that, because he went on Arsenio Hall and played the goddamn saxophone. All right? But that '94 crime bill that Bill Clinton passed locked up a lot of Black and brown people, so I'm not going to ever call him the first black president, because it's simply just not true. But I just felt like Hillary was a fruit off that tree, and she was a woman, and I'm not gone front, after President Barack Obama, I wanted novelty in my presidents. Like, I didn't want to go back to some old white man. For what? We've done that before. Yes, we've had a black man. Now, let's go to a woman. By the way, if you think that the White anger happened because of Barack Obama, you're absolutely right. If you think that they weren't furious of the prospect of a woman president coming right after that, oh, hell no. That's why they had to take back the country in a real, real way, by putting our Celebrity in Chief in the White House. But, I mean, I didn't have a problem with Hillary because interviewing her, I can't hold her responsible for the '94 crime bill.

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CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

She wasn't part of the Clinton administration. She wasn't a senator or anything at the time. She was a First Lady. A lot of people say, "Oh, well, she goes to bed with him at night." So what? What's that mean? I go to bed with my wife every night. She don't control all the decisions I make as a radio personality, TV personality, businessman. I might bounce things off her, but she don't control what I do. When we had

conversations with Hillary about the '94 crime bill, Senator Clinton was like, "Look, it was wrong, and a lot of people went to jail because of it, and if I become president, I want to right some of those wrongs that the '94 crime bill caused." That's enough for me. That was enough for me. Like, "Yes, I'ma vote for Hillary Clinton."

How Obama navigated racial opposition

01:17:23:01

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

They did the best that they could. You know? Like you said, they had so much opposition from Republicans in the Senate, Republicans in the House, just Republicans in government period. They pushed back on a lot of things that President Obama tried to implement and legislation he tried to pass. So I feel like they feel like they did the best that they could, and I think that's the other thing we got to keep in mind when we look at President Obama. We always say, "Oh, well he didn't do enough for Black people." Well, have we ever looked to see what he tried to do, the things he put on the table that got pushed back? That says more to me than what he actually got done, because we all know he couldn't get things done. Like it was very difficult for him to get things done.

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CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

Yeah. I mean, it's always tough being the first anything, right? So when you're the first Black president of the United States of America, that's a lot of weight on your shoulders. You're representing for a whole community. You're representing for a whole culture, so you can't act like the white privilege entitled demigod that we have in the White House now named Donald Trump, who doesn't listen to anybody, who files executive orders to make sure that what he wants to happen gets done. Barack couldn't do that. I think he understood that. If he even tried to do that, they would get him the fuck out of here. You know what I'm saying? I say it all the time, if you want to know how bad Donald Trump is, look at him through the lens of him being Black. Seriously, look at him through the lens of him being Black. Think about how pristine Barack Obama had to be. I always said, the greatest case, at first when Barack became president, the greatest case of optimism in the world for a Black man was Barack Obama, until you actually look at Barack Obama's pedigree, and you realize that this is not a normal human, period.

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CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

You're talking about a guy who is very well educated. You're talking about a guy who won a Nobel Peace Prize. You're talking about a guy whose résumé was damn near flawless up until that point. You know what I'm saying? Up until the point he became president, like, he was the closest thing you'll probably get to perfection. You know? So it's like, you really got to put in a lot of work to be President Barack

Obama, just on an educational level. Donald Trump, he's really the greatest case of optimism, because he's the nigga that they was scared Obama was going to be. He's the one with no education. You know? He's the one with no intelligence. He's the one that's doing whatever the hell he wants to do in the White House. He's the greatest case of optimism. He makes me feel like I can be president, not Barack Obama. Donald Trump makes me feel like, "You know what? I can do that. If he can do it, I can do it." Barack Obama never, no, not Barack. Barack don't make you feel like that once you actually see who he is as a person, and all the work he put in to get to that level, and become the human being that he is. Like, you got to really put in some work, and do a lot of schooling, and work a lot of hours to be Barack Obama. Donald Trump? No, I can do that.

Importance of Obama's second term

01:20:37:20

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

It was very important for President Barack Obama to win a second term simply to show that it wasn't a fluke, simply to show that he was doing a great job in this country, simply to show that the change he told America to believe in, they still believed in that change. It was important because you had guys, I want to say it was Mitch McConnell, who was like, "I'm determined to make Barack Obama a one-term president." So it was good to throw a middle finger to those guys. You know what I'm saying? Like, "No, you don't have that kind of say. All

right? The power is still with the people." That'll probably never happen again. Democracy as we know it is dead, especially with Russian interference and guys like Mitch McConnell being aware of the Russian interference but blocking election security bills and voter suppression. They're going to make sure that the power is never with the people ever again, unless some real election security measures are passed, but yeah. It was important just to like, it was important to say, "Fuck you," to all the people who didn't want that to happen, to every racist, to every bigot who did not want President Barack Obama to be a two-term president. It was important- it was important just to get him back in there just to say, "Fuck y'all," that this country still belongs to the people.

Trayvon Martin's murder

01:21:54:08

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

Man, Trayvon Martin um- Trayvon Martin was such a sad situation simply because when you hear that 911 call, that's everything that we, as Black people, especially Black men, that's everything we tell you we experience, but you hear it from the person who's actually doing it to us, the racial profiling, the stereotyping, seeing us in a neighborhood, thinking we don't belong. Not even asking no questions, just saying, "Nah, he don't belong here. He looks suspicious." Why? Because it's raining and he got a hoodie on, and he's walking back to his crib and minding his business? For you to have the audacity, the unmitigated

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gall to violate this man's personal space just because you feel like he doesn't belong, like, man. That's what we all feel on a daily basis.

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CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

That's what we tell people we're experiencing, but nobody believes it until they see it, and then to see George Zimmerman get off, it's like, "I don't know what more y'all needed to see." You know, like, "Why would you think that this guy, this little 16, 17-year-old kid was a threat to this dude?" This guy had a gun. Even if you did get into an altercation with him, you couldn't hold him there? Like, it's like, Trayvon picked up the whole sidewalk and hit him in the head with it? Like, "What are we doing here people?" So, just to have George Zimmerman walk because of the stand-your-ground law and saying it was self-defense, well, what, what was he defending? You clearly heard on the phone call, he was the agitator, he was the instigator. Imagine how Trayvon felt, a 16, 17-year-old kid walking through a neighborhood that's not even his at night, and having some guy approach him. This guy is already off, you know, frantic and anxiety filled. He probably, I'm sure he was scaring Trayvon and asking him what he's doing here. Trayvon probably, "Mind your business. I'm trying to get home," and then this guy confronts you.

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CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

Imagine how that kid felt, like, you heard the screaming and the yelling on the phone call when somebody else called 911. That was no

George Zimmerman yelling. That was Trayvon Martin yelling, and then when you learn the history of Trayvon. They was trying to profile him because he had a hood on. So that kid wanted to be, he wanted to be an astronaut, not an astronaut, he wanted to be a pilot. He wanted to fix airplanes, and he wanted to fly. He wanted to be a pilot. I spoke to Barrington Irving, who's the first Black man to fly around the world, and the youngest person to fly around the world. He teaches a school for young pilots. Trayvon was in his class. Trayvon was his student. So this wasn't just a pipe dream, Trayvon was saying, "Oh, I want to be a pilot." He was actively pursuing being in that field, and that's what George Zimmerman took away from the world because of his fears about Black men in America, because of his insecurities. That was a tough one to swallow.

Obama's remarks on Trayvon Martin

01:25:05:23

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I respected it. I respected it because he didn't have to say that, because when you look at a lot of these politicians, especially presidents, they usually don't address everything that's going on in the world. They focus on the major issues. They don't really major on what some people would consider the minors. To us regular, everyday people, Trayvon Martin was a huge deal, huge deal, but I mean, how many presidents would acknowledge that on any given Sunday. So for him to do that, it was just a reminder like, "That's a Black man. That's

a Black man, and he feels the pain that Black people go through, and he's damn right. That could've been his son."

Michelle Obama

01:25:57:04

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

Michelle Obama's the reason that I thought Barack Obama was Black man. I did not look at Barack Obama as a Black man until I saw Michelle Obama. I looked at him as like, you know, like, I don't want to use this term, but I'm, Rob Parker once said on ESPN, he was, he called RG3 a cornball brother. And I'm not, that's kind of how I looked at President Obama. I'm like, all right, this is just some Manchurian candidate, a Black prop, token that the white man is trying to force down our throats and make us think everything's going to be A-OK in this world after George Bush.

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CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

But it wasn't until I saw Michelle Obama, where I go, "yo this dude might really be the real deal. This is, he's really a Black man. He's got a beautiful Black queen, two beautiful Black daughters." To me Michelle is what secured the deal for me. I was like, "all right, I'm all in on this Barack Obama guy. He got him queen from the South Side of Chicago. Like yeah, I like him."

Meeting Michelle Obama

01:27:05:05

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

Nobody believes me, you know what I'm saying? Except for Angie Martinez because she was there, Sue Angie Martinez. But when I walked up on Michelle to take the picture, Michelle goes, "Charlemagne," she goes, "you're so smart and so funny, but smart." And I go, "Really?" And nobody will believe- nobody believes me when I tell that story so I don't like to tell it. But she also said to me, she said- I said, "What do I call you?"

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CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

Because I really didn't know what to call her. I'm like, "Do I call your First Lady? Do I call you Ms. Obama? Do I call you queen? Like what do I call you?" She was like, "Just don't call me a bitch." And I was like, "Who would call Michelle Obama a bitch?" And she goes, "You'd be surprised." I don't think I ended up calling her anything because I had that conversation. And then when she told me I was smart and funny, I was kind of just stuck on that. Like oh shit. Michelle Obama just called me smart and funny and nobody's going to believe me. And even when I say that because Angie Martinez was right there, Angie goes, "No, I heard the funny part. I didn't hear her say anything about you being smart. But I did. I heard the funny part. Ain't nothing about smart." So I don't even like to tell that story because nobody believes me, but it happened.

Charleston church shooting

01:28:19:08

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I was actually living-- I was in New Jersey. That's where I live at now, New Jersey. And I was home and my cousin who was a police officer, he portro- he actually patrolled the downtown area where Emanuel AME is at. My cousin Kente, and he hit me, he's a Sergeant down there and he hit me and he was like, "Yo, there was just a shooting at Emanuel AME." And I'm like, a shooting at Emanuel AME? Like that's random. Like wow. And you know Emanuel AME, that's not just a historic site in Charleston because of that. It's a historic site because one of the people that I have always been intrigued by is Denmark Vesey. Denmark Vesey was a slave in Charleston, South Carolina. And he, I think he won the lottery.

01:29:03:13

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

And so, he bought his freedom, and he always wanted to go back and free other slaves because even though he was well off, he had the lottery money and then he opened up a carpentry shop. He knew that other people was still enslaved. And so he led one of the- he was about to lead one of the largest slave revolts ever in America, but he got ratted out by one of the other slaves. And Denmark Vesey, that was his church, he helped build Emanuel AME. Emanuel AME was Denmark Vesey's church. So that was always on my radar, like that

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church. So when I heard that, I was like, man, that's random. And I remember it started to trickle out on social media and then it popped up on CNN. And I remember tweeting out, "Yo, I hope that this shooting wasn't race-related," because that was around 2015. That's when you started to really see that white anger bubbling up in a real way. That's when those rose colored glasses were starting to come off, and people were starting to realize like, oh, these white people ain't happy about President Barack Obama. So I remember tweeting that and I remember everybody jumping on me and killing me on social media.

01:30:09:23

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

They was like, "You always, you know, acting like race don't exist and yada yada yada. What else could it be?" And I was like, "Ah, I hope it's faith based." I don't want to live in a world whereas a Black person now we got to worry about white people just walking up to us and gunning us down just because we're black. Yes, I hope it's faith based. I hope somebody was upset about Christians and they went here, and they shot at this church. Not like we want that to happen, but I wouldn't, I don't want it to be just based on race. And that's exactly what it was based on. Dylann Roof, super racist, super bigot right there in Columbia, South Carolina where I've also done radio where I got my own day in Columbia, South Carolina. My wife graduated from the University of South Carolina and the area he's from in West Columbia, I remember vividly when I used to be on probation, after

driving to my probation's office, like we used to avoid West Columbia because that's what it was kind of known for. It was kind of known for the rednecks and like don't go on this side of town if you Black don't get caught out there. So you know, we kind of stayed away from like that Lexington area and I think he was from somewhere around there. So yeah, I just remember that night just like not wanting it to be race based and it ended up absolutely being race based.

Obama singing *Amazing Grace*

01:31:26:08

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

Incredible, amazing, phenomenal. I'll never forget it because I was on a JetBlue flight to Charleston, South Carolina. I mean, I fly JetBlue all the time, but I really remember that because Charleston JetBlue started flying from New York to Charleston around 2012, 2013. So whenever I would go down, I would always ride JetBlue. And I remember being on the flight and watching that as I was headed to Charleston. And I don't even remember what I was going to Charleston for that weekend, but I just remember watching that man and once again being reminded, this is really a Black man. You know how I know this is a Black man? Look how he is commanding this audience sounding like a pastor and then the breakout in song and do Amazing Grace. The joy, you got to look at the people behind him as he started to sing Amazing Grace. You have to look at the smiles. You

have to look at the joy that these people had on their face after he gave the speech and then broke out in the song.

01:32:24:20

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

That's how you know you're dealing with a true leader. That's how you know you're dealing with somebody who really cares about the people because he was just going off the cuff in that moment. He got caught up in the spirit of the Black church, and he was able to do that. That's why a white president could never because they just don't have that kind of soul. They didn't grow up in the black church the way President Obama did. But look at the people behind him and look at how happy they were. And people probably hadn't smiled in days. Oh, people probably didn't feel true joy in days. In that moment he brought joy to those people. He gave us yet another case for optimism in that moment like, man, you know what? Even though this is one of the most tragic things that we've ever experienced, it's going to be all right.

Sandy Hook shooting

01:33:15:04

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

There's no way that, there's no way that a parent isn't going to see what happened at Sandy Hook and not feel that pain for another parent. Like imagine we all, you know, and I try to dismiss these thoughts out of my mind because I'm the type of person that the

things that I want to happen in my life I constantly think about. The things that I don't want to happen I try to dismiss. That's what causes the anxiety. That's what causes me to have such bad anxiety because I'm thinking about a situation like Sandy Hook, and you envision your kids in that situation. You envision your kids laying on that ground dead, bleeding. You envision yourself getting that phone call. Like, "Yo shooting just happened." And you rush into the school. You don't know whether your child is alive or dead. So when I saw him shed that tear, I felt him. That's the pain any parent would feel. That's the pain any father would feel when thinking about a situation like that because you got to be a cold-hearted person with no empathy to not even remotely think about what those parents were going through and how you would feel if you was in that situation.

Obama's lack of dialogue on race

01:34:26:03

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I think that even though he's a Black man, he understood that he was the President of the United States of America. And he understood that he wasn't just the President of Black people. I know it's easy to look at Trump now and say Trump talks to his base and his base only. He don't care about what nobody else thinks. But I also think it's very important for us to remember that's not the way it's supposed to be, you know?

01:34:51:02

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

Barack spoke to me when he should have. He spoke out about Trayvon Martin. He was there at Emanuel AME. I wish he would have done more with the Eric Garner case. I think that- that was something that fell right on their desk. The DOJ should've, with Eric Holder, they should have pressed the issue to have those police officers locked up, which they said, they said they were going to handle it, but they never got around to it. So I don't know if I wanted him to be more outspoken when it came to race related issues because I think he was. I just don't think he took enough action when it came to race related issues. The Eric Garner case is a perfect example. Those police officers should've been locked up. They should have been sent to jail for what they did to Eric Garner. And I mean that's, like I said, that's something that fell on, that fell at the feet of Barack Obama and Eric Holder and they didn't act on it.

Eric Garner's murder

01:35:52:06

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I mean, I've been here, I've been in New York since '06 so I've been here for Sean Bell. I've been here for Eric Garner. We're still talking about it. We had Tamika Mallory and Mysonne, we had them up there a couple of weeks ago because they actually disrupted the debates. And they disrupted the debates and was calling for the firing of the police officer that choked Eric Garner out. And I mean, I don't know if

that disruption caused them to start talking about it during the debates because we know a lot of those questions are preplanned. But it seemed like a discussion happened during the debates after they got kicked out. And that's when Mayor de Blasio said that he was going to get the officer that fired, that killed him. They was going to make a decision on whether he was going to still be employed after 30 days. But I don't care about employment when it comes to a murder. He killed somebody, cold blood. So to me, that should have been a federal case that Eric Holder and the Barack Obama administration handled.

Connection between Trump and Obama presidencies

01:36:54:15

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I see Trump's election as a white lash to the first Black President. That's what they did. They took the picture of perfection when it comes to a human being on this planet, what America is all about, really, in Barack Obama. They took that and gave us the complete opposite. They gave us somebody who's not articulate. They gave us somebody who's not intelligent. They gave us somebody who's not qualified. Barack Obama was overqualified for the position. The only other person that was probably as qualified as Barack was, was no not as, over, Hillary was super overqualified and they didn't want that. They wanted somebody that was going to come and drain the swamp, whatever the hell that meant. Somebody who wasn't part of any political party, that wasn't part of the establishment. Somebody from

the outside to come in and shake things up. And that's what Trump was. Trump, he spoke that language. He spoke directly to the racists.

01:37:53:18

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

He spoke directly to the bigots. He knew exactly what they were feeling because he was feeling it. He's the guy that started the birther conspiracy against Barack Obama. So Trump knows, he knows exactly how he felt seeing that Black man every day. That's why every day of his administration right now, he does everything he can to replace Barack Obama's legacy. Anything Barack Obama implemented, Donald Trump is ripping apart. Everything. He's obsessed with the legacy of Barack Obama. And yeah, he was a white lash to the first Black president. They went and found the most entitled, privileged, you know— they went, listen, they went and got super cracker if we're being all the way honest. That's what they went and did with, with Donald Trump. They got that guy that they can put in there and remind everybody the all mighty white man still runs things and don't you ever get it twisted. And if y'all don't believe me, I'm going to show y'all. I'm going to show y'all how nasty white men can be. Old white men.

01:39:00:09

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

Woo, man. President Barack Obama wrote a book called the Audacity of Hope. The audacity for us to have hope right now. But I guess I have to, right? I got to be optimistic, you know. I mean, what is the hope

though? Barack's gone. Barack got Netflix deals and book deals. Barack ain't even speaking out about what's going on right now. Barack, like leave me alone. I told y'all what was going to happen if you didn't run out there and vote. I don't know what the hope is right now because I really feel like we're under a fascist regime. And I feel like democracy as we know it is dead. I don't know if we'll ever have a fair election ever again. I feel like people's rights are being stripped away. I feel like, you know, media is going to end up being silenced if you got anything negative to say about Trump. I, honestly- I don't see Trump leaving the White House.

01:40:10:13

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I can see the- I can see the Democrats winning by a percent or two in 2020 and the DOJ challenging it, and he's already setting it up to say it, to make it seem like they're- the Democrats are the ones getting outside interference. He's already, "Oh look Google, Google did this with Hillary Clinton." He's already setting the stage for that. So I can easily see it getting to the Supreme Court and Supreme Court like, "Yeah, you know what? He's right. There was some type of interference." Trump, you're there. I can see him amending the Constitution to where he's the President until he dies. I can see these kinds of things happening. I know it sounds crazy and farfetched now, but I see these kinds of things happening. So when you asked me about hope, I don't really have much hope right now.

Obama's legacy

01:41:02:21

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

President Barack Obama, the permanent mark he left on this country is that he showed us what American could be— America could be when it's truly at its best, when America is at its best. When we talk about those principles that our founding fathers had, whether it's freedom, justice, equality, liberty and justice for all. All men created equal under the eyes of God. He represents, he represented the best of the best of America. He represented what America was supposed to be. If the elections are fair, if the elections aren't rigged, if the fight isn't fixed, if people are just able to go out and vote for what's good and what we think is the best for our country we get people like President Barack Obama. You know, I just feel like he represented the best of America. So when you think about, you know, his mark and what his legacy is, that's what you should look at him as. You should look at him as that symbol of hope. You know, that symbol of change. That human being who represented the best of America. Who represented what America should truly be about.

Message to Obama

01:42:26:12

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

I would tell President Obama thank you. I know a lot of people like to say they don't feel like he did enough for Black people. I can kind of

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agree with that, but I think that he did– he did the best he could. He did his– he did what was possible for him to do. I know it was a tough job. You could tell by, he aged 40 years from 2008 to 2016. And I can only imagine the stress and anxiety that he had every day because I can think of the stress and anxiety we had when he first got announced as President and he walked out there with his family, and you realize that it was bulletproof glass surrounding him.

01:43:14:02

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD:

You realize then, man, he's got to do this for like the next four years. And he won again and you're like, oh damn, he got to do this for another four years. I remember him– I remember when he first won and sitting there watching the TV and him and Michelle had to get out to walk. And I'm like, man, don't get out the car. Because in my mind I'm like, well somebody's going shoot him. I really thought that. I'm like, somebody's going try to assassinate President Obama. So when that didn't happen, I was just like, okay, America's really changed. He's meant to be there. And so I would just tell him thank you for thugging that out because the way my anxiety set up, I don't think I would have been able to do it. But clearly, he's more of a G than me.

END TC: 01:43:59:03