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A New Way to Think About Racism in America

Plain English with (((((((((((((((((((((((Derek Thompson))))))))))))))))))

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Several years ago, the writer, researcher, and policy advocate Heather McGhee traveled around the country to report on how racism in America holds us back from policies that would benefit everybody. In her book *The Sum of Us*, she explained how racist fears have made us all worse off. For decades, many voters and politicians have fought against policies that would have gotten them better jobs, better benefits, and more upward mobility—because they were afraid that those policies might also help non-white people, and especially Black people.

She made another point that struck me. Progressives sometimes talk about racism in a way that is pretty helpful for their causes. “Progressives often end up talking about race relations through a prism of competition—every advantage for whites, mirrored by a disadvantage for people of color,” she wrote. “The task ahead, then, is to unwind this idea of a fixed quantity of prosperity and replace it with what I’ve come to call *Solidarity Dividends*: gains available to everyone when they unite across racial lines, in the form of higher wages, cleaner air, and better-funded schools.”

Today’s guest is Heather McGhee. In this episode she talks about her new podcast *The Sum of Us*; the indelible metaphor of a drained pool in Alabama; how progressives talk about race; and why many laws today that might not seem explicitly racist still sustain racial inequality.

If you have questions, observations, or ideas for future episodes, email us at PlainEnglish@Spotify.com. You can find us on TikTok at www.tiktok.com/@plainenglish_

Host: (((((((((((((((((((Derek Thompson))))))))))))))))

Guest: Heather McGhee

Producer: Devon Manze

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Information

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