

## A Conversation with CHARLES MURRAY

Charles Murray is a political scientist, author, and libertarian. He first came to national attention in 1984 with the publication of [Losing Ground](#), largely credited as the intellectual foundation for the Welfare Reform Act of 1996. His 1994 bestseller, [The Bell Curve](#), coauthored with the late Richard J. Herrnstein, sparked heated controversy for its analysis of the role of IQ in shaping America's class structure. Murray's other books include *What It Means to Be a Libertarian*, *Human Accomplishment*, *In Our Hands*, and *Real Education*. His most recent book, [Coming Apart](#), describes an unprecedented divergence in American classes over the last half century.

About his conversation, Murray tweeted, "*Bill Kristol draws me out on things I haven't said elsewhere, except occasionally at dinner tables.*" Indeed, Murray offers a behind-the-scenes look at his books and his thoughts on their sometimes-lively reception. Kristol engages Murray, whom he regards as "America's leading living social scientist," in a lively discussion about Murray's scholarly beginnings, his thoughts on welfare and education reform, and the future of the space program.

**On American elites**, Murray observes: "In terms of marriage and working hard, and for that matter, often times being deeply engaged in communities and even religion, the elites are behaving pretty well within their own communities. But they are so increasingly segregated from the rest of America that it's almost 'I'm doing okay, Jack, and so you guys can take care of yourselves.' Yeah. It's a nice time to be a member of the American elite if you don't worry too hard about the rest of the country."

**On the country**, Murray concludes it, "is increasingly being run by people who if you sat them down in Topeka, Kansas would feel like they were in a foreign country."

### Chapter Links to CHARLES MURRAY Conversation

[Scholarly Beginnings](#)

[Losing Ground](#)

[Welfare and Education Reform](#)

[In Pursuit of Happiness](#)

[Coming Apart](#)

[The Bell Curve](#)

[Space and Future Discoveries](#)