

TIME: 6:30-7:00 AM

NETWORK: NJN

PROGRAM: Caucus: New Jersey with Steve Aduato

Interview: State Assemblyman Wifredo Caraballo talks about ethical standards for public officials and issues of race in America
STEVE ADUBATO, host;

An in-depth conversation with state Assemblyman Wilfredo Caraballo coming up next. Stay with us.

Announcer: Funding for this edition of CAUCUS: NEW JERSEY has been provided by The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey, founded by the Jewish community; Johnson & Johnson, the worldwide health-care products company; New Jersey Natural Gas, proud to support education in our communities; Verizon communications; and by QualCare, Inc., a local managed care company covering 550,000 New Jersey residents.

ADUBATO: There here is, our colleague, our friend, state Assemblyman Wilfredo Caraballo representing the 29th Legislative District, former public advocate in the state of New Jersey, involved with the Joint Commission on Ethical Standards. You're appointed to that. You also used to write for The Record newspaper, and you are a professor of law at Seton Hall. What, do you--and you're, like, a lawyer. You've got all kinds of things going on.

Assemblyman WILFREDO CARABALLO (Democrat, New Jersey; Member, Joint Legislative Committee On Ethical Standards; 29th Legislative District): Yeah, and not bad for somebody who's 37, right?

ADUBATO: You are--you look very good for your age.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: For 70, I look pretty good, I know.

ADUBATO: You know, full disclosure, we do this all the time.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Sure.

ADUBATO: All right. I beat Fred a lot at golf. All right. I'm lying. OK. It's not true. OK. We play golf.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: We play golf.

ADUBATO: We've been friends for a long time, and I won't hold that against you here. So any--you said anything's fair game.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Anything and everything.

ADUBATO: OK, here we go. A couple things I want to start with.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Sure.

ADUBATO: We've had a series of programs, Fred, on the issue of ethics, you know, raising the ethical bar in the state of New Jersey. Do we have some sort of unique ethical problem, a "culture of corruption," as some say, that other states don't have? Is there something about us?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: The water. You know, Steve, I don't know how to answer that question, because I know my colleagues, and I know quite a few of them very well, and I know them to be very ethical people, very honest people. I don't believe that we, in the state, have a unique problem. I think, however, that in this state, we're a lot more willing to expose ourselves and expose our failures than people in other states. I mean, we do it ourselves, the media helps us, and I think to the extent that that's the case, we hear about it more, we see it more, but, I mean, as long as any institution is made up of human beings, you're going to have problems. So I don't see that we have a unique problem, but I do think--I mean, think about it. In Connecticut, it...

ADUBATO: Governor Rowland.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...you saw what it took.

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Here, you think the Legislature would have allowed that to occur?

ADUBATO: What do you mean? Governor Rowland and what it took for...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, I mean--yeah, yeah.

ADUBATO: ...to take him out of office?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah. It took all kinds of media and--I mean, we would never have put up with that as a Legislature in this state. I think we're much more willing to address the problems that we have.

ADUBATO: See--yeah, but, Fred--devil's advocate. Some people say, come on, a lot of state legislators knew about Golan Cipel and Jim McGreevey and the fact that McGreevey had put this person, who he had this private relationship with, which is not the issue--he put him as head of homeland security, a position he wasn't qualified for. He was an Israeli citizen; wasn't even an American citizen, so he couldn't get access to confidential private government information, FBI files, CIA--whatever. I mean, come on, he got away with that.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah, but you're assuming, one, that we could do something about it. We did. Many folks did what they could do, which is they spoke to the governor. I per--I didn't personally do that, 'cause I didn't have that kind of relationship with the governor nor did I know Golan or his background, but I do know people who went to the governor and told him and told him, you know--actually told him, 'You're doing the wrong thing here.'

ADUBATO: But isn't it a public issue? It's not some private conversation between Democrats and the Legislature and the governor?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: It...

ADUBATO: Wasn't that the people's business?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: It is, but what's the first way you try to deal with a problem? I think you try to deal with it privately first before you have to go public with it. And I think some people did what they could given the fact

that the Legislature doesn't have a role in that decision-making. That was an appointed position. Those of us in the Assembly, we certainly have no advice and consent role in that, so I'm not going to sit here and tell you that that was one of our finer moments.

ADUBATO: What did it do? What did it do--as Jim McGreevey was resigning in disgrace, huge ethical cloud.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: What was it like in the Statehouse?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Oh, it was horrible. It was horrible. It was--and it wasn't just in the Statehouse. It was horrible in the street. It was horrible on the golf course.

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: It was horrible at home. You know...

ADUBATO: Why?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, because everybody wanted to know what happened and everybody assumed that I knew, for example, what went on, that I must have known or that somehow, every one of us had something to do with this. You know, you all get painted with the same wide brush. You can't help but feel it and you can't help but react, and I did in a number of different situations, sometimes nicely and sometimes not so nicely unfortunately.

ADUBATO: You don't have a lot of patience for folks out there, the public, who thinks--I'll just play this out--"They're all the same."

Assemblyman CARABALLO: No, I have none.

ADUBATO: They're all a bunch of crooks. They're just trying to line the box...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: I have none.

ADUBATO: ...you know the way politicians are. I don't trust them as far as I can throw them. How do you react?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah, I have no patience for that, just like I have no pa--but I--that's--that runs through my entire...

ADUBATO: But you understand that attitude.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Absolutely. But that runs through my entire life. I have no patience for lawyers who don't do their jobs well and for people who assume that all lawyers are bad. I have no patience for parents who don't parent and the assumption about men and how we're supposed to b--I have no patience about things generally when it comes to...

ADUBATO: You mean stereotyping?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah. Yeah. And assuming the worst in all of us, and...

ADUBATO: But isn't some of it earned, well-deserved in government?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: You know, it's not just in government. In life, there are always some individuals who do some things, and to the extent that someone believes that everybody who is in that position is the same, then they do this--they paint us all again with the same brush.

ADUBATO: Yeah. But Chris Christie sat in that chair--you know, we had a good conversation with him. Former student of yours?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah. He was one of my students.

ADUBATO: Yeah, US attorney.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: US attorney, nice guy.

ADUBATO: Yeah. He said there's a culture. He said there's a culture--he believes there's a culture in New Jersey of corruption.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, I don't--let me tell you something. First of all, if you look at the prosecutions that have come down...

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...they've been prosecutions with the exception of one case, a local government...

ADUBATO: Not in the Legislature.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Not in the state Legislature. If there's a culture in the context of local government, I don't know about it since I'm not in local government. But I also don't...

ADUBATO: You know, that's a legal thing, though, Fred.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: But I also don't really believe that.

ADUBATO: But that's a legal and criminal issue. Stay with the Legislature for a second.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: You know, I'm a former legislator long before you got there, been out for a long time, right?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: I can't believe it's 20 years I'm out of there.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: It's amazing, isn't it?

ADUBATO: I said this on one of the other programs we do on ethics. I said, you know, 'I remember being invited to a Giant football game early on in the Legislature.' And I think another time--I forget what it was, some sort of dinner we were invited to--and a trade association or a lobbyist paid for it or whatever, and it was a different environment. And I remember

thinking, 'What's the big deal?'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: It's a big deal. Twenty years later, it's a big deal.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah, it's depending.

ADUBATO: Start lecturing other people--write your name--your name's been in the paper.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: Your name's been in the paper because you went on a trip somewhere.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah, playing golf. Yeah.

ADUBATO: What about it?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, you know, Steve, you're right. They are making a big deal out of it. I'm not quite sure--I understand why. I'm not quite sure I agree with why they're making the big deal.

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: But I do understand the climate, and to the extent that I understand the climate, I find myself having to change how I do things and what I do.

ADUBATO: But you're the same person.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, yeah, but these folks who are putting certain things out there are trying to imply some things that most of us in my position don't see. For example, if you play golf with somebody, how does that all of a sudden mean that this person gets to tell you how to vote or gets you to promise to vote a certain way. I mean, I'm not sure I really see a connection.

ADUBATO: The devil's advocate question is it paints the perception. It creates the perception that somehow you have this relationship with this person who you got chummy with and played golf with, and they represent a certain point of view, a certain special interest, and Fred Caraballo's somehow compromised. Even if he's not...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: ...the perception is there. And the media has a responsibility to report it, and the public has a responsibility to decide whether they think you're a totally honest guy.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Don't disagree. I don't disagree.

ADUBATO: Yeah, but it's a problem, Fred.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: But it's a problem because you can't stand what it does in terms of limiting your ability to contact people.

ADUBATO: What do you mean?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, I'll give you an example. I chair the Telecommunications and Utilities Committee.

ADUBATO: Tell folks what that really means and what's at stake. Cable TV?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Cable TV...

ADUBATO: Send your cards and letters to Fred Caraballo. Go ahead.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...telephone...

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...electricity, water...

ADUBATO: Big stuff.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...all the big stuff, right? One of the ways that you get to find out what's really involved in the various industries is by actually talking to people...

ADUBATO: In the industry.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...in the industry. And one of the things you do is you break bread. Sometimes you might socialize all in the context of trying to get to know each other so that you can...

ADUBATO: Can't you go to a conference they might sponsor?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Potentially.

ADUBATO: OK.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah, so that you can discuss issues in a non-hostile setting...

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...All right?--in a way that maybe always each to open up and share...

ADUBATO: Where's the problem?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...what their perce--well, the problem is we--again, today, anytime somebody sits and breaks bread, the view that we're getting now--that the public is getting now is that they're something wrong with it.

ADUBATO: Does it matter who pays the bill? \$100 dinner, Fred.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: I've never...

ADUBATO: It's a \$100 dinner, and somebody from an industry sits down with you...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Steve, you pay \$100 when you go out to...

ADUBATO: All right. OK, wait a minute.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: I mean, make it a \$1,000.

ADUBATO: Oh, stop!

Assemblyman CARABALLO: It's just--OK. Yeah, I got the point.

ADUBATO: It's a couple hundred dollars.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: I got the point.

ADUBATO: Do you say to yourself, 'All right. Listen, I know who I am as a human being. I know how I got to be where I am. This guy--you couldn't buy me for whatever number.'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: 'So I don't care. Pay the bill.' Or once that guy pays the bill, you have to then go and report...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: ...that so and so put \$57 of a bill...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: It's over \$25 today, having--reporting, I think, it kicks in at \$25.01. I think that's the ...(unintelligible).

ADUBATO: Professor Paula Franzese at your law school...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: ...who--key position.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Great person.

ADUBATO: Great person. Great interview as well. She said, 'Full disclosure. Full transparency. I need to know about that \$25, Fred.' You say?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, I'm not gonna argue about that \$25...

ADUBATO: Any \$25.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...but there are some...

ADUBATO: Zero, zero tolerance.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Oh, yeah.

ADUBATO: That's what I heard.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, it's more than that, though, because not Paula's particular recommendation but the original recommendation that came in from a group I think it was two years ago...

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...when we first voted on these bills was that not only should I disclose if I'm accepting a meal or anything else from somebody, which I totally understand...

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...but in the interest of disclosure, the properties I own. OK, fine. I've got one property, so it's OK. Who holds your mortgage? What credit cards do you have? Excuse me?

ADUBATO: I don't have a right to know that as a taxpayer who holds your mortgage?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Hell, no. Hell, no.

ADUBATO: Why not?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Why? Why should you know who owns...

ADUBATO: Because you're a public official.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Oh, so why don't you find out what kind of toothpaste I use as well. It...

ADUBATO: Where's the line?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: The line, I think, should be drawn on any fact which has a bearing on how I might vote in the Legislature. And the company that holds my mortgage, unless you're saying that Steve Aduato is the guy who owns my mortgage and I am then going to be voting on Steve's co--unless we're talking about that...

ADUBATO: Yeah.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...you don't have a right to know.

ADUBATO: Well, full disclosure. Listen, I just realized this as we were talking about this. Wilfredo Caraballo not only is a member of the Legislature and a professor of law, he also serves as a not--you are an unpaid member of the board at the Caucus Educational Corporation, which is the not-for-profit organization that runs this company, runs this television series. And as the CEO of the organization, you're on the board, so you vote on my salary. I mean, that's full disclosure, right?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah. And...

ADUBATO: But I've given you--you've gotten breakfast, Fred. I know you have.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Those lousy bagels. I'm tired of them. You know, Steve...

ADUBATO: Is it important?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah, but...

ADUBATO: I have a habit. I...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Steve, I think that's important...

ADUBATO: Was it important I did that or was it stupid?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...for everybody--no, I don't think that's stupid. I think that's important to know. But the next question is: What does that do for our relationship? I mean, you didn't sit here just now and give me a pass on the idea that I made the newspaper, about the fact that I took a Gulf trip...

ADUBATO: I'm not gonna give you a pass on anything.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: But that's my point. That's my point.

ADUBATO: But someone might say the per--I know there's a--guys, I know there's a break. Someone says, 'It doesn't matter.' There is some people who say, Fred, 'It doesn't matter what happens in this interview. It doesn't matter what you actually do as a legislator. It's the perception.'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: And to the extent that the perception is, in fact, one that can be connected to reality, then that's OK.

ADUBATO: Ooof. Not black and white, is it?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: No.

ADUBATO: I knew this wasn't gonna be a black and white conversation. By the way, speaking of black and white, we'll be talking about race when we come back with Wilfredo Caraballo. Stay with us.

(Announcement)

ADUBATO: Welcome back, folks. We are speaking to state Assemblyman Wilfredo Caraballo who's talking about a whole range of issues.

I actually want to do the race thing in a minute, which is totally unconnected to ethics, but I wanna follow up on something you said during the break. You said, 'If we go to far with these ethics reforms--like, if we say, "You're gonna have to tell us who has your bank mortgage. You're gonna have to tell us, you know, what kind of toothpaste."' I mean, half-joking but get the point...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: ...'We're gonna drive people away'?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Oh, absolutely.

ADUBATO: What do you mean?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, you know, I mean, there are a lot of us who believe that there's a side to our lives which should be private, that we should--that we're entitled to a certain privacy. Now we understand that we're public figures...

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...and to the extent that we're public figures, there's a whole lot that comes with that. But there are pieces to our lives that are private. And to the extent that someone who's--and I've made that decision...

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...but there are a whole lot of people who would--who want to engage this field, this endeavor, who are saying to themselves, 'You know what? This is getting too far into my private life. I accept that I have to be ethical. I accept that I have to be honest. I accept that disclosure's important, that anything that's connected to something I might possibly have to vote on or dispose of is important, but they're getting too far into my private life. And I don't know if I'm willing to do this now, and who knows what more they may open it up in the future.'

ADUBATO: So some folks who have something to offer...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Who have a lot to offer.

ADUBATO: ...say, 'I'm not gonna do it.'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Maybe scared away. Absolutely.

ADUBATO: I have not seen a single media story--I've seen a lot of stories about golf trips and legislators and the University of Medicine and Dentistry and Rutgers University, and my name was actu--hey, look, folks, some of you watching me have said, 'Hey, I saw Aduato. He was--mentioned that his television series got a no-bid contract to do'--yeah, what it meant was that the University of Medicine and Dentistry, that we did a health-care series--our not-for-profit and their's to do a health-care series. I remember the reporter who called me. He said, 'You got a no-bid contract.' I said, 'You mean we did this partnership with the university, and we did these...'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: No.

ADUBATO: '...programs? And what were we supposed to do?' And I said, 'You want to know what the programs are about?'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Nope.

ADUBATO: And she said, 'No.' I said, 'Wait a minute! Don't you want to know what the product was?'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Substance doesn't count.

ADUBATO: She said, 'No, it's appearance.'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah, substance doesn't count.

ADUBATO: And so my point is this. It's not about me. I just wanted to make that clear that all of us--and I don't consider myself a public person, but I consider myself someone of the public but not a public official like you. A lot of people are gonna say, 'Huh-uh, any public...'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: That's it.

ADUBATO: `...entity. Forget about government.'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: `A public university.'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Especially when you're talking about the appearance question and not the substantive question.

ADUBATO: How do we get the higher ethical standard and still not drive people away because it's going so overboard and nutty?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, I think, you know--I mean, I don't want to sound overly pessimistic. I actually think that this dynamic that's going on right now might help get us to the right place. I think you need people...

ADUBATO: You mean a pendulum?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah, well, not only that, but just you always need people at extremes almost to kind of get you to the right place.

ADUBATO: Yeah.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: So to the extent that we have some people who are pushing for solutions which I think are extreme...

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...and then we have those who--and I'm not there--believe that we shouldn't disclose anything...

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...to the extent we have those extremes pushing against each other, there's a good chance that maybe we'll get to the right place and the proper balance. And being the eternal optimist that I am, I'm hopeful that we'll get there.

ADUBATO: Real quick, let's run this one. How about if someone says, `Ehhh, Caraballo, he's full of it. I'll tell you what, man. Full disclosure on everything because the only people we want in government and in public life are those who have nothing to hide'?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: I'm not quite sure I know what `nothing to hide' means.

ADUBATO: They put everything out there because...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well...

ADUBATO: ...there's nothing they do--who holds their mortgage, that...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: OK, I think we're gonna be left with a society that will be ruled by two people, and both of them will be the type that none of us wants to follow because in some way or another, I can't imagine there isn't a human being that doesn't have something in his or her heart that they just

don't want to put out there.

ADUBATO: OK. Want to talk about race?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Sure, why not?

ADUBATO: We talk about race off the air a lot. I don't know where I want to go with this, but I'm gonna try something...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Sure.

ADUBATO: ...because as we do this program Judge Roberts will probably--well, you know, I don't know what's gonna happen.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: He'll be approved. He'll be voted in.

ADUBATO: The issue of affirmative action comes up a lot in that discussion. Let me ask you something. What do you say to those who say, 'You know what? Enough is enough. Enough is enough. And right now at this point we should live based on Martin Luther King--Dr. King's standard that we should be judged not by the color of our skin but rather by the content of our character...'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: And he's absolutely right.

ADUBATO: `...and get rid of these laws and these regulations for--set aside a certain percentage of contracts for minorities...'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Soon as we're there, I'll be right with you. As soon as we're at the point where we are being judged by the content of our character and not the color of our skin, I'll sign on to vote to eliminate affirmative action laws...

ADUBATO: But you are not judged...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...but we're not there yet.

ADUBATO: ...by the color of your skin.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Oh, give me a break.

ADUBATO: You're here beca...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Give me a break, Steve.

ADUBATO: Fred, come on.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Steve, Steve! Listen, let me tell you something.

ADUBATO: You're being discriminated against?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: I didn't say that. I said I'm being judged, OK? And there's a difference.

ADUBATO: So am I. What, you think that only blacks and Latinos have the...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: No.

ADUBATO: ...exclusivity on being judged?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: No. I don't believe that at all. But I do believe that there is a history that goes with pigmentation which has empowered certain people in this country at the expense of others and to the--and that that continues to this day. And until we get to the point where we can actually look at each other eyeball to eyeball and know that not just in terms of laws but in practice people are getting equal opportunities...

ADUBATO: How do we...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...then we need to do something...

ADUBATO: ...determine that, Fred?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...to make it equal. Well...

ADUBATO: What's the barometer?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...let's put it this way. While New Jersey continues to be the third or fourth most segregated state in the entire country, we know we're not there. And that's a fact. This is the third or fourth--I can't remember which one...

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...most segregated state in the country. Is that an accident, Steve?

ADUBATO: No, it's not, but why...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, but wait. If it's not...

ADUBATO: ...is that based on racism exclusively?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: All right. You know what? Don't tell me for a second, please, because I know you don't believe this, that race doesn't have anything to do with that.

ADUBATO: I didn't say--no, no. I said `exclusively.'

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, but that's the point. That's the point. As long as race plays a factor--and it plays a factor--then we're not where we want to be.

ADUBATO: But you make it sound like African-Americans at some point don't want to live with other African-Americans and Latinos don't--I mean, communities are based on all sorts of things.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: I never--you know what? As long as you get to live where you want to live...

ADUBATO: And you should.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...I don't care.

ADUBATO: The laws say that.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah, but the law says that, and then we wind up having these great--you know, it's weird. We've had laws in place for years and years and years, and then what happens is we get these housing patterns that are based on housing codes, which are based on how a city or a town decides it wants its lots broken down. So, for example, in certain towns it used to be, 'Well, we can't have a house that's on less than two acres.' Well, it just so happens that it costs \$50,000 an acre to buy a house there. And then you get...

ADUBATO: That's an economic issue.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, wait a second. Yeah, and in a society where we know that the great number of those in that economic bracket happen to be people who look like me as opposed to people who look almost like you--almost like you...

ADUBATO: There are people who are whiter than I am.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Not many, but yeah. I mean, that's just a fact, Steve. And until we get to the point where we can actually say that we can judge people by the content of their character, we need to make sure that we help to develop a level playing field. Now by the way...

ADUBATO: I forgot about this last break. Let me do this last break. I promise I'll come back.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Sure.

ADUBATO: More with Wilfredo Caraballo, who was my friend when he came in here, and I still think he's my friend now. Stay with us. We'll be right back.

(Announcements)

ADUBATO: Welcome back, folks.

Fred, the lesson of Hurricane Katrina's aftermath with respect to the conversation we're having right now is?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Well, I think the fact of the matter is that to the extent that you put incompetency coupled with a bias in some ways towards people who economically are not where we would want them to be and those who are in that economic position also happen to be people who are of a darker persuasion...

ADUBATO: White suffrage.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Absolutely...

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...which is why I said economic...

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: ...in the first category, that you're going to have those kinds of situations.

ADUBATO: Bring us closer together or further apart?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Man, I'm hoping--well, again, the eternal optimist...

ADUBATO: You are an optimist.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah. I...

ADUBATO: You have to be. What's the alternative?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah, shoot myself, right?

ADUBATO: What do you think?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: I'm hoping so because of the reaction in this country's been pretty good. In spite of what the media has portrayed on TV, the reaction has been pretty good by most people.

ADUBATO: Hey, real quick, real quick. I'm going to interrupt you. Do you know--do you remember we had a fund-raiser about two or three weeks after Katrina...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yes.

ADUBATO: ...right?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Awesome, wasn't it?

ADUBATO: A group of guys that we play golf with...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Awesome!

ADUBATO: ...most of whom are white.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Most?

ADUBATO: Almost all...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: ...except for you...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: ...and a couple of other guys. But they held a fund-raiser and they raised 50 grand plus...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Oh, \$50,000.

ADUBATO: ...for...

Assemblyman CARABALLO: \$50,000. It was beautiful, wasn't it?

ADUBATO: ...Hurricane Katrina and the victims.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Wasn't it beautiful?

ADUBATO: It went to the Red Cross.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Awesome.

ADUBATO: Nobody was thinking about race, right?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Yup.

ADUBATO: So we're a little better than we used to be.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: I didn't say otherwise, Steve.

ADUBATO: Right.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: I didn't say otherwise.

ADUBATO: Are you still gonna play golf with me?

Assemblyman CARABALLO: On occasion.

ADUBATO: You're a good golfer and you're a better friend and a great legislator. Thank you, Fred.

Assemblyman CARABALLO: Thanks, Steve. OK.

ADUBATO: Thank you.