Anthea Butler Interview

Anthea Butler (00:48):

Okay. My name is Anthea Butler. I'm associate professor of religion and Africana studies at the university of Pennsylvania. And I would like to be identified as a dr. Anthea Butler.

Butlerfilms (01:02):

Thank you, Anthea. Okay, great. And so I'm going to follow the script from our phone conversation in our, in our questions. And you cut out like, so I'm going to just use your words and ask them right back at you. This is all about science, denial and climate skepticism, and how we got to where we are today. And, and thanks to your good guidance. **You** really talk a lot about, um, it came, came in with the tide of the evangelicals in the moral majority. So the question that you would phrase rephrase was when did
the evangelicals become more political and where did the moral majority come from?

Anthea Butler (01:37):

Um, evangelicalism became more political in the 1970s. Many people think of that as a story about, um, the rise in antiabortion movements, but it's a very different story. The story about how ever Angelicals came into power is about taxes, actually taxes and race. And the story is, is that evangelicalism, uh, masked behind Bob Jones university, when it was, um, pressed to, uh, integrate the school and allow interracial dating in the 1970s, they were not integrated before you had to sign a statement of that. You would not interracially date. If you came to the school, the school's first black student actually came there in the 1970s and quit after a few months. So what happened is, is that when the IRS came after Bob Jones, evangelicals got very upset about this because they believed that it would cause their other schools, what people called segregation academies to have to be integrated.

Anthea Butler (02:36):

And those schools also got tax exemptions, and they were very afraid of this. So as a result, the, um, Bob Jones continued to fight this case and they had their tax exemption stripped when they had their tax exemption. Stripped evangelicalism began to write in. And part of this campaign had to do with people who were pressing evangelicals to get more involved in one of those people was Paul Weirich, who was actually a lobbyist in Washington. And one of the founders of the heritage foundation in the 1970s, Paul Weyrich is a very, um, probably I would say famous in some circles, but quite unknown in others for his organizing ability and thinking about the ways in which evangelicalism could become more politically active after, um, during a meeting and the end of the 1970s, where Ronald Reagan and others had been invited to Dallas, Texas to give a speech in front of major F Angelicals, Paul Roderick was there and also a person named James Robison and James Robinson was charged with the task of picking up, um, Ronald Reagan from the airport.

Anthea Butler (03:44):

And when he did pick up Ronald Reagan from the airport, he gave Ronald Reagan, one of Ronald Reagan's favorite side, uh, slayings, which was, um, you can't endorse me, but I endorse you, which went over very well with evangelicals. Now, this meeting was sort of a Genesis for the moral majority. Paul Rohrich is actually one of the people who came up with this name and said, if we could just get a moral majority and Jerry Falwell hit on that name and said, that's it, that's what we need to call our new organization, the moral majority. And as a result, the beginnings of the moral majority formed in late 1979, partially because they were upset about these taxes. They were upset, you know, starting to come into this space of anti-abortion activism and also because of the era, the equal rights amendment. So those three things really together, but especially the taxes help evangelicalism become a political force in the late 1970s.

Butlerfilms (04:47):

So what does any of this have to do with, um, today's conversations and debates around climate change and climate skepticism? Like how did the even juggles sort of get into that space and that conversation?

Anthea Butler (05:02):

Well, part of how evangelicals come into that space and in the conversation about climate change from the 1970s is that it's just one of the things that they are against because of the way that they see the world. They see the world as being God's creation and mankind has been given dominion over that, um, the world and narrow they're able to use the world Earth's resources as they see fit. So one of the issues that became very important for them and how they got involved is because of their lobbying, evangelicals were lobbying for things like antiabortion, um, against homosexuality and others and climate change and how you use the earth became another, because lobbyists came to evangelicalism to ask them for their help in terms of keeping, um, Atlantic, excuse me, I'm gonna start that over. Let me start that sentence over. Okay. Evan, Joel calls teamed up with people who wanted to push for other kinds of environmental changes, because they were the ones who wanted to see how they could benefit how their organizations could benefit from the kinds of ask me that question again.

Anthea Butler (06:18):

I'm going to do it again, cause you're going to get a better shot for me if I do this one more time. Okay. Because it's actually, I should break it into two let's break this question into two. So it makes it easier. One, one piece of the question you should ask me is, you know, what about evangelicalism organizations that became politically active and then asked me the question about climate change. This is actually a two part question when I was answering it. I realized it because what we need to do is set up what kinds of organizations and then to talk about the lobbying and everything that happens. Okay.

Butlerfilms (06:55):

Alright, let's do it. Okay. Um, so, but, well, I mean, let's just, let's just start with the organizations. I mean, what types of organizations were influential and, and, and, um, organizing at the time

Anthea Butler (07:08):

For average alcoves in the late 1970s, the moral majority was the beginning of a rise of all kinds of organizations that were designed to push forth evangelicalism, angelical kinds of concerns within not just politics, but the media. So not only do you have, the more majority you had James Dobson's focus

on the family, you had, uh, Donald Weidman's American family association, you had, um, all other kinds of things that were either connected to churches or denominations or what we would call para church organizations that were able to send lobbyists to Washington, to fight for things that evangelicalism wanted. So for instance, if, um, evangelicalism were looking for anti abortion legislation and rights, they would send different organizations like focus on the family or family research council or American family association to say, obstensibly fight for the rights of the family. And other kinds of evangelical concerns.

Anthea Butler (08:04):

These organizations became very powerful. They began to raise money and funding, and they also became involved in politics to a great degree. They also started to put together candidates where they have people vote for them. And probably the biggest organization of all which gained a lot of traction in the 1990s was Christian coalition, um, headed by Ralph Reed and found it by Pat Robertson. Christian coalition was an organization that had lots of power in terms of putting themselves behind politicians, putting their voting power behind the kinds of things that they wanted to see happen. So for evangelicalism, these organizations provided a very important role in the org, the organizational life of evangelicals. What they did was to give evangelicalism a sense of power from, um, a very gated religious organization that didn't really have a room to put forth, but what they did have were parachurch organizations that could raise funds.

Butlerfilms (09:13):

So, so that's part one. And part two is what does climate change have to do with it? But I wanted to ask you, um, I recently saw a commercial that was done where Pat Robertson sat down with Al Sharpton and they couldn't agree on much, right? Couldn't agree on much. We could agree that the planet needs care and we need to address issues of climate change. And then that dramatically changed. Um, I think Robinson regretted doing the commercials and changed his stances. And so that is another way to get at this, this, this question to have, while in the middle of all of this going on. Like what, why, why did environmentalism and climate change become part of the, the, the sort of the, you know, the, the, uh, the bundle of issues that even joggle leadership was, um, was pushing

Anthea Butler (10:03):

At first, you would think that evangelicalism would be involved with environmentalism after all, this is part of God's creation, but for evangelicalism, there was a sense in which this whole push for environmental ism was about liberalism. It was about looking for things that Democrats wanted. And as they became more politicized in the late eighties and early nineties, this began to change the political activities of evangelicals were pushed back. There was also oil money being put into some of these organizations that really turned evangelicals away from what they might call creation care into a sense in which we can use the earth, whatever we want to. Another story that I think is an untold story about how evangelicals sort of change in terms of climate change. And all of that actually begins back in the seventies. When we think about the Alaska pipeline, when the Alaska pipeline was built, lots of people from Texas and Louisiana went, and a lot of the workers on the pipeline were actually Bible belt, Baptist, believing kinds of Christians evangelicalism.

Anthea Butler (11:07):

And when they went to Alaska, they saw the beauty of Alaska, but that also meant that they saw the money that was in oil and all of this. And part of this is also about the funds that were made on the Alaska pipeline and other kinds of oral rig organizations. We don't often think about regionality in terms

of thinking about why evangelicals are against environmentalism, but when you begin to think about the regionality of Texas, Louisiana and other places where people work on offshore oil rigs and other businesses, this becomes very important to the livelihood of many churches there. And so for these churches, they don't want to see environmental activity. They need to see those things curbs so that their congregants and the money that comes into their churches continues to flow. Okay.

Butlerfilms (11:54):

And you touched on this a little bit with the money and the powerful organizations behind them, but, but you don't, why were they so effective? You know, it's not like even goggles are the majority of, of voters in the country. So how were they so effective and the leadership of the moral majority, how were they so effective and really, um, changing the diet?

Anthea Butler (12:16):

Well, Angelica was a very effective in changing the dial politically because they were very media savvy. They knew how to grab a headline. They had networks. First, those networks were based on a mailing list. And then they became, um, you know, computer internet lists. They reached out to people. They had funding from all the people who sent in money to these organizations. They organize pastors in the case of more majority at one time, there were over 3000 pastors that belong to the, to the organization. All of these places, the bulk of what they did was based a beginning on mailing list. And then the connections that were made further with television televangelism, all the rest of these things, created a powerful network of voters and people that they could reach out to for funds. And not only that they could mobilize when there was something that needed to be done. So for instance, to write your congressmen, uh, they had to do was to show something on their television show and say, this is a problem. Write to your local congressmen. And before people had phone banking and all these things Angelicals were able to do that very efficiently to move the dial for the issues that they cared about.

Butlerfilms (13:27):

Okay. And tell me, just tell me a little bit more about how they not, how they did it, because you just told me that, but some of the messaging that was used, I'm very curious to, for you to expand a little bit more on the theological arguments of, of, um, in relationship to climate change, whether it be in the realm of science, which I know we don't really want to talk about, but mostly this idea of dominion, which you talked about a little bit, perhaps maybe tell us a little bit about the end times theology too, and just man's arrogance, because I know that was a message to like, there was a liberal liberals or Arabic.

Anthea Butler (14:02):

Yes. So there's several ways in which Evan gel Coles went about, um, promoting their messages, uh, against environmentalism and climate change. One was the issue of dominion. Ism man has dominion over the earth. This is in scripture that God has given the earth and the fullness thereof for man to enjoy and its pleasures. And so they don't necessarily think about if we're coal mining, that stripping out earth that is making things horrible for people, it's making the environment terrible. They believe that God's going to renew the earth. That's first of all, and the reason why they think that God's gonna renew the earth is that they believe in what we would talk about as a, as an end times or an Armageddon. They believe that, um, at the end that Jesus and SA and Satan will have a great battle and the, uh, plane of mosquito, they hope that they won't be around because they hope to be gone because they will be gone in terms of a rapture.

Anthea Butler (14:57):

That means they will be taken out of the earth and God will leave the earth, um, barren, except for the rest of us who were probably all sinners and bad people and the devil. And then God will come down and have this great battle with his angels, renew the earth, beat the devil, and then there'll be a new heavens and a new earth. This is what the book of revelation talks about. So for evangelicalism, there's not much purchase in thinking about taking care of the earth that we're on because they think that God's going to give us another one. So that's first off. The second reason I think that evangelicalism don't really care about environmentalism is about what they perceive to be a liberal talking point or a democratic talking point. They believe that this is the science and how people think about this in terms of liberalism is some kind of, you know, it's, some people would put it a fairy tale that things are going to be terrible.

Anthea Butler (15:54):

And that climate change is real. And it's not really climate change. It's just that it's hot. Like it's hot every summer, or, you know, it rains like it rains normally. And none of these things have anything to do with anything else, except for people who are just very fearful and don't want to have the kinds of capitalist endeavors that ever gel, because believe in. And I think that brings up the third issue about money and capitalism for evangelicalism, capitalism and godliness are very close together, especially for them. And so the way in which they think about this is that if there's a way to be able to be a good steward of God's money for some people, you might think that means that you need to take care of the earth for them to be a good steward means that they were able to make money off of that, that they would be able to support the kinds of organizations that believe in the family and Christian values and, um, environment. Doesn't come into that at all.

Butlerfilms (16:56):

Sorry for the delay. Does this statistic, I mean, I'm, I'm, I'm fascinated by your answers. Are you, are you good?

Anthea Butler (17:03):

I'm good. I mean, are you okay with that? I mean, it's okay.

Butlerfilms (17:05):

Yeah. I mean, I'm not here to put words in your mouth. I want to hear your expertise and what you have to say.

Anthea Butler (17:12):

This is how they are so good.

Butlerfilms (17:15):

So, so, so where did, I'm sorry, where do evangelicals of color fit into that to, to, to this, and, and it's up to you, whether or not you want to make it present, or if you want to make it start,

Anthea Butler (17:28):

I need to start a little past and bringing it to the peasant. There have always been evangelicalism of color in the mix. Now, the ways in which they've been in the mix is very interesting. Um, as we know,

evangelicalism can be, uh, any race, but part of this is about for evangelicals is about creating a culture and is a predominantly white based culture. And when I say white, I mean a hegemonic kind of culture that is led by white males and everyone else, including women, men, anyone else with any other color is expected to follow. So, um, back in the sixties in 1963, the national association of black evangelicals were formed as a counterpart to the, uh, national association of evangelicals. Now we should just point out that when the national association of evangelicals was formed back in 1940s, it did not have any black denominations in it.

Anthea Butler (18:22):

Okay. So the formation of the national black national association of black Angelicals was about how to bring churches that had similar beliefs into the fold that were African American. There were figures that were involved in this most notably Tom Skinner and, um, William Panelle, who were very vocal in the sixties and the seventies and beyond about confronting evangelicals about racism. And this was met with some modicum of success. Some not, um, one very memorable speech in the 1970s was that our banner by Tom Skinner, where he accused evangelicals of being nationalists and racist. And that was a big moment in evangelicalism. Now for evangelicals today, we see that their evangelicalism color they're white evangelicals, but more often than not evangelicalism is referred to as it's a code word for white. And I believe that the reason for that is that it's been very hard for average locals of color to break away and, and say certain things about their beliefs and how they may see the world relative to the kinds of Evan shall call beliefs about abortion, same sex marriage, and the family that get articulated by major evangelical figures and organizations.

Anthea Butler (19:42):

So for average, uncles of color and particularly black image alcohols, this becomes very problematic because if you step out of that role and you, you start to speak for yourself, it is seen as breaking away from the camp. Okay. And also there's a sense in which when people of color come into evangelicalism, that they also have to accept the cultural mores of evangelicalism. That means you might leave behind gospel music, or you might leave behind a mariachi band, I'm using musical examples, but those are the easiest ones to sort of think about in terms of this, there's a way in which you are expected to leave your culture behind and embrace an evangelical culture, which is really a white kind of culture,

Butlerfilms (20:25):

Which brings me to the biggest question in our conversation. And as we had talked about, um, from the two evangelical or one evangelical and one politician that lived through a lot of this fate, um, this, this, this, this climate change problem, um, seismic and Bob Inglis, who both said that really all of these issues, including the conversation around climate change and regulation, deregulation all has to do with racism.

Anthea Butler (20:54):

Yes, exactly. And I agree with them about this issue about environmentalism has to do with race for evangelicals. Part of that has to do with some basic things. First, let's talk about something as basic as red lining, how people are bound out from different communities when black community black people started to want to buy in white communities, this was pushed, pushed back. Some black communities were red lined. In other words, they were put into places where there were environmental problems, where there was dumping, where there would have been chemical plants and other things. These were not in white sections of town. And so this is actually in a way, part of it has to do with an economic

status, the economic status of African Americans and where whites did not want them to encroach upon certain kinds of things. It might be okay for you to come to church, but to live next door to a black person was another thing altogether.

Anthea Butler (21:46):

So if we think about red lining is one way to think about how things environmentally change in the community. That's really important. I think one of the second reasons about why this has to do with racism is because there's a different way to sort of think about land, land use, and what should happen to it. So, in other words, if we're talking about the ways in which the urban space has been deemed as the black space, if we think about the 1970s in urban urban areas, or how people even talk about places like Chicago and New York as being cesspools, right, uh, and, and filthy, and all of these things that has a racism that's based in environment, they think because you live in a city and you're not in a small town, that means that it must be horrible. You must not have anything to care for.

Anthea Butler (22:37):

And that somehow a city is less desirable than a small town or a predominantly white enclave. So forever Angelicals. I think part of this reason why people like seismic would say that this is racist is because of policies that have been implemented by the government that also evangelicals have embraced. If we think about this in terms of education, it becomes very important if we think about where the ways in which after Brown vs Ford in 1954 happen and how long it took to integrate schools and where black schools were located, vis-a-vis where white schools were located. And when people were starting to be bused into other areas that meant that the environment was going to change. And so for evangelicals, anything that they could do to hold that back, whether we're talking about a citizens council and the fifties and sixties, whether we could talk about the ways that school boards got stacked in the seventies, through the nineties, and two thousands, all of these things were part and parcel of things that Emma uncles worked on in order to African Americans and others out of the clean environmental spaces, as opposed to the spaces that they were caused to, that they were forced to live in beforehand.

Butlerfilms (23:57):

Do you think that is also the reason why even when some, even when, um, some prominent evangelicals were taking on creation care, and maybe you can talk to us a little bit about, you know, trying to frame it and creation care. I think that that also was one of the reasons why, um, more powerful leadership came back and kicked, kicked it out again. Yeah.

Anthea Butler (24:22):

And so, in other words, you're asking me, let me just rephrase. So I, so I understand where you are. Um, you're asking about creation care and whenever Joel started to talk about that, why did the average uncle's pushback against it?

Butlerfilms (24:33):

Yeah. Is that also rooted in the, the, the, the systemic racism that you were just talking about?

Anthea Butler (24:40):

Yes. I think that when evangelicalism began to talk about creation care and care for the earth, I think there's two actually reasons why that happens. One is, is a, is a racial reason. Again, that would mean that they would have to begin to care for people who were forced to work in environments that were not suitable. So whether we have people working in chemical plants, people working in coal plants, people living in different kinds of scenarios, creation care meant the whole of creation. Right. And so you had to begin to think about those who lived in substandard conditions, who might be exposed to pollution, who may be exposed to things, and especially children who were going to school in places that were nearby waste dumps or chemical plants or things like that. That's number one. I think the second reason why creation care was pushed back upon is a sense in which that evangelicalism did not want to sound too Catholic.

Anthea Butler (25:36):

And in other words, what one of this is it's about theology. If you say creation care, the Catholic church has a very strong, um, place about, um, how you should see the earth, or, and this goes back to Vatican, to humanity. Vitay how people should be living. All of these things are really important in Catholic theology and how you care for the earth, but have Angelicals don't want to be Catholics. And so one way to make that delineation between themselves and others is to say that they didn't, they don't care about that because God's going to renew the earth creation care. It's something that is sort of a weird to them in a way. It's like, why are we taking care of this? Because we know God created everything. God can take it away. God can put it back again.

Butlerfilms (26:24):

And in that argument, where does the skepticism about science fit within, you know, how is that used in, in, you know, as a, not yet another barrier

Anthea Butler (26:37):

And skepticism about, um, how, how did you put it again? Let me make sure that the environment

Butlerfilms (26:44):

Or all environmentalism, sorry. I think that when we talked earlier, it's sort of important to talk about science in, in, within the context of evangelical religion period as rock, and then how it relates to

Anthea Butler (27:02):

Remember how I worded it. Cause I remember, okay. All right. I think the issue of science becomes very, very important to think about and evangelicalism, because we want to go back, we can also take about things like, um, you know, the, um, the moment of teaching evolution in schools, you know, the scopes trial, this is a very important moment about what ever Angelicals have to be confronted with. But if we really want to go back even further, you could go back to the 19th century and began to talk about how Darwin's theory of evolution really confronted evangelicals, because this is the first time that people had to think about their biblical beliefs being challenged, uh, uh, earth that was created in seven days is what scripture says, right? It says it in the book of Genesis. There's two narratives about creation for evangelicals who believe in the infallibility and the inerrancy of the Bible.

Anthea Butler (27:54):

That means the Bible is never wrong. And it's right about everything in terms of life and how you live. This becomes a problem because evolution makes us have to think about there's millions and millions of years, you know, dinosaurs weren't created on the third day or whatever day you want to pick that you think that they were created. It confronts this notion against scripture, which is the number one thing that evangelicalism look for in terms of thinking about how they believe what they do, how they live their lives. So when we come to the scopes trial, this becomes a problem, obviously because of the way that the trial goes and that if we're talking about people being created by, you know, rising up from, you know, apes, that doesn't make any sense, this is evolution. Again, they don't like that. Bring this forward to the seventies and eighties.

Anthea Butler (28:44):

This is a real problem for evangelicalism because you start to see about things that they don't want to have taught in schools. So it's not just about, you know, um, the environment it's about, can we teach sexuality in schools? Can we, um, have kids cut up frogs in school? Can we have them do all these kinds of things and all that goes under science? If you just want to think about the scientific way and which reproduction happens, evangelicalism want people to learn about that? Because basically they think that that is, you know, promoting, um, premarital sex, which would be unknown. Okay. So the morality gets mixed with the science. And I think that's something that people really need to pay attention to when you're thinking about why evangelicals anti-science it's part of it has to do with scripture. Part of it has to do with how evangelicals see their morality being based in scripture.

Anthea Butler (29:37):

Part of it has to do with how evangelicals think about the world is being created or how they have, you know, alternative ways of thinking about this. So when we talk about Evan gel, Coles, they may say, we want to talk about intelligent design. So that's a way in which to say, man, I'm able to take a little bit of the science, but it's really intelligently designed by God. And it's not about evolution and all of those things. So when you put that together and you start to see what Aboriginal worldview is, that worldview really says that every Angelicals see God as being the center of all creation, everything that's going on, it's not about what, what evolution did. It's not about some scientific notion. And so when we bring ourselves up to the present and we start to think about, um, viruses and what we've been dealing with with, um, COVID-19 and other issues, it becomes very difficult for evangelicalism to think that they should pay attention to any of the science, because God's going to take care of them. Their theology says that God takes care of those who believe, and if God is going to take care of me, God can help me get through.

Butlerfilms (30:48):

Okay. So, and I, and I get that, but it's another area that we did talk about was like, it's very hard for the majority of us to think, how can you actually think that? Like, how can I can understand it if you're like 80? And you might think that because, you know, you're an evangelist when you're 80 and you think that, so how is it that so many, um, even if juggle still thinks that way,

Anthea Butler (31:12):

Why they think that way is the kind of schooling that they got, whether that was in a Christian school or homeschooling homeschooling materials that were designed in the sixties and seventies, you know, um, really focused in, on the kinds of creation by God. So if you think about, uh, the movie that came out a few years ago, Jesus camp, one of the scenes, and there was a young man watching about, you know,

dinosaurs and Jesus talking about them and how that they came into the world. And all of this, there's a whole set of educational materials that are not the educational materials that you would normally see that are disseminated for Christians, that kids are reading. So whether that's veggie tales or any of those other kinds of cultural things, there's an easy way to teach people another kind of story. That's not the story that what most kids would get and, you know, in a public, uh, public or private school, but what you get in a Christian school and that kind of teaching that issue, science is really important to why evangelicals don't grow up, believing in science or thinking that science is any good.

Butlerfilms (32:20):

Sorry, I'm slowing my unmute button. Okay. So tell me and you, and you've touched on this, but I just want to, I want to hit it with this question again, to see what you have to say. Um, how has, how has environmental racism that carried out overtly and covertly in the, in the, in the last decades, those were your words. And they intrigued me the words over, it's an overt problem, and it's a covert problem. And I really love it. You would explain what you meant by that.

Anthea Butler (32:55):

Well, I think, um, environmental racism is overt problem because the ways in which, again, how there've been red lining, how, you know, companies have used, um, African Americans and others to work in unsafe conditions and paid them low wages and not taking care of them. And we think about this usually as being chemical plants, but we could put this in terms of working in poultry processing plants, other kinds of environments that are unhealthy. We can also think about this in terms of prisons. I'm thinking about a place like Angola, which is, you know, nearby chemical plants and things like this, and then not, and standard conditions, uh, substandard conditions in terms of environment. We could think about that in terms of prison life. We can think about this in, in other ways too, there's covert, uh, kinds of environmental racism. And so I think of this as being one big, very big issue, which was with hurricane Katrina, that happened in 2005.

Anthea Butler (33:53):

And one of the I'd say that was covert was that you had a levy that was built in new Orleans, but that levy had not been repaired. It had not been taken care of. And when the levy was breached during the storm, you flooded out and, you know, uh, a huge African American community in the ninth ward of people who had generational homes there, who would not have been able to afford homes anywhere else in new Orleans. But they lived up against the levy, which they trusted that the Corps of engineers was going to continue to repair and do the work which had not been done. And the reason why it probably had not been done is because it abutted the ninth war. This is what I call the covert racism or covert racism is not watching out for, you know, air quality control and neighborhoods that are nearby these kinds of chemical plants and other things. There's just a looking away because they're not in spaces where white people live essentially. And so those are the kinds of ways in which we see both over, um, environmental racism and covert environmental racism.

Butlerfilms (35:01):

And what does environmental justice mean? It's a term that's used a lot right now.

Anthea Butler (35:05):

I think environmental justice means to me, that people have the kinds of living conditions that everybody else has. In other words, you get to have clean air, you get to have clean water. One thing

that comes up to me is when I think about environmental justice is a place like Flint, Michigan, which needs environmental justice, because they have had something in Jew, very unjust happened to them in terms of the water filtration system. And now people have been using bottled water to Bay then to cook in and now have poisoning for years because of what a gov, the governor of Michigan did previously in order to take away their fresh and clean water. That's what I'm talking about when it needs to be environmental justice, environmental justice is also making sure that there's equity for people who are working in these dangerous kinds of conditions more often than not.

Anthea Butler (35:52):

They are underpaid. That is a justice issue. It also is a justice issue to think about where people are living and if they are going to be affected by climate change. So in other words, if you're living on coastal places in Texas, Louisiana, Florida, other places, how are people going to be provided, um, money in which to move and not everyone who lives on the beach is rich. Now, everybody who works in these places are rich. And when these, this kind of livelihood is taken away because of environmental issues, how do we plan to be able to make people whole and to bring them forward so that they're able to have a living wage in this country? I think those are the ways in which I think it's really important for us to recognize environmental racism and also to recognize there are many justice issues involved in order to make people,

Butlerfilms (36:44):

Do you see a shift among young evangelicals? Um, in terms of this issue around environmentalism, do you see the grip, the firm grip of the moral majority starting to loosen and, and, and are we moving into another era?

Anthea Butler (37:01):

I think young evangelicals are beginning to change because they realize that climate change is real. Unlike their parents, they can see the changes that have happened in their lifetimes. They can see the kinds of things that are occurring with more storms, wildfires, and other issues in the nation. And I believe that they are more attuned to thinking about the environment than their parents were. On the other hand, I do think there's a contingent of young evangelicals who continue to believe as their parents did. They continue to espouse Republican values. And I say this because the marriage of evangelicalism and Republican party is a very close marriage. There's probably not a lot of daylight left within them. And so when young Angelicals have to think about capitalism and having a job and all of that, they may be less. Um, how do I say less inclined to think about environmental racism or to think about climate change, because they are concerned with how they will make a living wage

Butlerfilms (38:08):

And where do you, um, if you're black or you're Latino, and you're a conservative, because we always want to assume that, you know, that that they're, they wouldn't be conservative. Where did they fit into this? Where do they fit in conversation?

Anthea Butler (38:23):

I think that blacks and Latinos who are conservative, some of them do espouse, conservative beliefs all the way down. So in other words, some of them would, uh, espouse what their white counterparts. They would not really care about the environment. They would see it also in the same way that God's going to take care of this, and it would be fine. However, I would make a difference and I've seen people and

sojourners magazine and others try to make a difference between evangelicals of color and white evangelicals. I think that may be true to some extent, but I do think those evangelicalism color who care about the environment who care about environmental justice issues, they more often than not tend to end up leaving evangelicalism, or they are in churches that are predominantly black or Latino that have social justice as part of their focus. And I think that they find themselves uncomfortable and predominantly white evangelical.

Butlerfilms (39:26):

And, and, and I'm going to wrap this up. It's like one of my last questions. So is, is how important do you think, um, religion is to these conversations? How important has religion been in terms of shaping our, our current world view? I have to keep it to climate change because that's what this piece is, but, you know, lots of times people think, you know, corporate, corporate money, big, big, big oil politics, but I don't know if it's always, really understood completely how much of a role religion has played in the past. And do you think it will continue to play in the future?

Anthea Butler (40:06):

I'm going to ask you for clarification of this questions before I answer it. Am I answering this only about evangelicalism? Or can I answer it a little more broader sense?

Butlerfilms (40:16):

I'll say religion. I mean, you can and should answer it in a broader sense. And then the part B of that would be specifically the influence of you can tell calls, but it's gotta be a broader sense. It is a broad,

Anthea Butler (40:29):

Yeah, yeah. I can answer this. I think, um, in, in a way religion plays a very important part in us talking about climate change. And, and I say this because the reason why is, is that climate change is starting to affect big religious festivals. Whether we talk about the Kuumba Meli and, and hint and Hinduism and India, and how that's changed about how people can take baths in the river. I can think about several rivers in India that are sacred rivers that have been just struck with pollution, or they also have a overflow of their banks because of climate change. Right? So these, these are very big problems. We can't just leave religion out of it. Probably the person who has been, I would say from a religious perspective, most important about talking about climate change lately has been Pope Francis with his encyclical on this.

Anthea Butler (41:17):

And he's talked about the environment and climate change. That is a very important moment because he's been able to capture the media and social media, all of these things where people talk about his role in talking about things that are happening with change. Uh, I would say in a sense you could think about somebody up all these speakers who have been out here, like Gretta, who have been very much involved in climate change. She might not be an overtly religious person, but she is a figure who is, I would say, a witness for what is happening with, uh, I'm going to go back and really just resay this real quick, cause I want to get her name. Right. Okay. I think about somebody like Gretta Thornburg, who is very much a, not a religious person per se, but it's almost like a religious Crusader for climate change. And thinking about the ways in which climate change is affecting the world. And so I think it's really important for us to not think about climate change as just something that scientists think about or that, um, you know, politicians try to get rid of, but that how religious people and religions in particular and

religious practices are being affected by climate change. And what does that say about how people are having to reevaluate and redo what they're thinking about in terms of their religious faith?

Butlerfilms (42:42):

That's great. Now, you know, you're a professor when you, like, when you talk with your students, do you, um, are you hopeful? Are you hopeful that there'll be a shift here?

Anthea Butler (42:55):

You know, I'm hopeful because I find that my students are knowledgeable about climate change and that they care about it. Um, I will say that I think one of the things that I find very interesting about climate change conversations is that I've had a lot more of them in Europe than I have had in America. And I find that Americans, um, who are not tuned into what's happening in the rest of the world, tend to not talk about climate change very much. But whenever I go to Europe and even Africa, I find people want to talk about climate change because it is directly affecting their lives. It is directly affecting the way that they do their work is directly affecting the kinds of things that they eat, the prices of the food that they get. And I think that because we've had so much of a bounty recently in America, that people just don't think about climate change in the same way, but when it begins to impinge upon their everyday lives, when it begins to make the raspberries go up in price, or they're not going to be able to get their favorite fruit from a part of the world anymore, because it doesn't, they can't grow it anymore.

Anthea Butler (44:02):

Then I think Americans will start to pay attention to climate change a little bit more closely, but it may be too late.

Butlerfilms (44:09):

I hope. No, no. My favorite movie is to watch all the time, but the day after tomorrow, it tells me a lot about you. Yeah.

Anthea Butler (44:23):

Because I'm just like, I'm like, I mean, every time I see that movie, I'm just like, Oh my God, this is what's going to happen. We're gonna all be running them back to code. They're gonna not let us. And I mean, cause we've been so horrible and everything is going to freeze over on the East coast. I mean, it's, it's, it's, it's, it's a, it's a contrived thing. Right. But it does. It does make, you have to think about, you know, stuff is happening. I lived in California for a long time. There's nothing but fires. It's horrible.

Butlerfilms (44:51):

What are you worried about Anthea? Isn't the rapture going to come and save a song?

Anthea Butler (44:54):

There's no rapture clearly because we're still all here. Write down, look what we're living through. I mean, it, I mean, it, this was not proof where we are right now that there is no rapture. I don't know what is,

Butlerfilms (45:07):

Oh my God. I gotta use that. Can I use that?

Anthea Butler (45:09):

Yes, he can. I mean, it's complete proof. There's no rapture because there was a rapture. We would all be gone by now, the virus, everything else that's going on right now. I mean, you would think that if you're a good person, you could go away, but now, so it's, it's, it's a crock and it was also created in the 19th century, so it doesn't matter.

Butlerfilms (45:31):

That's great. Okay. So the one question I didn't get to, and I don't even know about you use Billy Graham or not, but I did want to ask, um, and I think the way you wanted to frame Billy Graham was more about where, who was funding him, his alliances. Yeah,

Anthea Butler (45:49):

Yeah, yeah. Um, w so we want to talk, so let me just kinda, I'm just going to say a little narrative about this, and then I think that'll be important. Um, one of the things about, uh, the evangelical figure of Billy Graham that is ubiquitous for evangelicalism is that Billy Graham had a lot of funding from outside sources. He not just regular people, but people who also helped him promote, um, Christianity today, other magazines, his whole crusades, his connection to power made him a very potent political figure of evangelicalism. I mean, if you really think about it before the moral majority, before all of this happens before this history, there's Billy Graham, who is the friend of presidents and businessmen alike. And if we think about books like Kevin Cruise's book about, um, and, and, uh, one nation under God, he sets out a very interesting way in terms of looking at Billy Graham and Billy Graham's relationship to business.

Anthea Butler (46:44):

And I think we need to go back and begin to look at the ways in which evangelicalism embedded themselves and capitalism. And that capitalism has been pretty much in a sense because of it's the end, the parents have to make money and, you know, making money was just being like next to God. If we think about the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism and all those things, which have been debated, if we begin to look at it like that, then we get a very clear picture, a much more clear picture about the ways in which evangelicalism has always been embedded in systems of power. First of all, and secondarily embedded in systems of power, which allowed them to use their theological beliefs, like believing that the earth was going to just be recreated in terms of, uh, ideas about capitalism that hurt where we think about things with climate change. So in the fifties and sixties, when oil was on the rise and all of these other kinds of issues and, and not wanting to have clean air and all these other things, Evan's locals are involved in that. And they're involved in helping keep those structures intact. That allowed for the kinds of things that we're dealing with now, with the environment and with the climate.

Butlerfilms (47:58):

Okay. That's wonderful. And fad, thank you. We are almost done. What is the difference in white nationalism? Excuse me, what's the difference between Christian nationalism and white nationalism?

Anthea Butler (48:14):

So when we talk about Christian nationalism, we're talking about a nationalism that is basically based on two things. God is, um, has his hand on America and America is God's chosen country. And that is what this is about. Lock stock and barrel. Sometimes when we think about Christian nationalism, when we say

that, and that God is involved in this country, and God has favored America, that also can be linked with the nation of Israel, that Israel is a partner in this, and it is America's responsibility to guard and protect. Israel is part of this Christian nationalism. Okay. When we talk about white nationalism, white nationalism is a belief that white people are the ones who are empowered and that there needs to be a nation that is run by white people. So when we talk about white nationalists, what white nationalists want is they want their own state.

Anthea Butler (49:04):

They want to be some of them at least want to be separate. Some of them want everybody to have their own space. They, they kind of believe in, in some things like people used to talk about in the late 19th century that certain lands were made for certain people, Africa was for the Africans. You know, Europe was for the Europeans. America was for, you know, all the white people who came over and took things from America, right? So when we talk about white nationalism, that's a little bit different than putting, puts white people at the center of it. Christian nationalism puts God and America at the center of it.

Butlerfilms (49:39):

Thank you. And, and with our current, the current administration and, and the, um, religious leaders that are surrounding Trump, um, people, and this has to do with, I mean, his environment, his stance on the environment, I think is pretty obvious as, as who he is in a business, man, he was always going to roll back regulations. But I think a lot of people ask, at least within the evangelical, you know, in terms of the evangelicals, how could, how could they support a person like Trump? Like how could, why, like, and I know you probably get that question, but

Anthea Butler (50:17):

Yeah. Yeah. I'm going to answer the question very simply for you. People evangelical support Trump for two reasons. One, he's a strong man. Who's getting the things that they to have done. And second for white evangelicals, they like his racism. Their race is racism appeals to their ideas about Christian nationalism and the ideas that they have about whiteness period. And so he, somebody who is Betty clear time and time again, he is for white people and everybody else can come along as long as they understand that why people are in power and they're the ones who are in authority over them.

Butlerfilms (50:55):

They're not going to win though. Right?

Anthea Butler (50:57):

I don't know what to tell you. I think he's going to steal it. I don't think he can win it. I think he might steal it.

Butlerfilms (51:04):

I might, but I hope not. I hope not either I'll remain optimistic. So unless there's something you want to go ahead, how much influence do you think religious leaders of color will have moving forward? At least in the issue around climate change and climate action and what we do for people in the class to said, well, we've never been asked as the table.

Anthea Butler (51:30):

Well, I think somebody like a Reverend William Barber would be someone who comes to mind for me, that would be a great climate change activist and a religious person, because he has talked about all these issues and how they've been intertwined. There are other people who are involved and, and local level, I would think in, in churches, you know, for talk about Freddy Haynes in Dallas, or we're talking about Otis Moss, you know, and other kinds of religious leaders in their local communities. Yes. I think that they could really become involved, but the question is going to be, will they feel as though this is a big issue that they can deal with alongside of all the other issues that we'll have to deal with post COVID-19.

Richard Cizik Interview

Butlerfilms (00:00:00):
We're recording. All right. Okay. So this is, this is the easiest question of all. Tell me your full name and how you would like to appear on our documentary. Like what your title would you like your title to be?

Richard Cizik (00:00:18):
Gotcha. My name is Richard Cizik and I'm the president of an organization called the new evangelical partnership with the common good nep.org or new evangelical partnership.org. Uh, you know, you always get that in for the screen purposes. It's president new evangelical partnership. You can leave off for the common good, but it's up to you.

Butlerfilms (00:00:40):
Okay. We'll put it on. So, and now just for a fun introduction of yourself, we're doing this where we're asking people to just say, I'm Richard and I am a blank. Like, um, we spoke with Bob Inglis and I think he ended up saying I'm like a albino unicorn environmental.

Richard Cizik (00:01:01):
Yeah.

Butlerfilms (00:01:03):
You could tackle that now. Or we can with the conversation,

Richard Cizik (00:01:07):
I'm an evangelical pastor minister clergyman, and I'm also a climate activist. I happen to be a electric car owner and an aficionados of everything that's renewable. And so that's who I am.

Butlerfilms (00:01:21):
That's wonderful. So, so Richard, you know, lots of people know your story and you've given this interview a lot, but for the purposes of our audience. So for some of it will be new to that. Um, so tell me a little bit about who you were in your former life, the name of Joel pastor with a big mega.

Richard Cizik (00:01:41):
Not exactly, not exactly. I'll clarify. I came to work for the national association of evangelicals. It started with a religious rights rise in American politics who was 1980. Ronald Reagan was president and I was the newcomer to the office in Washington, D C the office for governmental affairs. And so I Rose up as a legislative researcher first to become the policy director. And then eventually the director of the office for governmental affairs, for an organization, the broadest and largest of its kind representing 54 denominations called the national association of evangelicals. And I worked there for a total of 28 years, the last 10 as vice president for governmental affairs. And so I saw the shift from evangelicalism fundamentalists being not involved in politics, non engaged, to being hyper engaged, and then where we are today, which is a well it's the age of Donald Trump, uh, whether we like that or not.

Butlerfilms (00:02:42):
So, so don't, don't spare the details. Give me a little bit of a timeline of like, how did that shift specifically occur when were sort of the most pivotal moment that shift, um, and, and where you

personally, um, where, where did you fit into those moments? What are some of the relationships you have anecdotes? You know, I mean, we were all about sort of context in history. So, you know, you can even think about it as a timeline. If you want.

Richard Cizik (00:03:15):
In the 1980s, I was a typical religious right activist. I was a newcomer largely to Washington, but I accepted the right. I was a conservative, the organization was a conservative organization. And so it was natural. Now background, I had grown up on a farm was a naturalist. In that sense, I was the embodiment of everything that the American dream on the farm means. Somebody who gets his fingernails dirty, learns how to drive a tractor at age 10 and drives a wheat truck at 12. And, uh, has everything from barnyard animals to cherry orchard, a hundred acre farm on the West coast of the United States. So I grew up knowing a lot about nature back to the matter is though that when I accepted this position after seminary, for years in seminary to go to work for the association, something changed. I realized as I was at the bottom of the totem pole, of course, but what happened was that the worldview that I had grown up with became more and more constraint it narrowed and narrowed down to a few short, a litmus test issues, frankly, that the organization held namely abortion anti-gay rights, et cetera, some foreign policy issues, of course, antique anti-communism in the light, but that worldview, which I had held previously by virtue of the environment that I came into, the evangelical world closed to become more narrow in narrower.

Richard Cizik (00:04:51):
And so it was only when I was invited by sir, John Holton, one of the cofounders of the intergovernmental panel on climate change in Britain to come to a climate change conference in 2002, that I began to think about this issue. Now, previously in the nineties, I made fun of Al Gore and anyone who is environmental. It was acceptable to do this in circles of the right. And yet, uh, I was a little uncomfortable with that view. And so a gradual shift occurred to where, when I was invited to the climate change conference at Oxford, I accepted, but I said, don't expect me to change my mind. Don't expect me to sign any statements. I'm just going to learn. I went there and I heard the arguments for against all the arguments that had been made. Some of them I had heard, but the point is I had a conversion.

Richard Cizik (00:05:53):
There's no other way to describe it. Now I know that occurs in a process. We come to a place where we have to make a decision and I felt the movement literally of God in my life that provoked a change in my heart. So it wasn't any more, uh, just a concern about climate change and its impact. It, it was a change of my heart toward that change, which is Kering in the world and to love the earth, the planet in a new way. So I call it a conversion because I think everybody who is an avid delicacy Christian, or for that matter, a citizen of the United States where the planet needs to have that kind of an encounter with the reality of climate change. And so since that time I've had my trials and tribulations communicating climate change to a conservative Republican constituency in America. And I've had, uh, some crisis points and I'm today doing what I'm doing as I was, uh, back in 2002, when I first had that conversion, it's now 2020, and I'm still doing this, communicating this message that if we don't love the earth, that God loves, then we will experience a judgment. And I believe that.

Butlerfilms (00:07:14):

So would you first start it in this though? You have some allies, you know, as I understand it from the research, there were quite a few people that felt this way in the Christian community and the,

Richard Cizik (00:07:26):
Yeah, it wasn't, I wasn't the first those, there were people like,

Butlerfilms (00:07:30):
Y you know, if you're, if you're going to do a subtitle and it it's like, why do evangelicals sort of know death? They're green babies? Like why, what, what happened in politics? What happened in, um, with the rise of the Christian, right? And maybe you could even define the difference between Christian right and evangelical, you know, or what you already have you been to almost what happened? Why turn, why demonized issues, um, around the environment.

Richard Cizik (00:08:08):
That's a good question. Why have evangelicals some many millions today still demonizing environmentalist and care for the earth? Well, I reduce it to three or four points first, uh, that, uh, they have a Republican point of view. It's a partisan point of view. Angelicals do, uh, secondly, they have a view of economics. That's a free market economics, let the market do it. It will, it will work well if we just hold our hands off. And thirdly, uh, an anti-science view, we hear that from Christian evangelists, even today that, well, we don't need to listen to scientists on climate. We don't even need to listen to climate, uh, uh, scientists who are also epidemiologists, who say that climate will impact the spread of diseases, viruses like COVID. And so there is this sense by many, a suspicion of scientists, a suspicion of, uh, mainstream scientists, there is a political point of view that's conservative. And you meld that with a biblical fundamentalism that is a bit rigid and you have together a noxious brew that builds a conflict between what are these views, which I happen to believe are biblical views about care for the earth. And we're in the place where most evangelicals are at. And there's a divide there, there still is. After all these years, you see it, you feel it, you know, it happens every election cycle and yet things are changing significantly. And I'm just happy to be part of that change

Butlerfilms (00:09:51):
Who were some of the key players in sort of, you know, creating that noxious brew, you know, the, the propaganda machines, wherever they're getting their money company, what politicians were, I mean, you tell me like this, we reached it, but you were in the thick of it were politicians, you know, coordinating the evangelical pastors.

Richard Cizik (00:10:19):

Oh, of course. So when dr. James Dobson focus on the family, mostly a family psychologist, uh, visited Washington, D C he would visit, uh, James Inhofe, Senator Inhofe, still from Oklahoma to get his input on these issues of climate change. And it was centered in Hoff who dismissively threw a snowball in a climate hearing on Capitol Hill one day suggesting. Yeah. What about climate change? Well, nothing from his point of view really occurring. And yet we know that it is. And so there was a merger, frankly, I knew, I know some who are still living. I knew some who are now gone like dr. Jerry Falwell, who founded the moral majority. Many of those who were original founders were very friendly to the national association of evangelicals. And we were an ally, a faithful ally as described by others of the religious right on variety issues from foreign policy.

Richard Cizik (00:11:19):
One of my very first accomplishments was, uh, drafting a speech for a Ronald Reagan that became the famous evil empire speech. I had a part of that, just a part, but it was, it was an important role in suggesting that this is an argument that we ought to care, look at challenges that the planet faces in this case, the challenge of communism and bring a moral perspective to it. That was what I did on that issue. And so I began to then think, well, if these moral considerations apply to foreign policy, that he surely must apply to the environment, but my cohorts said, Richard, just cool. It don't talk about it. In fact, when I left the Oxford conference on climate change, I went to the gardens of blending palace. And sir, John Holton, who just recently passed, said to me, Richard, if you've had a change of your heart and you need to talk about this.

Richard Cizik (00:12:21):

And I said, sir, John, if I do that, I'll lose my job. Well, I'm not a prophet or anything like it, but yeah, I did eight years later for speaking on these issues because it was just too much for many in the evangelical world to handle. It's not so much so today. Uh, but there are still penalties. If you speak out truly and the religious right figures that existed, then all summer gone like Jerry Falwell, but others remain. I mean, dr. James Dobson, I'm sure doesn't approve of my climate advocacy. He said I was anti American and anti-free enterprise and wanted to make climate, the sole issue that evangelicalism care about. And none of which was true nor is true today. But I do believe that we have to look at the Bible and come up with what is biblical teaching, that he created it and we are our creatures. And if we're to be faithful to him, we have to care for this. So I say, yes, we need to see more clearly behold the world differently. We need to care more deeply about it, to love what God created. And lastly, we need to be more bold, act, more boldly. And so those are my threefold suggestions to evangelicalism. See more clearly care, more deeply and act more boldly.

Butlerfilms (00:13:47):
Are you seeing some changes among younger age most? Um, talk to me a little bit about the work of someone like Kyle and, and why is the time? Right, right now for that to happen,

Richard Cizik (00:13:58):
We are seeing huge shifts, especially among the demographics of the evangelical world. A lot of those religious right leaders that took exception to my advocacy are gone. They've simply gone to meet their creator. And yet there is a whole new generation of a young evangelicalism for climate action. They're speaking effectively, I think, to the challenge going forward. And we see that the percentages of those evangelicals who believe that climate change is occurring is rising as is the percentage of those who believe that we are causing it. And we have to do something about it. And on all three levels, there are huge shifts that are occurring and demographics will eventually change the evangelical world on this issue, if nothing else, because people get it.

Butlerfilms (00:14:55):
Do they risk being ostracized from their communities?

Richard Cizik (00:14:58):
No, probably not because many of their fellow, uh, millennials or generation X or Z, whatever, they've looked at the evidence around them and decided that this is a current and we're doing it. And so there

isn't the ostracism, but they may get it from their parents or their family, but that makes them the best, uh, candidates for persuading others. And I love them all dearly if I don't know your name and you're doing it, let me say to you, uh, out there, Hey, I love you for what you're doing and what it means for the planet. We're really in a crisis we're told by scientists that the warming of the earth is the equivalent of four Hiroshima bombs going off every second. And for those of us who come at this from the Christian worldview crisis in the Greek means judgment. And this judgment, isn't a peevish God casting down admonishments on us.

Richard Cizik (00:16:06):
Know what, what it really means is that judgment means is a moment of truth in which we reap what we have sown in a divinely ordered world, and that is occurring. And yet, can we idly stand by and not do something about this? No, we must. We must act. And I happen to think that, and this is why the younger evangelicals are so good for the advocacy movement, because yes, they're concerned, but what really influences other people is what's in your heart and how you communicate that heart shift to other people. And when they see your love for creation, call it the creation love for environmentalism, call it sustainability, call it, creation, care, whatever word you choose. When others see our actions, what we really do with our lives to change the planet for a more sustainable world, then they're impressed.

Butlerfilms (00:17:12):
It's still, there's powerful forces out there that are trying to shift the conversation still. Um, who, so my question to you is how, how has the Bible that can be used as sort of a weapon in the climate skepticism or even just climate denier debate, you know, and it brings me to Inhofe in his, whatever, when he said sort of famously that, you know, is man's arrogance to think that he can fix, you know, fix

Richard Cizik (00:17:45):
Yeah. You can cherry pick. Yeah, that's right. And those who aren't all together, a trained, if you will, in the interpretation of scripture, will cherry pick a minor verse and exploited for their own political viewpoint? There's an expression I learned in seminary. It goes like this. A verse out of context is a pretext and that's what's occurring here. People using certain passages as a pretext. I remember for example, when Senator Inhofe, uh, asked me to come to a hearing to testify when he was chairman of the environment and public works committee. And I said, I think I'll take a pass. Uh, but anyway, I'd taken so much abuse at that point that I decided, well, I can pass on this one. Well, and not to be out done. He brought on a poster board, a picture of me and used that as his little, you know, uh, effort to humiliate me, supposedly it was from vanity fair magazine.

Richard Cizik (00:18:46):
And, you know, I was walking on water or whatever, but the point is, yeah, people will try to humiliate you, uh, activists, you see that all the time. Um, when I happen to think this kind of activism is in the best sense of scriptural teaching, why here's, why? Because see, in order to get people to consider change, they have to be uncomfortable. There has to be a tension between what they're doing, the way they're behaving, the way they're living and the earth as it exists. And if there is that tension and they begin to feel that tension and millions upon millions, they're doing that right now. All they have to do is look out their kitchen window. Like I got it right here and say, the world is changing, it's warming. And when you feel that tension between the way the world is and the way it ought to be, that's when you're open to shifting and evangelical Christians who are known for, you know, banging their Bibles or

whatever are much more effective when they simply, uh, challenge people as yes, a kind of profit in our society to what God says is true.

Richard Cizik (00:20:03):
And his word is true and what we're doing to this planet, and that's called sin. There's no escaping that. And there will be judgment, which I said before, it means reaping what we sell. And so the apostle John in his revelation, the last book of the Bible in verse 11, chapter 11, verse 18, he says as, uh, the, he says that death will come to those who harm this earth. Wow. That is really a prophetic judgement from his vision of the earth. So that's what we're about here. Um, it's very serious. We can't just minimize it and act as if it doesn't exist.

Butlerfilms (00:20:58):
I agree with you. Um, I lost your voice

Richard Cizik (00:21:03):
By the way, by the way I lost it. I'm looking at, uh, at something. Okay. Yeah.

Butlerfilms (00:21:09):
Um, okay. So, so now these truths for you, you've been living them for a long time, but I want to go back a little bit again to, um, just a little bit of your history. Um, tell me again about your, who you were, the position you had and that conversion moment again. And just talk to me a little bit about how things started to unravel, um, with a little more detail, if you would, um, you can cite the, they didn't tell us about vanity fair article. Tell us about the Terry Grossman of view, you know? Yeah.

Richard Cizik (00:21:47):
It began down there. Yeah. Yeah.

Butlerfilms (00:21:52):
And sometimes these histories are easy to talk about, but again, it's like a new generation of people that don't really know them. Know this story.

Richard Cizik (00:22:00):
Rich, rich cizik was this young man who came to work for the national association of evangelicals out of seminary and who was a faithful member of the tribe, the conservative right tribe who had a good theological education, also had a BA and ma degree from George Washington university in political science. And so I earned my spurs for many years as a conservative of a faithful conservative. And yet when I shifted my change and began to talk about other issues, that's when the pushback came and the worst of it was directed, uh, after a Terry Gross interview on fresh air, which many of you know is on NPR. And Terry Gross asked me, well, Richard, you've been talking a lot about these issues, climate change and the like, and so I'd like to ask you, uh, tell me, tell me about that and tell me who you voted for.

Richard Cizik (00:23:03):
Well, so I said, well, I confess that yes, I voted for Barack Obama in the Virginia primary. I was trying to massage it just a little bit so that I could say with truthful honesty that look, I can re represent

evangelicals in Washington who were, uh, both political parties, but that in itself was heresy in the evangelical world. And then I went so far as to say about these younger evangelicals who believe in equality, sex equality, LGBT rights. I said, yes, I could, I could go there. And I made a constitutional argument briefly that you can't deny people their rights based upon the constitutional equal protection and due process clauses. But this was too much too. So if you take my shift on something so fundamental as the creation and our responsibility to it, a shift from being a stalwart Republican who voted for every Republican year in year out to then someone who admitted openly in my position that I voted for Barack Obama, because I happened to agree with his positions. Well, that was more than my colleagues could handle. And I was, I went to the, um, conference, which I had been invited to with Jimmy Carter and some others, uh, part of global zero, which is to reduce, uh, nuclear weapons, even eliminate nuclear weapons. And I was in Paris and well, I came back, uh, as a result of this and was told, uh, you know, meet me in Minnesota, Richard and I went to Minnesota and I was told that, uh, I had to resign.

Richard Cizik (00:25:01):
It was, it was a very, very painful, the job I had held more or less for 28 years was just suddenly ended. I was told to clean out my office before Christmas. This was just before Christmas. And, and so that's what can happen if you speak out on these issues even today to some. And so It is really as described by a friend of mine it's going from denying or having no interest to deliberating, then a design to change, and then actually changing that's doing it and then defending it it's. So it's the movement in my own life. I call them the five DS. I won't, that's denied. I might, that's deliberate. I will, that's designed. I'm going to do it. That's doing, and then I've defended it the change. So that's what I'm doing today, defending the change as often as I can.

Butlerfilms (00:26:18):
Very hard, very hard. The,

Richard Cizik (00:26:22):
Well you, when you go to church, not just in, you know, 10 years ago, but this year, and you meet a man outside the foyer, in the foyer of the church afterwards, and you're greeting people and saying, how are you? And a man comes up to me and says, you're a newcomer. How are you? And I said, I'm crate today. And I really enjoyed the service. And he said, well, what do you do? I said, well, actually, I'm an activist on issues of the environment. And he quickly responded saying, Oh, I'm so glad you're there beating up on those liberals because I just can't handle them. And I said, well, sir, I don't want to disillusion you, but I'm probably one of those because I happen to think it's, God's calling to do this. And he walked away and to make matters even more painful. Uh, I was asked by a church father shortly thereafter, not to come back true.

Richard Cizik (00:27:28):
And I can't imagine why I am a diplomat of a certain order in the Christian world. I try to persuade people with love and with evidence. And yet to even say, this was apparently so offensive that I was asked not to return. Well, I didn't take it personally. These things don't strike at the heart as they once did I take it and stride, but that's reality. I had a friend tell me that when she expressed her views, she was at a women's club meeting and a large Southern Baptist church in Texas. And when she in her women's group that she'd been attending for two decades, uh, heard from her that, yeah, I, I voted this way and I care about the environment without a word being said, every one of the other women picked

up their coffee cups or their lunch moved to another table without a single word being said, and then proceeded with their conversation without her.

Richard Cizik (00:28:34):
That's a true story because she was no longer part of the tribe. And that's, what's occurring. It's political tribalism, it's religious tribalism, and you can't defy the tribe without being cast out. And so it takes courage. It takes resolve. It takes a certain personality to be able to do this. And some people are called for it and, and some not. But I happen to think it's ultimately absolutely essential to provide that voice, that tension so that somebody who knows in their heart as I once did that, what I was doing was wrong. It was sinful and I needed to change. And then in a miraculous way, God changed my heart. We came back and sold our recreational vehicle. I bought a Prius. Uh, we began to change our air conditioning and all of our lifestyle, all because we believed that this was something God had called us to do. And everybody is different. There are varying stages in that five fold process, but I do believe that you can make the shift. We must make what is impossible, inevitable,

Butlerfilms (00:29:58):
But it was a lot of the experiences you had in the labeling and the branding that you had. You know, people just didn't come to that by themselves. You know? So talk to me a little bit about the architects of this propaganda, of this sort of vast branding machine that you are a climate activist that you must be like a crazy,

Richard Cizik (00:30:19):
Yeah. You need to understand I've done

Butlerfilms (00:30:21):
Through that. So tell us specifically about that.

Richard Cizik (00:30:26):
I made a trip once to little rock Arkansas, and I was speaking to a congregation in this case, they were a Pisco paleo. And I put up in the webinar, a chart of the organizations that exist in the religious and the political right world and the amount of money that it spent a judge to be spent annually. And they found it abs absolutely unbelievable that a billion dollars could be spent on an annualized basis through one stream or another to defeat that, which they came to discuss climate change. But this is verifiable. I can give you the citations of the amount of money that is spent by big oil and related industries who are adamant about not losing their power. And they sit in the front row when United States senators who are Republicans proclaim their disinterest in climate change, or their opposition to the fact that we're doing this or opposition to a, you know, a green climate world and legislation about that, you know, green world, they don't do this because they don't have a reason they're bought and paid for.

Richard Cizik (00:31:58):
It's true. Politicians are bought and paid for. It is a giant scam on the American people. And fundamentally, this is really true. It is a defiance of everything God has said we should be and do if we are to care for his earth, because he says in revelation, yeah, I will destroy those who destroy the earth. That is what the scripture say, revelation 11, 18. It comes from the apostle John's revelation, but it is God speaking. I will destroy those who destroy the earth. And what does he mean by that? Not that he's

down admonishments for us for the way we've lived, as much as that. And in a moment of truth, we discover that we reap what we sow in this divinely ordered world. Wow. That is, that is compelling. And we are living that today. We're experiencing a virus that isn't unrelated to climate change, and it's just the start of what will be the 21st century. If we don't change the way we live.

Speaker 3 (00:33:14):
Fuck.

Richard Cizik (00:33:17):
Yes. Yeah, yeah, sure. Oh, sure. Yeah. We have to move. Yeah. We have to move from what, uh, is an anthropocentric world view to a cosmos centric, worldview and anthropocentric world puts man anthro inf in the front of this and says, Hey, everything in this planet is about me and we have to move to God. So loved the cosmos the world to a cosmos centric worldview. And that's the shift, the mind shift that has to occur. And it's not easy for people, but it can be done. And it means, like I said, seeing the world differently, caring for it more deeply and acting more boldly, all of those are needed, but it is a fundamental paradigm shift that has to occur in the evangelical world, particularly because they're the ones that are voting for politicians that deny climate. And we have in the white house today, a man who is the ultimate example of climate denialism, and we've lost more than just the Paris climate deal and the, and the rest.

Richard Cizik (00:34:26):
Uh, we've literally given permission to Republican politicians in the, in the Senate and in the house. And frankly right out of the white house to destroy everything we've been given from the parks and recreation that we are blessed with. You see to the smoke stacks of major cities that are now permitted to emit mercury, you know, like never before, you know, the Obama power plan included reductions in mercury from power plants, coal burning power plants. And so what Trump did was he came along and took away those limitations. Okay. So EV Angelicals say they're pro-life and 80% plus have voted for Donald Trump, but they pride themselves being pro-life. And yet one out of eight children in America are born with mental retardation or other disabilities because of mercury poisoning. And yet, how can you vote for a politician? Who's willfully doing this and right in your face.

Richard Cizik (00:35:34):
And it's been subscribed as follows. Uh, president Trump went to a church. You had the day, uh, he used tear gas and smoke and other, you know, attacks, uh, you know, that are used upon protestors in Lafayette park in order to hold up a bot to say, Oh, I I'm I'm God's man or something. And a lot of these same religious leaders who deny climate apply to the president, know what the president in effect was doing was he was saying, I am a crude and a cruel personality, and I'm going to give you crude and cruel behavior gross even behavior. And you will love it. And you know why? Because you are accrued in gross people, that's in effect what the president was saying and doing. And if you don't read that in his actions, and you're not seeing, as I say the world as it really is, because that's what the president was doing. And we, we as have Angelicals for the most part are what could be called a cheap date, you know, spew certain lines, and then just do the opposite.

Butlerfilms (00:37:04):
You are still making people mad, Richard.

Richard Cizik (00:37:10):
No, I don't see you at all. It's low battery.

Butlerfilms (00:37:14):
Okay. Let me, let me plug the phone in. I'm going to go, there you go. You're back.

Richard Cizik (00:37:21):
Oh, there, um, I don't hate anybody. You know, I don't hate anybody. People say, well, you hate Donald Trump. I th I don't hate Donald Trump. I hate his policies. I love my enemies. I try to love mine, even my enemies in every way I can, but I'm not going to accept their destruction of the planet by no means. And I'll call out that, which is sin to be sin. And when angelical leaders, ridicule climate activists, especially the young millennials for what they are believing and doing then that is called none of none, nothing other than gross sin to challenge these young people in that way, because what they're doing is what the Bible says, and they should be applauded for it, not condemned freely. I think so much of them that, uh, I would, uh, you know, give him a big hug if I had them right here in COVID world. Maybe I just do a fist bump, you know,

Butlerfilms (00:38:28):
That's great. Um, well, let, let me, let me go back to a couple of the things that you had talked about. Um, you talked about the politicians and sort of unholy Alliance with the oil companies. They go out fossil fuels, other industry, other polluting industries, um, and wait there, where does the, where does religion come into that? How were, how was the even don't look community or the Christian right. Community sort of, you know, used or even mobilized to, um, get involved in politics to become a voting block that was quite for minimal

Richard Cizik (00:39:22):
Many observers. Think it was not simply the pro-life issue in abortion, which led to evangelicalism engagement. No, there were politicians, some of whom I went to meetings with and knew quite well, like Paul Weirich the late Paul Weirich, who was head of the free Congress foundation and held meetings every other week on Capitol Hill to bring activists together, to support the agenda of the moral majority. He termed it, why Rick did Falwell didn't. He gave it to Jerry Falwell called a religious right moral majority. And so there emerged in the seventies, this movement of evangelicalism into the public square that hadn't been there before. And they were being led by fundamentalists like Jerry Falwell, who were defining the issues. Now, allegedly it was the pro life movement. People think, no, originally it was the opposition by Falwell and others to the integration of schools. Even the national association of evangelicals had a position that, uh, uh, support of the Bob Jones university in the Bob Jones case before the Supreme court and what Bob Jones university was doing was engaging in a policy of non miscegenation.

Richard Cizik (00:40:32):
So you couldn't date, interracial dating and, and the evangelicals were taking the position. Well, uh, if you take away our rights on this issue, won't someday it'd be LGBT rights. And so inspired by the IRS is, uh, restrictions on, on, um, racial segregation. In other words, the government was moving at the, in these years against racial segregation, so that a white flight occurred and evangelicals created Christian schools. And IRS was saying in effect, look, if you're creating these as white flight academies, then don't

expect to have a tax exempt status. And Bob Jones university lost his tax exempt status. And so there emerged, you see an anti-government view among the evangelicals that coincided with the rise of the religious, right, uh, and the creation of Marge shorty, and a Republican politicians like Ronald Reagan to become a huge, almost a billion dollars a year, going into this fight to reduce government, reduce government regulation, allow free enterprise and allow that big business, big oil and gas to do exactly as it pleases and all of this led of course, to the crisis that we have today.

Richard Cizik (00:41:56):
It was years in the coming, but these people knew what they were doing. You know, in the 1920s, there were approximately 50,000 oil Wells in Oklahoma. And so this crisis of the land and oil goes a long way back. I have to tell you one story. I was in Butan and this Buddhist priest said, uh, I noted that you're having tornadoes in Oklahoma and places like that. And I said, yeah, I saw it on CNN just the other day. And he said, well, do you know that the path of the tornado was the same this year as it was five years ago? And I said, no, I didn't know that he says, uh, that's exactly true. And I said, why is that? He says, well, it's not just that, uh, you know, science is under, uh, understanding this, but there are spiritual realities and you destroy the earth and you create, he said, the Buddhist priest, you create, you see an environment that is conducive to other things happening.

Richard Cizik (00:43:00):
And I said, wow, that is not my usual Christian way of understanding, except I do believe that what you reap, you sow, you reap what you have sown. And he was saying all the way back to the 1920s oil Wells. Now we have earthquakes every other day, practically in the same part of the United States. And so they're there arose and merger, a marriage of the religious, right with big oil and big gas. And it exists to this day. And it's personified in the Trump administration personified with all of its destruction of our air and water and the like personified by the Trump administration's destruction. And it is an offense against God. And the Bible is very clear. It's not just a matter of reaping what you sow the scriptures, teach that from revelation, that God will destroy those who destroy the earth. And that is exactly what's happening.

Richard Cizik (00:44:02):
And I see a judgment occurred. You S you see it happening even today. I see it. I look at the opinion, opinion, polls of what's happening. And I say, Hmm, there has to be more going on here than what you think in other words, to live your life, without that spiritual reality, that God is alive. And he is working his will to accomplish his purposes is to deny what is divine order of reality from the Christian point of view. And if God says, I will destroy those who destroy the earth and you destroy it, then what do you think is going to be well? Do you think that there's certain immunity from you because you say you're saved, or because you go to a church, there is no immunity. We reap what we sow and we've sewn destruction, and we're going to reap it in this case. It's not, you know, just a hurricane or a tornado or rising seas, uh, or crashing waves. What we're seeing are viruses, a virus COBIT exploding. And if you think there's no connection between COVID-19 and climate change, then you're mistaken because all of the scientists say one of the inevitable consequences of climate change is the rise of viruses. It's as clear as day,

Butlerfilms (00:45:30):
It was that, that taking residential humans,

Richard Cizik (00:45:33):
That revenge on you. Yeah.

Butlerfilms (00:45:36):
The bad factor. Um, so, so the, it brings me to another question about this sort of, you know, another argument that we've read about in this area, this issues is that these, this end times reading of the Bible is, is, is potentially another pass for people to say, well, it's end times anyway, like it's it's okay. Because, you know, the end times mean the resurrection, right? So if you're a true Christian

Richard Cizik (00:46:09):
Yeah. I felt I left that out. Thank you. Yes. Yeah. So the, uh, you know, the, the paradigm that has existed for so long is shifting now is you see opposition to mainstream science belief in free market economics, a literal Bible, and not least of all, uh, a, uh, yeah, a, an apocalyptic racism that says, Hey, it doesn't matter anyway, because God is going to destroy this earth. And when Jesus Christ comes up again and so no need to worry, Richard, no need to worry. It's all going to be okay. And of course, that's a misreading of science, a misreading of our engagement, politically. I miss reading of, of the end times as well. Why that's because yes, I believe in the scriptures as true, but God's purposes for a new heaven and a new earth are not to create a whole new earth, but always to redeem the earth.

Richard Cizik (00:47:13):
I was at a wedding family wedding, and the father of one of the family members, new family members to the clan, uh, said when the conversation at the after dinner party, uh, grew quiet, he said, out of the no place, he just said, Richard, don't, you know, that God is going to destroy this and it will all burn up. And it doesn't matter. Oh, everybody, just, everybody went quiet. And I said, well, let me explain in the scriptures. Fire is a multi valence symbols so that it both refines and it destroys it in that case, you're citing from first Peter in the scriptures, that is refinement. So there will be a new earth, but it will be refined. God, isn't going to create X Nilo out of nothing, a whole new earth for people who lose, uh, you know, the older to live in a new one, he's going to ask us to protect this one and keep it. That's what, that's, what the mandate was in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it to care for it. And so he's not going to create a whole new earth, a new earth, a new heaven, a no, he is way God's ways are always to redeem. He redeems people. He reduced, he will redeem creation, but he needs us to help him.

Richard Cizik (00:48:37):
He needs us to play our role as stewards of the earth as co-creators, uh, you know, with him. Okay. Well, what God is asking us to be is, uh, as he exercise a kind of stewardship, a dominion over this earth, a good dominion. What he asks us is to be co stewards with him of this earth. God is real. He is redeeming this earth. Even as I speak, you might not see it, but he is redeeming this, and he's going to redeem all of creation, but he doesn't do it on his own. Otherwise he wouldn't have said in the garden of Eden, you are to be my stewards and care for it and keep it. And so he gave us our very first assignment as Christian to care for the earth and kill it and keep it the very first duty of all the dude was this one. And yet, if you go into an average evangelical church today and you say, creation care, they go, Hmm, what's that? Well, that's changing. Thank God. But that was the first duty, the first assignment. And yet people forget it don't know their Bibles.

Butlerfilms (00:49:53):

No. When you went to work with the Reagan administration and, you know, he incited over and over again, you specified it yourself, you know, sort of that Alliance with the he in print, you know, that sort of famous build wires, you know, capture, you know, I don't endorse you or whatever it was. It's like a, you can't divorce me, but I endorse you. Right. Exactly. Did you have a sense then, or have you reflected on it since, as, as to, you know, that really was a shift point with the conservative Christian, right. Having enormous influence on the political, on a political change theory, effective, um, mobilization.

Richard Cizik (00:50:45):
Yeah. I knew it was a, uh, uh, uh, is it called a confliction point? Inflection? I don't know whatever the word is there. It was, uh, an inflection moment when Reagan was elected and the Republicans realized, wow, do we have something going for us here? And yet Reagan was pretty, Reagan was bad on the environment. Uh, I remember that his secretary of interior, mr. James watt made comments of, Oh, we don't need to care about the trees or the forest. You know, God's going to destroy them anyway. Or so it was alleged. He, uh, he was sort of the flashpoint James watt during the Reagan administration, but fast forward from early 1980s, all the way to 2020, we have a man in the white house. Who's worse on the environment. Who's married to the oil and gas fracking and all the rest and disowned summits openly anti-science Reagan, wasn't openly anti-science.

Richard Cizik (00:51:52):
But this man in the white house today is. And so there is a marriage of religion, big oil, and the Republican party. Now that is changing because you look at the opinion polls right now in Texas. And you have, uh, well look at the con you know, the contest, a beta O'Rourke almost winning United States, Senate seat. And so Texas is changing and it's a, almost a toss up state in this forthcoming presidential election. And so that's changing, but there has been this marriage of Republican party, big oil and gas and the evangelicals. And it's a marriage of convenience for some, and for the rest of us, it is a, you know, it is a toxic brew. This is destroying the earth, and there's no other way to look at it than that. It's just a noxious stock toxic kind of arrangement that is, you know, sort of to their satisfaction into the world's destruction.

Butlerfilms (00:53:03):
Talk, talk to me a little bit about, and you'll know this from your experiences too, about the, um, the mobilization efforts to reach out to pastors to say, go into your churches, let's vote, like, make sure you get out and vote. Let's get you to the booth. And in addition to that, things like the green, you know, the, the green driving or,

Richard Cizik (00:53:28):
Oh, the slang of the green dire. Yeah. Yeah. I was, I was attacked in the, you know, we need to slay the green, new dragon. And I was one of those who needed to be slayed, I guess. And so you have a, almost a portfolio of organizations on the right that from groups officially aligned with her bumping party to the Cornwall Alliance, uh, you know, the incarnation Dow and now of the moral majority led by Ralph Reed called faith and freedom. So there's a wholesale Alliance of convenience between these folks and the end result of which is yeah, that they mobilize evangelicals and they mobilize evangelicals for Donald Trump effectively so that he got the higher percentages than even Ronald Reagan in this contest for the white house. And he took all that with that is Trump took all that with, uh, a certain glee. And yet he shouldn't take it for granted because you see the number of slipping and the percentages of those of Angelicals who were willing to give him a pass, have declined a bit. So the numbers are in the big, uh, his

support is in the mid sixties from down from 79 or whatever it was in the past. And so more and more evangelicalism are saying,

Butlerfilms (00:54:50):
Hmm,

Richard Cizik (00:54:52):
I don't agree with this. I don't agree with the racism. I don't agree with the climate destruction. I don't agree with, uh, the attacks on the poor. I don't agree with the unwillingness to take a basic science approach toward the coed pandemic. I don't agree with any of this arrogance

Butlerfilms (00:55:14):
And

Richard Cizik (00:55:15):
That's good. I'm glad they're saying that because what it says, if we accept that is that we are thumbing our nose at God and everything he's said to us about loving your neighbor and caring for the earth and treating other people equally as your, you would treat your neighbor and love your neighbor as yourself and all of the scriptural teachings from Jesus. This is what's at stake. It's what's at stake is the integrity of Evan's Delica movement. And I'm, I'm really on this. I really think that the organization that I went to work for in 1980, the 19 1980s, the national association of evangelicals was the organization that was created to respond to the fundamentalism in the 1920s with the scopes monkey trial. And those evangelicals who couldn't even accept, create a creative creation and evolution at the same time, they said, Oh, no, evolution is, you know, is satanic.

Richard Cizik (00:56:19):
And, and so the fundamentals of that day, uh, the association of evangelicals was created to respond to not to be, anti-science not to be, you see I'm opposed to academia or intellectual thought, or for that matter engagement in politics or the, like the evangelical movement arose in the 1940s. That was to be a response to the fundamentalism of the past. And yet today, some of the biggest names in evangelicalism are those that get invited to the oval office, like pastor Jeffries and Ralph Reed and others. And so, wow. It, you have to ask yourself, have we have we as an evangelical movement comment all to a sense of the common good at all? You know, I worked for, they haven't doggles for the common good new Evans. Helicos that's who we are. Hmm. I sound like I'm preaching. I'm sorry. I am a preacher. I am a preacher.

Butlerfilms (00:57:28):
Tell me your definition or the difference between a fundamental [inaudible].

Richard Cizik (00:57:36):
You know, there was an old joke, uh, in the 1960s and seventies that a fundamentalist was someone who had no fun, a whole lot of dam and not much metal. It was a put down of the fundamentalist. Okay. We can laugh about it now, get over it. If you are, you know, if you're offended by that, get over it. Uh, fundamentalists were about that in so many ways. Uh, but even today, as much as they let's face it, they aren't as a Washington post reporter put it, uh, they haven't tolerable. So they are not poor and

educated in an easy to command. Uh, because frankly evangelicalism are educated. They're not easy to command and, uh, they're not poor. And so why, then this marriage with the right and Donald Trump, now it can only be because people are sold out, they're sold. Let's see. It is, it was sold their soul to the devil.

Butlerfilms (00:58:42):
Do you have any regrets? Do you have any, do you wish you had handled the vanity fair article differently? Do you wish you had not revealed, deteriorate gross? Who you voted for? I don't have any regrets.

Richard Cizik (00:59:00):
There's no point in that. In my opinion, it is what it is. I did what I did because I spoke from the heart and that's who can, who can fault that because if they disagreed with me fine, they fired me. And that's the right. I served the board of the national association of evangelicals. And they didn't like me out on climate change or equality of rights or the poor or human rights and the like, and they didn't like that. And so they fired me and that's all right. I still have a voice. I'm still doing what I think is important, like caring for the earth. Um, but it is a reflection on them, not on me. The fact that they couldn't tolerate these views was there for election. Not on me. I never lost my integrity. I didn't engage in some kind of moral scandal. Absolutely not. I just spoke from the heart, the truth as I perceived it to be. And there was no room for even a little bit of flexibility, not as, not a little bit of room at all, because if you violate some of the tenants of the right, they go at you until they, they defeat you. Well, that's what they think. Uh, no one defeated me.

Richard Cizik (01:00:23):

I still have a voice. Uh, and I just am working on the outside, not the inside. And I was speaking about this one day to Jesse Jackson, and he made the comparison to the civil rights movement. And he said, well, that's right, Richard don't feel so bad. God had to work outside of the church in order to, you know, make a movement. Now it's true. Pastors were involved in, in the civil rights movement and pastors are today engaged in creation care, but God had to move with others other than the church in order to accomplish his purposes. And that's why you don't, that's why you don't attack environmentalist. That's why I do it. You don't malign them or lie about them or accuse them of being as the green dragon movement, you know, slaying the green dragon, you know, said that we were all worshipers of the earth.

Richard Cizik (01:01:10):
Nothing could be further from the truth. That's such a lie. We don't worship the truth that we worship God, but we know that God called us to care for the earth. So we do it. But yeah, you got to put up with this and understand that's what's going to happen. I don't regret it. No, absolutely not. Maybe, maybe some members of my family too. It was a hard time. It was a bad thing. I mean, Virginia couldn't even go to the church without being asked. Well, what, why does James Dobson say you hate America and that you only believe in climate change and that you're a divisive and that you're destroying the movement and all the rest. And so my family had to go to church and hear this. And as I mentioned, just a few moments ago, this is 2020. And I went to a church and this man at the back of the church afterwards said, what do you do? I said, well, I'm clergymen in a climate activist. And he said, Oh, thank God. I'm so glad somebody is out there fighting those environmentalist. And when I said, well, I think sir, I'm one of them. He kind of gulped and walked away. And then I was asked not to come back.

Butlerfilms (01:02:26):
Well, there's a lot of people out there happy that you're fighting a good show.

Richard Cizik (01:02:28):
Oh, thank you very much. Alright. Um, I have a proposal into a Jeff Bezos is earth fund and, uh, it's uh, and religion and science.

Butlerfilms (01:02:42):
Well, there you go. This is right up his alley, right? I hope you get it. Have to get the funding. Um, you taught, when you, when you told Trinny Grossi voted for Obama and that was it. You know, you said that was it. That was like the nail in the coffin, along with, with some of your other stances, um, civil unions, things like that. But how much of it in your opinion was wrapped up in race and in race and systemic racism?

Richard Cizik (01:03:16):

Absolutely. Wow. Uh, you have to understand that the board of the national association of evangelicals consists of denominational leaders, the 54 plus other church, pastors leaders of mission groups and the liken, it numbers about a hundred on a regular basis. And when we did a poll just before the Obama election, the president of myself as director of government affairs, we did a poll of the board. And what we found was that of the board 98 were Republicans and have the answers to the question on, what do you think about Obama? About 38 to 40% said they were very deeply suspicious of Obama. Well, what did that mean? Well, it could be variously defined in one's own head, but we know what it meant.

Richard Cizik (01:04:10):
Trump, Donald Trump was suggesting he was, you know, a man who wasn't even born in America though there was the birther movement. And so, uh, even going back that far, that systemic racism has been part of the evangelical movement. And you can't help, but understand that if you speak out against racism, you suffer some, uh, repudiation, because you're not supposed to talk about that. And most pastors don't, they don't talk about systemic racism in the white church. And so you have a huge divide it's often said Sunday morning is the most divided day of the week, the racially divided day of the week in America. That's because you have white evangelicals, particularly who are just sort of systemically unwilling to address the issue of racism. And so was my own dismissal. If you will, from the association attributable to that factor. I did say that I voted for Barack Obama and I've had board members subsequent talent. Tell me who are conservatives and are my friends that know the civil unions issue that you were fired over. Richard had nothing to do with your ultimate demise with the association. It was all about Barack Obama and Democrats.

Richard Cizik (01:05:44):
That's what they've said to me. And so the systemic racism exists in the Evans helical church, uh, widely today still. And you see it reflected in the racist campaign that Donald Trump ran and editorial support for it. He walked down the elevator in Trump tower to start a campaign that began with attacks upon Mexicans and others. And to this day he's attacking various minorities by his actions and the evangelicals have approved at this, or they've been completely silent. And so is there racism? Absolutely. Is it as bad as every yes. And are we all guilty? Yes. But do we do something about it? Of course. And so you can

look at my comments and my Facebook pages or whatever, and see what I say. Yeah. I say black lives matter.

Butlerfilms (01:06:48):
Thank you, Richard. I know these are, you know, these are a lot of big, big topics and, um, thank you for being so honest. And I think, you know, of course it's a 12 minute video, so yeah.

Richard Cizik (01:06:59):
I get 30 seconds. Hey, get 30 seconds on glad to get him, you know,

Butlerfilms (01:07:05):
We archived in, in, in UVA. Um, I hadn't, you know, I had another couple of questions for you in terms of, um, well, this is a silly one and I was just sparked by it. I think it was funny, the NPR articles that featured you and the headline that was, you know, what would Jesus drive? And so my question here is what would Jesus drive

Richard Cizik (01:07:41):
It's intended to may convey a symbolism? What would Jesus drive is intended to convey a symbolism about beer? And no one knows the answer to the question, but we do know this, that if we are his disciples and his followers, and we are to be obedient to what he has said to do, which is to care for the earth. And it's unquestionably true that we have to change the way we live. And that means shifting from gas, guzzling gas, guzzling, automobiles, to electric vehicles, I happen to own an electric vehicle and I'm proud of it. So what would Jesus drive well decide for yourself? But look, the paradigm shift is this speaking of automobiles, what comes out of an automobile? Traditional gas, guzzling, automobile com combustible fumes, and the average evangelical things. When he drives his car out of the tailpipe comes wow, something, and it goes away and see, stainable thinking says there is no away.

Richard Cizik (01:08:40):
It goes somewhere. It goes into the atmosphere and it creates part of the pollution. And then the life at all are contributing to the destruction of the planet. And so you have to shift your paradigm the way you think, and it's from, you know, straight line thinking God created, God will bring Jesus back in the earth. Well, and that's straight line thinking to systemic thinking, which is that all of this is connected, spiritual and political and social and cultural realities are all connected. That's called systemic thinking. And so we moved from straight line to systemic. We removed from short term thinking to long term thinking we moved from there is a way pollution just goes away too. There is no away. We move from iron cage thinking that no, nothing changes. And I can't make any change to, of course, every person in every act makes a change and we move from, Oh, technology can save us to, uh, well I say it this way.

Richard Cizik (01:09:44):
Um, we have to move from, take, make waste. We take from the earth and we make things. And we put the waste back into the earth to another model, completely different, which has says, which says we borrow, use and replenish. We borrow from the earth. We use its resources and then we replenish the earth. So that's the ship, that's the paradigm change. And people move in a process. If they're confronted by people who will convey the tension that has to exist between somebodies behavior in that take, make and waste mentality to the other, they have to confront that tension and decide, okay,

am I going to change my behavior or not? And if I'm going to change it, what do I do? Well, you have to give people the conviction. If they're going to change that the solutions you're offering them will work. That's number one. And number two, you have to be able to persuade them that this matters that this creation I'm looking outside my house, you know, this matters and that they can do something about it.

Richard Cizik (01:10:57):
And the sum total then is if the benefits outweigh the liabilities by two to one, if there are more benefits to come to me from doing this, then the liability is the downside of it. Then I will make the shift. And that's just reality. What way people that's the way Americans live. Not everybody lives that way in China, people for all its faults. I've lived there. I studied there. Uh, they think more about the common good, frankly. That's why their response to covert is so much better than ours, but you know, there is a paradigm shift and you have to incorporate that shift in and persuade people that if they take these actions, it will make a big difference.

Butlerfilms (01:11:42):
So last question, um, in your, in your role with Reagan and during the sort of political heyday, um,

Richard Cizik (01:11:55):
I like it by the way. I liked Reagan at the time and I met him. It was in the Rose garden. I was a young man then not young anymore. Go ahead. I'm sorry.

Butlerfilms (01:12:08):
No, that's okay. I was just commuting. So you could, so we could get it. Um, we've talked a lot about thoughts of the fossil fuel industry and the influence of the lobbies and the fossil fuel industries on the conversations and debates. And, uh, one of the people that we're also talking to in this piece is farmer. And, um, he happens even to Christian, Neva evangelical farmer. He, he, uh, is, uh, you know, sort of a fierce libertarian, just not believe in government regulation at all, but it's, it's his opinion. It's big. It's, it's possible. Yes, but it's big ag. Yeah.

Richard Cizik (01:12:44):
Yeah. It is big ag. Again, I grew up on a farm

Butlerfilms (01:12:48):
Changed, you know, that is one of the biggest contributors to climate change. So just curious from your perspective, how much of, um, how much influence do you saw from, from that side of the aisle as well?

Richard Cizik (01:13:07):
Uh, I grew up on a small farm, a hundred acres of beans, potatoes, and alfalfa, and 20 acres of cherries and a huge, huge garden that my father put together almost 20 acres and sold, uh, fresh fruit and vegetables from the side of the road. That was my upbringing. And so I grew up in small ag. My family still is an agriculture onions to be precise in the same part of the Columbia basin of Eastern Washington state. And so that's really where I grew up and which I will never leave. Ultimately it's in my heart. You see it in the way I garden around my house and the way you look, if you were to see it, you would say, Hey, Richard still, uh, has a green thumb. So that was always there. And it still is in my heart in many ways. But what has shifted is that the small farmer is really one to 2% of agriculture today.

Richard Cizik (01:14:04):
It's big ag and we know what big agriculture is doing, and it's not just big agriculture. It's, uh, the, uh, part of agriculture that consists of meat, Packers, meat, Packers, and so animal livestock and the production of food, you know, for families, it is inevitably related to the climate and the environment. And so should we be surprised that big agriculture, which has produced these, not family farms that have range fed beef, but what we have are huge livestock ovens, so to speak for putting chemicals, uh, you know, everything into the livestock in order to make it grow fast and, and produce more beef so that we can consume more meat products and challenge the climate in ways, destroying it in ways we never would have imagined, but that's what's occurring. And so it's not just, you know, it's not just big oil, it's big ag. And it also consists of the propensity of Americans for, you know, meat products and the climate, the climate impacts from a bovine, uh, pollution are huge. And so it all comes back to w how do you eat? I made a shift a few years ago, uh, away from a red meat diet more than a few years ago.

Butlerfilms (01:15:58):
Are you familiar at all with Joel? Salitan, that's one of the two at Polyface farm, not too far from you in Fredericksburg. Yeah. Um, generally, yeah, he's an interesting character too. He definitely is a creation care type of

Richard Cizik (01:16:13):
What's really neat is what's really neat is when you find these, uh, farmers and agricultural specialists, and they might work for one or the other co-ops that exist for the family farm, who really do know what's going on and what's happening to the earth. And then they put it all together and they say, Hey, we've got to do things differently. That's such an encouragement to meet those kinds of people.

Butlerfilms (01:16:38):
Very inspirational. Yeah. Okay. So I told him, I know I told you it was the last question. Well, I just thought we are asking, asking folks to kind of introduce each other. So, so tell me, I know that you and Bob Inglis have a long history. Tell me a little bit about all us.

Richard Cizik (01:16:54):
Oh, wow. I met Bob on Capitol Hill as a Republican member of Congress from South Carolina, so many, many years ago. And I, I liked him because, uh, well, pardon me. But, uh, he said, uh, my son says you got to meet me. And so took his son's advice and invited me up. I met him and I knew this was a special man, a guy who hasn't been the independent thinker. And in other words, here, he was inviting me to come up to talk to him about scripture and creation and things like that. And this was before, you know, Bob's, uh, encounter with, you know, Republican reality in South Carolina in which he was defeated on a variety of issues. I guess he'd just become too unsolved Carolinian, but otherwise, uh, it's still a very intelligent guy. Who's a great voice on the environment and for the right causes, in my opinion. And so I love him dearly.

Butlerfilms (01:17:53):
Thank you for that. Okay. And so I guess the only other thing is we're going to try something where you look straight at the camera for the, try, that little technique again, when you say, um, you state your name and say, I am a blank, you just stare straight down the barrel of the camera. And I don't know if this will work or not, but it might so let's try it. So you don't look at me, just look at the camera.

Richard Cizik (01:18:21):
I am an evangelical clergyman, a climate activist, a care of this creation and a lover of what God has given us to love, namely this earth.

Butlerfilms (01:18:34):
Okay, good. Now give me one more. That include your name in a shorter, okay.

Richard Cizik (01:18:40):
I'm Richard [inaudible] and I'm an evangelical clergyman, a climate activist, and a humanitarian who wants to change the world.

Butlerfilms (01:18:50):
Thank you.

Richard Cizik (01:18:50):
Or I can give you another version. Um, I am Richard Cizik. I'm an evangelical clergyman. I care for the earth and thus, I'm a climate activist. I try to live a sustainable life and I'm an officiant natto of electric cars and not least of all. I'm a follower of Jesus.

Butlerfilms (01:19:12):
Okay, good. Now give me one more, that sort of hands your, um, that gives people a hand right off the bat at of your, of your life's journey. Certainly not.

Richard Cizik (01:19:25):
Yeah, I got, yeah. Okay. I'm to, uh, I'm Richard Cizik, I'm an evangelical clergyman, a climate activist, someone who cares about the earth autoclaves, God says to care about the earth, uh, an efficient auto of electric cars and yep. A rebel in the ranks of the evangelical world.

Butlerfilms (01:19:46):
Fantastic. Thank you. Thank you so much for chatting and for your generosity of your time.

Richard Cizik (01:19:55):
You're welcome. You're welcome.

Darren Dochuk Interview

Darren Dochuk (00:00:01):
I think I am on.

Butlerfilms (00:00:05):
Okay. I'm going to, okay. So how should we start this? Um, do you want to go way back, you know, um, to sort of the beginning of your book, like, how do you get, give us the, give us the primer of, uh, of where you started with this and where this whole, you know, sort of, you know, civil religion versus Wildcat, uh, uh, religion really started with the oil.

Darren Dochuk (00:00:36):
Sure. Well, the story begins in the mid 19th century in the 1850s and 1860s. Uh, oil was discovered in Western Pennsylvania, uh, just as the civil war was beginning and, uh, men flocked to this region throughout the civil war period, trying to make, uh, trying to make it rich for themselves. Uh, and then, uh, at the end of the civil war, this is when we really see the boom begin and, uh, thousands of entrepreneurs, again, moved into the Allegheny mountains to pursue the black stuff, pursuit crude, uh, digging Wildcat discovery, Wells, uh, and again, trying to build their own empires. Uh, this created a chaotic environment, uh, through the 1870s, this was a cutthroat landscape. Uh, it was a culture of, uh, pain and death. There was much suffering with fires, a common occurrence, uh, just working the oil fields was always dangerous. And so, uh, in the 1870s, a gentleman by the name of a Rockefeller John D Rockefeller sr made his way to the same region with the same ambition to try to make it rich.

Darren Dochuk (00:01:48):
He already had an advantage. He had built up an infrastructure of refined, uh, refineries in Cleveland nearby in, in Ohio. Uh, and he was determined to bring order to this landscape. What, uh, happened, uh, thereafter was really the clash between Rockefeller, uh, who quickly became this powerful oil man, uh, growing his own company, standard oil, uh, and those that he tried to subdue thousands of kind of smaller oil producers, uh, who wanted to again maintain, uh, their own livelihood as well. The clash between these two, uh, oil, uh, sorry. We just had a garbage truck outside. I'll condyle. I'll just continue. I now get to the heart of the matter. So

Butlerfilms (00:02:37):
No, no, no, just you just go, this is just fascinating this time, this kind of timeline it's super useful.

Darren Dochuk (00:02:42):
Good, good. So in the 1870s, then you have a Rockefeller sr, who is, again, trying to create a monopoly, uh, in his estimation, he has been kind of given the right by God to not just make money, but to impose order on this chaotic landscape. He is a bureaucrat. He is someone who is as max vapor would write about, had this kind of a work ethic, the spirit of capitalism that, uh, sought calculation and control. Uh, and what he saw in the early oil business was the exact opposite, but in the process, again, of imposing his own order and taking control, uh, he is also stamping out the livelihoods of these other, uh, thousands of, of kind of smaller oil producers. Uh, and so we have this clash, it's literally an oil war that plays out in the 1870s and into the 1880s. Ultimately, what we see emerge here, I argue is kind of the, the, uh, the development of kind of two distinctive religious political economic cultures.

Darren Dochuk (00:03:47):

One that is represented by Rockefeller, which I call kind of the civil religion of crude. Uh, this is again, uh, the quest to impose godly order, not just on capitalism and on the business of oil, but as Rockefeller sr sees it, uh, to impose a order and bring together, uh, kind of a collective unit in the church itself in American Protestantism. That is again the opposite of Wildcat Christianity, which I argue represents kind of the religious, political, economic culture of the small oil producers who are again, daring entrepreneurs who are always willing to take risks. Uh, they live on the edge, uh, always facing collapse and calamity. Uh, and this creates, again, a particular worldview which lines up, especially with, with what we would know as kind of evangelical Christianity, again, a fierce, uh, defense of the individual, whether that be on the oil field or, uh, before God, uh, the ocean that each individual had the right to carve out their own destiny.

Darren Dochuk (00:04:54):
They saw that destiny as well as in God ordained, uh, they emphasized a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Uh, they also saw the war, the world in cataclysmic terms kind of apocalyptic. They came to expect the ebbs and flows of, of, uh, oil and capitalism. Uh, but that was just to be accepted as the natural order. What does one do in response to that lean heavy on a trust and a faith in God, a God who is all powerful. So that is, those are kind of the roots as I paint them. Uh, and again, yeah, weaving religion into matters of business, uh, and into this kind of hot, uh, dynamic, uh, industry that takes hold of America in the late 19th century. And then in the early 20th century really takes off. And the reason for that is because the epicenter of oil exploration shifts across the Mississippi to the West and the Southwest, and there these small oil producers having fled Western Pennsylvania for their own, uh, again, ability to carve out business opportunities. Uh, they are going to take root in the Southwest and in the West. And because oil will be discovered there in places like Spindletop, Texas, they are going to gain some leverage in the industry and by extension in American Protestantism as well, uh, setting the stage really for a century long struggle, uh, in oil and also in American Christianity between these two kind of warring sides.

Darren Dochuk (00:06:32):
It's great. So interesting. So let's just dig in a little more detail on that. So you've got two you've, you've got, you've set up the beginning and now this so Rockefeller, you know, the Rockefeller's, you know, in there, hold on big oil, you know, they pass it down to the, at generations. And then tell us a little bit more about Spindletop and people like Higgins. And tell us a little bit more about sort of the arch enemies that rise between Rockefeller and Stewart, right. Oil, not going to pretend to know all of this very well is, you know, it's a lot there to take in, but, but these are, they're just fascinating characters and they kind of keep building through the decades.

Darren Dochuk (00:07:13):
There, there is no shortage of, uh, characters in this story, uh, and again, oil, the nature of the oil business itself, I think facilitates that. Uh, so you have these thousands of kind of independent oil men, small producers wildcatters, uh, who move into the West. And, you know, as long as late as the 1890s, uh, standard oil did not believe that oil existed West of the Mississippi, uh, famously or infamously, uh, John Archbold, a president leading executive and standard boasted that he would drink every gallon of oil West of the Mississippi. And this is how sure he was that it didn't exist. Uh, well, by the 1890s, we're starting to get some strikes in California. And then the big one comes right at the beginning of the century at Spindletop in, uh, South Southeast Texas, uh, near Beaumont, right on the Gulf coast. Uh, there we have, uh, just a historic gusher that, uh, instantly makes Texas the new leading producer in the world.

Darren Dochuk (00:08:16):
Uh, how did that come about? Well, uh, there's this gentleman a very, uh, eccentric gentleman by the name of patella Higgins, who again, is representative kind of, of the, perhaps more of the extremes of kind of wild cat Christian culture. Uh, but by no means, was he entirely exceptional? Uh, this is someone who, uh, saw himself as a prophet of sorts as an apostle. Uh, he was convinced, uh, even though his neighbors and peers, uh, made fun of him, but he was convinced that there was oil in the Beaumont region. Uh, at one point he travels to Western Pennsylvania just to see how the oil industry operates, comes back, Texas, where he'd grown up. Uh, he was known as a Renegade growing up as a young man. And, uh, and, and at one point actually, uh, had, uh, murdered a police officer. Uh, he got, uh, acquitted on self-defense, but in any case, this was someone who had a wild childhood, uh, becomes a Christian after attending a revival.

Darren Dochuk (00:09:16):
And then, uh, again sees his duty as creating a successful business. Uh, one, he, he kind of envisions in utopian terms. Oil is going to provide him with that opportunity. And that's why he's so convinced that Beaumont has oil. He's going to explore for it. Uh, he's going to find investors, uh, and, uh, even though he is going to ultimately get, uh, kind of booted out of the original company that he was in charge of, uh, that company is going to go on to find oil at Spindletop, uh, proving that Higgins had it right. And, uh, Higgins at that point is going to be called by main any of his neighbors, the profit of Spindletop. So this is kind of the types of individuals that, uh, emerged, especially in the West and the Southwest in the early 20th century, uh, oil, uh, you know, it, it required risks. It required daring. Uh, it also was something that individuals with a bit of capital could pursue on their own terms. It wasn't like building up, uh, a coal, a coal mine, a coal industry, uh, oil could be an individuals, uh, kind of an entrepreneurial individual quest, uh, and often it resulted in spectacular riches.

Butlerfilms (00:10:31):
What were some of the arguments about what is it about arguing, uh, rules of capture that also developed as, as a real sticking point. And part of that question too, is just getting to the independent entrepreneurial don't want regulation. Um, don't want somebody else to tell them what to do or how to do it. And, and, and where does their religious philosophy tie into this as well? On both on both sides? Well,

Darren Dochuk (00:11:03):
So yes, oil and the oil industry, uh, as, as I've said, had, uh, at its roots, certainly kind of promoted, uh, the individual's ability to kind of chase crude and chase profits on one's own terms. Uh, the nature of the business itself allowed for that. It was also buttressed by kind of this unique, legal, uh, code in the United States called the rule of capture, uh, unlike Europe, for instance, or other parts of the world where a government had a federal government had a more heavy handed oversight of oil, uh, in the United States, uh, mineral rights belong to the individual, those who could pursue it on their terms. And so, uh, it allowed individuals, uh, again, the right, uh, to, uh, put, you know, uh, bill Derek's and start drilling, uh, and to drain as much crude as they could, as quickly as they could even under a neighbor's property.

Darren Dochuk (00:12:02):
I mean, this was the rule of capture basically was, uh, a facilitated kind of a laissez Faire free for all. So, uh, and that's why it would be so chaotic. And there would be in subsequent decades, of course, as the

oil industry, uh, evolve, there would be, you know, more regulation that would come into being whether at the state level or ultimately at the national level, but it's built into the DNA. In other words of the oil industry, that this is a fiercely independent fiercely individualistic operation, uh, and that spilled over into, again, the, the pulpits in the pews, uh, of churches in the West and the Southwest. And so we see, for instance, the Stewart brothers, Lyman Stewart, especially, uh, his is also a very typical story. Here was an independent oilman, uh, who grew up in Western Pennsylvania. He entered the oil business right at the beginning, uh, and became really a, a kind of, uh, a warrior for Wildcat Christianity, uh, someone who was devoutly evangelical, uh, someone who thought that just as the rule of capture promoted, uh, the independent, uh, the, the individual's authority and autonomy, uh, as he read scripture, he believed that true Christianity promoted that same type of, kind of fervent, uh, individualism, uh, reflected again, especially in one's personal relationship with Christ.

Darren Dochuk (00:13:30):
Uh, you know, as a young man, he became a Christian and going forward, uh, was committed again to preaching this gospel of, of, of personal wellbeing, of personal salvation. Uh, this was, again, something that he tied explicitly into his own business operations. Uh, and on the flip side, he was determined to use the profits from his business, uh, to build the church, to extend the gospel on a global scale. So he is forced out of Pennsylvania by Rockefeller. He grows to hate Rockefeller. He sees Rockefeller as corrupt in the business. He also sees him as promoting kind of a secularization of the church, uh, the monopoly monopolistic ways in the business, uh, Lyman Stewart, considers Rockefeller applying that same, uh, kind of monopolistic ambition in the church as well. Uh, and so climate Stuart moves to California and there starts union oil, which by the turn of the 20th century is really one of the largest kind of independent oil companies in the West.

Darren Dochuk (00:14:33):
This is gonna allow Stewart to fight the Rockefeller gospel, both in business and in the pews. Uh, and in the early 20th century, Stewart is going to build a huge church fund, a huge church in Los Angeles called church of the open door, or, uh, he's also going to build a Bible, which he sees as kind of the, uh, the way to fight, uh, the university of Chicago, which Rockefeller had built, uh, and Lyman. It's also going to fund missionaries who are going to go out into Latin America and Asia to preach again, this fervently evangelical, fiercely evangelical gospel of salvation, uh, through Christ and, uh, with, again, a reliance also on a very kind of strict literalist reading of scripture as well. So that's kind of how, you know, within Stuart, we see this, the embodiment really of these, uh, of these impulses that, uh, uh, move seamlessly, operate seamlessly, uh, between the church Pew, the pulpits, uh, and the oil fields.

Butlerfilms (00:15:38):
It's so fascinating that these, these grids all thrown around, whether it's Wildcat Christianity, or the civil religion crude, they come at it with such missionary seal, you know, in your research, you know, why do you think, or why did you discover that that's such a common thread? Was it just sort of in the water during these centuries, in this country, or like, what, I guess, I guess why so committed to bend the populace to their particular way of thinking in the Christian, in the Christian religion, whether it be Protestant or the evangelical

Darren Dochuk (00:16:21):
Good question. Well, again, I think it was, you know, the type of men and this was a very masculine muscular industry. Uh, it was also very white as well. Uh, this was a white man's game from the

beginning, the type of men, uh, like Lyman Stewart or John D Rockefeller, uh, who succeeded in this business, uh, tended to be, you know, a strong willed, strong minded, uh, absolutely ambitious, uh, in some ways audacious as well. This was the type of individual, uh, kind of single-minded who succeeded in the business. So it's no accident that, uh, they were going to kind of apply that same ambition, uh, in their philanthropy, uh, and in their, uh, kind of operations within Christianity within the church. Uh, so the personality, uh, that succeeds in oil, I think, uh, you know, by nature, that was the type that was going to be driven equally driven in promoting, uh, their particular belief system, their particular priorities as they saw it, uh, their truth, uh, that they had gleaned from their, their, uh, reading of scripture and their relationship with God oil was also, this is also a story of movement.

Darren Dochuk (00:17:44):
Uh, you know, if you're working in the coal fields, uh, of Appalachia, uh, or, or in the West, uh, coal mining, it takes place over the long DeRay, right? This is something, uh, that doesn't necessarily pop up and then go away, oil arrives, uh, spectacularly, it surprises, uh, but then it also goes away. Uh, and so there's always kind of a constant motion. Oil is always in motion. You're always chasing the next frontier. Uh, and by the turn of the 20th century, that was a global endeavor. Uh, and so, you know, when we think about global missions and the, the missionaries that Rockefeller and the Stuarts, uh, supported, uh, this again was kind of a natural extension of their own work in the oil business, which was, which was forcing them to go global almost from the very beginning. So, uh, both the business and the philanthropy, uh, are always in motion. And they're always, again, looking for, uh, the next frontier, be it, the untapped soil or unsaved souls.

Butlerfilms (00:18:51):
So you, um, you, you talk about, you've talked about how the, if you're a wildcatter, you take very literal, um, a literal view of the Bible and, and, and use that to a certain extent to, to not just propel your oil exploration, but sort of justify it in a way, right, where it's, whether it's the apocalyptic view, whether it's the minion view, whether or not it's God provided you. And I found myself, um, you know, really being judgmental of that, but on the flip side with big oil and the Rockefellers and things like that, I mean their, their treatment of the environment or the earth maybe wasn't necessarily painted in those terms, but there was no care for the earth either. And I'm just curious, like, how did, um, biblical views inform both sides in terms of their exploration and eventual, like understanding, and you even quote one, one, one Wildcat or saying, you know, it's like when you poke a hole, Haiti's comes out or whatever seemed to be some sense on both sides that this was dirty business. It was very hard on the people doing it, and probably not all that good

Darren Dochuk (00:20:19):
[inaudible]

Butlerfilms (00:20:20):
[inaudible].

Darren Dochuk (00:20:22):
There was a, you know, from the very beginning and certainly in the early 20th century and in places like Texas, again, there was just an assumption by those drilling the holes, but those living also in proximity to Derrickson to this oil oil operations, for instance, in East Texas, uh, there was an assumption that, uh, this was a destructive industry. This was a destructive business. It, it killed people, it maimed people, uh,

and, uh, you know, death was a regular occurrence and whether or not it was clearly framed, uh, there was also a notion and an assumption that this was bad for the land as well. Uh, you know, once pastoral landscapes, farming communities in East Texas, uh, almost overnight became, uh, drilling zones and, uh, or, or sites of, uh, uh, oil tanks and refining and people at the very beginning, lamented the passing of the old order, uh, they viewed this as necessary to some extent, to a large degree, certainly those working in the business just accepted this trade off.

Darren Dochuk (00:21:37):
Uh, but there was from the beginning of sense that, uh, you know, th th this was bad for the land, this was bad for the environment. Uh, there was an ecological price to be paid here. Again, it would take some time for that to kind of be formulated in, in kind of a, uh, land stewardship ethic. But, uh, there, there was always a sense that this was a painful trade off moving forward. Uh, you know, I would say, I think the wild cat culture, uh, came to accept this more willingly than for instance, the Rockefeller side and, and certainly, uh, the destruction they were, they were very much part of, of the destruction. Uh, but when we get to John D Rockefeller jr, for instance, uh, this is where, you know, kind of the promotion of science, uh, the promotion of, of certain charitable causes that tied into medicine, for instance, uh, Rockefeller jr is going to, I think, start to, uh, provide a framework for revisiting, uh, you know, humanity's impact, uh, around the globe on, on earth, on, on, on its relationship with the land. Uh, and so moving through the 20th century, you know, that kind of wing that side of the oil business and enough Christianity, uh, would set certainly a kind of an environmental ethic in motion, I would say.

Butlerfilms (00:23:07):
So, so when junior does start putting his money into foundations that explore more scientific innovation in science related subjects, like how does that rub against, um, the, the independence, um, who, who especially evangelicals, who, um, you know, who may think that, you know, science as the new God is, is sacrilege to speak to that a little bit?

Darren Dochuk (00:23:37):
Well, for the wild wildcatters those independent fiercely independent oil men, uh, those who are going to be so instrumental in kind of constructing this modern evangelicalism that we we've come to know today, uh, you know, from the very beginning they were, they were very skeptical of science. Uh, they often had, uh, achieved success in the business through kind of their own common sense, their pragmatism, uh, you know, Lyman Stewart, uh, like to say that he could smell oil. There was this sense that I don't need any geological science behind me here. I just feel my way through this, and I, uh, I can locate oil. And so that kind of philosophy permeates the culture of Wildcat Christianity through the first kind of 40 50 years of the 20th century. So there's always a built in skepticism towards science. Uh, there is also, uh, as far as the Rockefellers are concerned, uh, you know, kind of Wildcat Christians, these evangelicals, uh, living in the oil patches are always fearful of kind of big business, as well as big government kind of overriding their own autonomy, their own independence.

Darren Dochuk (00:24:50):
Uh, and, you know, they tie this also into this fear of secularism, uh, kind of taking hold of American society in their eyes. The priority had to be again, uh, making profits as quickly as possible, uh, so that those profits could be poured into the church and into the business of saving individual souls. That is how you transform society. It's not by imposing as the Rockefellers seem to be doing these kinds of large apparatus, these large infrastructures of, of kind of collective power tying, you know, business to

modern science, to Washington DC and the federal government. Uh, these were the great fears. These were the great threats, uh, as Wildcat Christians of the Southwest sought.

Butlerfilms (00:25:40):
That's fascinating. So, so when did the politics really start to take off, like when did it go from being foundational, creating new world order to churches in the pews to really bringing in, uh, the players of, you know, just sort of creating these unholy alliances right on both sides?

Darren Dochuk (00:26:04):
Well, the politics of oil, uh, tied also to religion and the operations of the church, uh, again, these, the, this dynamic was present at the very beginning of the oil industry, but I would say the key pivot, the true kind of turning point, uh, was the 1930s. And, uh, we, we know for him, we know from the work of others that, uh, evangelicals, especially those in the West and the Southwest, uh, we're not major fans of the new deal. They feared the rise of big government because they, again, sense that this would mean their own kind of communities and, uh, their own religious freedoms, uh, and political freedoms would be taken away by an enlarged federal government. Uh, but the politics of oil play into this in really pronounced ways. Uh, the entire decade of the 1930s, uh, is witness to one of the, the biggest oil booms in the world up to that point.

Darren Dochuk (00:27:05):
And it's taking place in East Texas, one of the poorest regions of the country, uh, again, a period of economic decline. So this, this kind of, this boom happens at odds with what's going on elsewhere. Uh, so, uh, one on one hand that empowers, uh, people evangelicals living in this region, again, this is a heavily Baptist Pentecostal place. This oil patch ooze is quite literally, you know, metaphorically with, with this, this populous religiosity. So on one hand, it empowers these people. It also empowers a large number of Wildcat oil men fiercely independent oil man, who are like Sid Richardson, like HL hunt, going to hit it big, hit it rich in East, Texas a, and that is going to empower them. And then politically, what does this mean? Well, because of East Texas and the boom, uh, this creates once again, a chaotic landscape and it forces the federal government to come into East Texas and at least try to apply more regulation, more regulatory oversight of this, uh, crazy, uh, booming field.

Darren Dochuk (00:28:13):
Uh, and so an empowered, fiercely independent sector of oil and the church are now gonna clash directly with the federal government led for instance, by Harold Ickes, the secretary of the interior, who's going to try to impose, uh, you know, conservation measures in this region. This is a clash that begins in the thirties, but it's going to only intensify in the 1940s, fifties, all the way really into the 1970s, uh, that generation of oil men that emerge in East Texas in the thirties for the next 30, 40 years are going to fund the church. They're also going to fund a political movement really, that is going to fold kind of evangelicalism in together with their kind of fiercely anti status, anti Washington, anti-regulation political agenda.

Butlerfilms (00:29:05):
And how much of this, um, especially when you get to the air, you know, the fifties, the sixties, the civil rights era, like how much of this D in your opinion is, is, um, is, is tied up with, you know, sort of the racial, systemic racism, um, that has been pervasive throughout. Right. But, uh, it's a tough question because it's not from what I can tell in my quick ramp up on all this, you know, it's sort of a, it's not too

overt, it's sort of more covert, you know, it's like how much in your research do you find this tied into some of these issues as well?

Darren Dochuk (00:29:54):
Well, oil, as a, as I said earlier, oil is again, uh, is, is heavily racialized from the very beginning. Uh, it is the most racist industry in the entire American economy really through, uh, the late 19th and throughout the 20th century. Uh, I believe in the 1930s, I think, uh, 3% of the entire workforce, uh, was African American, uh, 30 years later, uh, 1960s, it's 3.1%. So, uh, you know, over generations, uh, it is nearly impossible for African Americans, uh, or, or Mexican Americans to, to make their way into this business. Uh, so whether it is acknowledged or not, uh, this is a heavily, you know, kind of a racist industry, uh, the culture itself, uh, just kind of represents that and reinforces it as well. Uh, you know, once oil shifts to the Southwest, for instance, where it really is going to take root for the entirety of the 20th century, uh, it's, you know, oil arrives in Texas at the very moment that the loss cause itself, uh, has become more popular.

Darren Dochuk (00:31:10):
This, again, this notion that, uh, it's, it's up to the self, the white self to kind of redeem the nation, uh, oil is, is tied to that vision. Again, a very white supremacist view of, of, of American society, of American politics. So even as late as the 1960s and seventies, uh, uh, oil is again, very much gonna represent kind of this white order, uh, once, once championed, you know, uh, in, in the 19th century, by the Confederacy. Uh, so that, that is again, built into the DNA of this business, uh, in the 1960s, when the civil rights movement, uh, you know, arises, uh, it's no accident that many powerful oil men are gonna find themselves in opposition to the civil rights movement. They are going to support fiercely libertarian candidates like Barry Goldwater, for instance, in 1964, uh, in general, they are going to oppose what they see as once again, the imposition of Washington's will through civil rights legislation on their own independence and on their own, uh, kind of local community and family values.

Darren Dochuk (00:32:22):
Uh, so, you know, uh, by and large, you know, the white, white oil sector is going to find itself on the wrong side of history, really, uh, in the civil rights movement that said there are exceptions as well. And, and, uh, you know, we do see some oil men who are going to including African well, men who in the sixties and early seventies are also going to put their money behind the civil rights cause. So there are, there are exceptions to this narrative, to this rule, uh, but at least in the first generation of civil rights activism, uh, most of, of kind of white, independent oil in the Southwest and the West are going to be, you know, opposing, uh, what they see as, as this kind of radicalization of American politics through the civil rights movement,

Butlerfilms (00:33:10):
Who was, who were the African American oil men you don't ever hear about them?

Darren Dochuk (00:33:17):
Their, uh, their numbers were limited, um, blanking, is it Jake Simmon? I'm blanking on the very, uh, it's Jake Simmons, right. Do you do

Butlerfilms (00:33:30):
I think I wrote it down, um,

Darren Dochuk (00:33:34):
This is what happens when you man. Yeah. Okay. Well, I'll just pick up,

Butlerfilms (00:33:40):
You, you sort of, when you were talking about Jake, you also talked about Ida Tarbell, but you were talking about Jason as well.

Darren Dochuk (00:33:49):
Well, African-American oil men. Uh, obviously their numbers were, were very limited that said again, there are exceptions to the rule exceptions to this narrative. Uh, one of the most important, uh, I really, one of the most fascinating individuals in this case is Jake Simmons, uh, who was a product of Oklahoma Eastern, Oklahoma. Uh, he attended the Tuskegee Institute, which was, uh, founded and led by Booker T Washington Booker T Washington. Again, had this notion of civil rights of racial uplift through economics. Uh, he had full confidence in capitalism and in the power of business, uh, to transform American society and to make it fair, uh, in terms of racial equality, Jake Simmons kind of immersed himself in this philosophy and thereafter became a businessman who was determined to make a lot of money, uh, to make it quickly. And then also to use that money to help support causes such as civil rights.

Darren Dochuk (00:34:52):
Uh, he does. So in the 1920s in the oil fields of Oklahoma and then, uh, hits it really big in 1930s, East, Texas, one of the first, uh, oil men on the scenes, uh, on the scene in East Texas. And there, he buys up leases, uh, land leases from local African Americans. And, uh, as a result is able to start drilling, uh, throughout the region. Uh, he immediately supports African-American residents in this region. This is a region known for its white supremacy, uh, for its lynching. Uh, and he ha facilitates the movement of many of these African Americans to Oklahoma, to his community where, uh, he creates really safe Haven for them. Meanwhile, he buys up Lisa starts drilling and makes a whole lot of money, uh, and moving into the forties and fifties, uh, becomes ever more successful as a, as an oil man, as an oil broker, uh, is going to become actually influential in Africa and opening up, uh, Nigeria and other regions of, of, uh, Africa for oil exploration. Meanwhile, again, making all the more money he's gonna pour that money, uh, into civil rights causes back in the United States. Uh, and it's going to become really an important, uh, philanthropist in that regard. Uh, again, a unique story in which business combined with a fierce commitment to civil rights and racial equality are all gonna work hand in hand to create substantive change,

Butlerfilms (00:36:27):
Fascinating character. It seems like feature film. Yes, very much. Um, okay. So we, I mean, I, I could, we could spend a lot more time on this and perhaps we go back to it, but, well, let, let's, let's stay in this timeframe a little bit is you're sort of walking through the 20th century. Um, at what point does Billy Graham become important to this story and, and how

Darren Dochuk (00:37:02):
Well Billy Graham emerges in the 1940s we know of, of, you know, his, his role in, uh, revivals in the 1940s, uh, most famous of course is the 1949 Los Angeles revival that really puts him on the map. Uh, and you know, it's at this juncture that evangelicalism as a whole, as a national movement is changing. Uh, it's, it's trying to shed kind of the, the fundamentalism, uh, the fundamentalism of the interwar

period, uh, trying to relabel itself as evangelical. Uh, it wants to be more culturally engaged rather than, uh, separatists. It wants to, uh, help transform American society rather than shelter itself from it as kind of the earlier generation did. And Billy Graham really represents the, the face and the voice of this movement. He is, he is very engaging. He's very charismatic, uh, and, uh, he's very optimistic in many ways. And this is kind of the way in which evangelicalism as a whole wants to kind of recalibrate itself in the post world war II period.

Darren Dochuk (00:38:11):
Uh, Billy Graham is also very intelligent, very smart. He knows that to build a ministry, uh, of the scale that he will, you need to have investors, you need to have people who are willing to, uh, invest their own money, uh, to, to grow this infrastructure, whether it's starting a magazine like Christianity today, or whether it's supporting other Billy Graham ministries or other evangelical ministries, Billy Graham van, uh, therefore, uh, seeks out these types of donors, uh, and against something he comes naturally to he's, he's very, uh, uh, very, uh, generous. Uh, he is able to, uh, forge friendships easily, uh, friendships with powerful people, be the presidents or, uh, oil, power brokers. And this is what happens, uh, immediately as his career begins to take off, uh, in the 1950s, he's going to, uh, become close friends with men like Sid Richardson. Uh, he is also going to become an ally work closely with J Howard Pew of Sunoco.

Darren Dochuk (00:39:21):
Pew will be probably the most influential oil men to fund Billy grains and ministries in the fifties, going forward into the sixties. Billy Graham is also going to take membership at first Baptist church in Dallas, Texas, a church attended by a number of other very powerful oil men, uh, such as the hunt family. And, uh, you know, so throughout the fifties and sixties, Graham is going to be, uh, feel very much at home in Texas, uh, in the oil patch world, uh, and, uh, going to, as a result, continue to forge these friendships, both with kind of elite high level, uh, oil men like J Howard Pew and Sid Richardson, but also with more kind of mid level, uh, like Earl Hankamer of Houston, for instance. Uh, so again, this is Billy Graham's pragmatism, but it's also something that's going to come naturally to him through these relationships. Uh, and through these shared kind of understandings of Christianity as well. Uh, this gospel that Billy Graham sells is one that reaffirms kind of the fiercely evangelical principles, uh, that Lyman Stewart, uh, adhere to, you know, 50, 60 years earlier.

Butlerfilms (00:40:36):
So how did this, this sort of, you know, these alliances turn into almost like the gospel of crude within the pews. And so how did it go from the leadership to the pastors, to the pulpit and, and, and how did that sort of get ingrained and indoctrinated to just the overall philosophy that also pointed towards a certain political ideology?

Darren Dochuk (00:41:02):
Well, this is certainly a top down story. Uh, that's one you can perhaps overemphasize though, uh, you know, you follow the money and you will see kind of this trickling down of, of oil money into the church pews of the oil patch, especially of the Southwest Billy Graham, a very powerful preacher is going to tap into that as well. And through these friendships with, with rich oil men, uh, you know, kind of, uh, help facilitate the, the movement, uh, the expansion of these particular economic interests and by extension political interests. Uh, but it's also, you know, a story of kind of a bottom up story as well. It's, it's the kind of forging of this, uh, evangelical religious culture, uh, tied to the politics and economics of oil in the

Southwest, uh, is all going to happen in many ways organically. Uh, and again, it, it, it makes sense if you, if you think about it, if you live on an oil patch, uh, such as Texas, uh, the evangelical gospel provides a certain comfort, a certain kind of worldview that lines up with the day to day lived experiences of the oil patch.

Darren Dochuk (00:42:18):
Again, if we want to understand this, this is a fiercely, uh, harshly boom bust, uh, business, for instance, uh, you know, and, and so just as quickly as the oil arrives at disappears, uh, there is a sense therefore, that as individuals, as communities, we need to place our trust in a God who, you know, give and take it, but who is always there, uh, the sense of even eschatological, the, the ways in which, uh, evangelicals of the Southwest come to view, uh, the rapture, the end times, I mean, this is cataclysmic, this is something that's going to happen suddenly. Uh, there is going to be suffering involved, but again, this lines up with what communities as a whole, uh, feel and experience on the oil patches of America throughout their entire history. Uh, so the evangelical gospel, uh, again, provides a sustenance and provides strength and support, uh, in a way that makes sense. I argue,

Butlerfilms (00:43:22):
Okay, so we've talked about the Rockville, we talked about Stewart, but we haven't talked as much. You've mentioned him, you've mentioned Pew, but, um, I think it's important to also just sort of, you know, talk about the influence and power of the Pew, and also the direct pushback, you know, his Merck growing his influence in direct opposition to Rockefeller's right, and what they were doing. And, um, and at some point before the interview's over, I'm just going to have to have you do lines of, you know, you can go from Stewart to Doug deduct about on this side, and then these guys on this side, but, um, let's talk a little bit about Q and the continued influence today. I mean, I think most people probably have no idea when they see, like on PBS, you know, brought to you by the future. They trust, you know, it's like the long lineage of, uh, of their family's influence.

Darren Dochuk (00:44:28):
Well, it's impossible to think overstate the importance of J Howard Pew to modern evangelicalism, uh, J Howard Pew grew up in a family. His father was a first generation oil man in Western Pennsylvania. Uh, these were very devout, uh, free Presbyterians. Uh, again, they were, uh, believe strongly in the importance of, of scripture to their daily lives. The importance of one's personal relationship with God, uh, the kind of moral framework and family values, uh, out of which, you know, which grow out of I, again, this theology in the business of oil, J Howard Pew's father is almost driven to bankruptcy by the Rockefeller. So, uh, again from the very beginning, J Howard Pew is going to Harbor, not just a distrust, but, uh, a hatred for the Rockefeller family. Uh, and he is going to see his business operations, as well as his philanthropy, uh, as oppositional to the Rockefeller way.

Darren Dochuk (00:45:39):
Uh, he is going to take over the become CEO of Sunoco in the 19 teens, and will guide the company right into the 1940s and fifties. And, uh, within the oil business itself, he will grow Sunoco into, uh, what would be known as a mid major company. This is a very successful family run business, but he is always going to see it as, uh, himself as an independent oil man. He is going to in the thirties, uh, began to, uh, rise to prominence in politics. He and his brother, Joseph Pew will become leading donors and Republican party, but more importantly, they will really lead the charge on behalf of independent oil on behalf of Texas oil. Uh, even though their company's based in Pennsylvania, uh, they have a foothold in

Texas and really see themselves as Texans, if you will. And so from the thirties into the forties and fifties, it's going to be J Howard Pew.

Darren Dochuk (00:46:39):
Who's really going to be at the forefront of rallying, a kind of Southwestern evangelicals, rallying, independent oil men, uh, in opposition to Harold Ickes in opposition to Roosevelt liberalism, a new deal liberalism, which he fears has taken hold of Washington. He is also going to rally evangelicals, uh, in opposition to, uh, liberal Protestantism, this, this legacy of Rockefeller, uh, this, this notion of ecumenical, internationalist, religion, uh, in pews eyes, uh, religion that has watered down the core essentials of the evangelical faith. And it's for that reason that he is going to start funding Billy Graham's ministries, the national association of evangelicals, uh, and as the 1950s give way to the sixties, Pew going to indeed have been successful in really funding, uh, evangelical, conservative evangelicalism, uh, on a scale really not witnessed before, uh, by the 1970s, early 1970s, uh, by the time of his death in the early 1970s, uh, Pew has really not just created a business empire with lent with, uh, lasting legacies, uh, but has also put his stamp on modern evangelicalism itself.

Butlerfilms (00:48:03):
You think that was the start of this whole, you know, anti intellectual movement to, you know, the, the, the, the spurning of the academics, the spurning of the obese, I don't know.

Darren Dochuk (00:48:19):
Well, one could say, yes, you know, the 1950s, 1960s, uh, this kind of subculture that Pew helps fund this evangelical subculture. Uh, first of all, it is going to start to exhibit this kind of anti, uh, leadism anti-science, uh, that we see resonating today in more powerful form. Uh, because again, they're going to tie, you know, the, the science, the world of, of modern science to, uh, can this larger agenda, as they see it of secularization, uh, the fear of taking God, uh, out of, out of the home, out of the community, uh, out of the corporate boardroom, uh, this is what modern science does at least the modern science preached by the elites funded by the Rockefeller foundation. Uh, and so there is, again, this always this oppositional stance, uh, meanwhile, thanks to Pew and other, uh, other businessmen in oil, but beyond, uh, evangelicalism is going to be able to really create its own parallel universe, uh, of schools of colleges, uh, of periodicals magazines, media, uh, and so that by the time Pew does pass away in the early seventies, one can be immersed in this parallel universe without having to necessarily engage a broader intellectual developments, uh, in the American Academy.

Darren Dochuk (00:49:47):
For instance,

Butlerfilms (00:49:51):
You said that that's playing out at a much larger scale today. What do you mean by that?

Darren Dochuk (00:49:57):
Well, I think there's gradations here, the levels of, of, of, uh, engagement or of kind of a defensive posture, I think in the 1950s and sixties and seventies, again, reflected in Billy Graham's ministry, there was a sense of evangelical kind of optimism, a sense that one could still engage and transform society, secular society. Uh, Billy Graham really had, again, this, this, this optimism about him, uh, that I think gave evangelicalism kind of a more kind of positive outlook. Uh, Jay Hart, Pew was certainly an

intellectual of his own in his own, right? I mean, this is someone who read widely, uh, read extensively. Uh, this is someone who at the annual business Christmas party, you know, would preach his own sermons. Uh, this is someone who was committed to, uh, conservatism, uh, not just in terms of religious, but in terms of the constitution, uh, he was a purist, he was someone who immersed himself in theological texts and also, uh, in political texts.

Darren Dochuk (00:51:11):
So he wasn't anti intellectual in that sense. And he did not necessarily, uh, kind of resist developments in the Academy. So that's what I would mean by that first-generation or that earlier generation, I think still had a level of engagement, uh, that we do not see as much today. I think, uh, the evangelical is, um, of today, uh, is more radically defensive, I think in sheltered, uh, since the 1980s, the construction of an evangelical parallel universe has accelerated and intensified in a way that I don't think even J Howard Pew could have imagined. And it's one in some ways, I think that even the likes of Billy Graham, uh, resisted, uh, to some degree, and I think his son, Franklin Graham represents this, this more recent kind of, uh, uh, defensive posture, this, this anti intellectual ism of modern evangelicalism, uh, in a way that his father, uh, I don't think, uh, would have, uh, fully approved of.

Butlerfilms (00:52:16):
So what happened and who were the players? What, what, what, you know, who came up to change that become more defensive and as the modern evangelical movement grew or majority grew, you know, and, and these are big questions, but along the lines for you also in terms of tying into oil, what, what started happening in the seventies and eighties, um, who were the political players, who were the religious players, and how was that all kind of tied into money, Carter, Reagan, et cetera,

Darren Dochuk (00:52:50):
Right. Well, there's, there's lots to say there, so I'll, I'll go in one or two directions, but we can also not return, but yes, the 1970s, uh, are absolutely crucial. Uh, if we want to think about kind of a transitioning or transformation within modern evangelicalism, the 1970s, really the decade of that, of that change, uh, it's set against the backdrop of, of political volatility and change. We know, for instance, the politics of feminism, uh, abortion kind of social issues emerge in the 19, uh, that really create this, this fracturing of American society and politics, the polarization, uh, by the end of the seventies, you're going to have clear, uh, clear lines drawn between liberals and conservatives in terms of who supports, uh, women's rights, uh, who supports, uh, the right to an abortion. Uh, the energy, the momentum there of course, is going to lead to the formation of the moral majority and really the creation of the religious right in the late 1970s.

Darren Dochuk (00:54:00):
Uh, but there are other issues as well in 1970s. And I argue that we need to remember them as well. One of them being energy, of course, the 1970s is witness to two major energy crises in American society. One in the, uh, age of Nixon and the other in the age of Carter. And, uh, as far as even Joe Nichols and oil men in the Southwest are concerned. The reason why America is going to suffer in those energy crisis is because they have seeded power ceded control of oil to foreign powers, such as Saudi Arabia, such as OPEC countries. Uh, and so they are going to, uh, start crafting a narrative that says, wait a second, if we were going to get out out of this crisis, uh, we need to start focusing on an America first energy policy, one that privileges, uh, the authority and the ambitions of independent oil men in the Southwest.

Darren Dochuk (00:54:59):
Those who unlike large major oil companies have never had as much of a presence globally and who've have had to, because of economic constraints, focus on domestic oil exploration. And so, uh, they want Washington to stop against supporting foreign oil operations and focus on domestic production. Uh, so it's really kind of, again, an America first philosophy that brings together fears of the liberalization of the family and community with fears of a liberalized, Washington, uh, being more concerned with, uh, internationalism, uh, and, and partnerships with these other oil producing nations, uh, most powerful of which are Arab and Muslim. Uh, and, and these independent oil men of the Southwest rap, these, all these issues altogether, uh, and bundle them in by 1979 and anti Jimmy Carter Mo uh, movement and a pro Reagan movement. Reagan is going to, uh, you know, campaign through Texas through the Southwest.

Darren Dochuk (00:56:05):
And on one hand, he's going to champion the pioneering social values of yesteryear, uh, that Texans in Oklahoma is it always adhere to, he's also going to, at that same moment preach, uh, the priority he is going to place on domestic oil production and on defending the rights and the freedoms of independent oil men across the Southwest to drill, drill, drill. So that message is going to win the day. Whereas Carter is supporting, you know, liberal causes where he supporting feminism, where he supporting conservation and environmentalism. Uh, those in the Southwest are rejecting that and saying, well, we need to, again, shore up our value system. And Ronald Reagan is the man to do it. And that is going to be a key factor in Reagan's when in 1980 and going forward, Reagan is going to reward them by again, shoring up their kind of worldview, their philosophy,

Butlerfilms (00:57:06):
And how did the environmental movement environmentalist, and, and even like the, you know, I mean their national association of evangelicals words at some point, you know, kind of getting behind the environmental movement and, and, and, uh, it, you know, I mean, it wasn't, it wasn't just a democratic issue, right. I mean, right. Nixon starts EPA. And so at what point does it, well, first I'll tell us a little bit about that and what point does this topic of environmental stewardship and, and really at some, at some point climate change get rolled in to the messaging, um, so that it sort of turns on itself. So it makes sense. Sure.

Darren Dochuk (00:57:52):
Well, right at the beginning of environmentalism, let's say the 1960s and early seventies evangelicals were very much on board. Uh, they supported earth day in 1970. Uh, there, there was a sense again, that, uh, evangelicals could engage this issue, uh, and, and be supportive of it and help kind of grow a movement, uh, earth care resonated with their view of the gospel, their view of, of what, uh, their role as Christians were on this planet to take care of the earth creation care. Uh, you know, we see Francis Shaffer for instance, uh, who in the late seventies is going to become famous for writing, uh, anti-abortion texts. Uh, but one of his first texts is in the early seventies and it's on pollution. Uh, and again, so this is someone who, uh, is advocating for kind of a Christian engagement with environmental concerns. Now that first book also, uh, sheds light on the differences of opinion as well, uh, that will divide evangelicals from others in the environmental movement.

Darren Dochuk (00:59:07):

Uh, Shaffer wrote that book in, in no small part to argue against Lynn white, jr. Who, uh, wrote this absolutely crucial article in the late sixties that attributed the, uh, environmental crisis that he saw playing out in America, even in Los Angeles, where he was based pollution everywhere. Uh, Lynn white blamed that on Christianity itself, uh, said that the roots of this, uh, STEM from, uh, Christianity in the early modern period and the, the work ethic, the ethic of capitalism that Christianity seemed to support, even at the cost of environmental destruction, Shaffer Francis Shaffer comes along and writes this book and says, we are as evangelicals concerned about pollution. Uh, but we never must lose sight of, uh, the Christian roots of our environmental concern. Uh, moreover, uh, Shaffer always, uh, rejected the notion that man should not be at the center of the universe that man needed to be privileged over nature.

Darren Dochuk (01:00:12):
Uh, this was a very hierarchical order imposed by God. This was a very Calvinistic, uh, Dominionist outlook. And so Schaefer even then, uh, shows how evangelicals are eventually going to separate themselves from environmentalist them. Nevertheless, at this early stage, there was enough synchronicity for evangelicals to support the movement. This changes by the end of the seventies, is that, uh, well, yeah, evangelicals are going to become more concerned with issues of the body abortion, for instance. And so, uh, where some of that early kind of energy was placed behind land or earth care, uh, creation care issues, uh, by the late seventies, that same political passion is now going to be driving their concerns, uh, with abortion. And so a shift there in, in emphasis is, is in some ways going to be natural. Well, uh, you know, we look at for instance, uh, the three mile Island, uh, nuclear, uh, crisis of the late 1970s, uh, that concern with nuclear energy is going to by extension stir up concern among evangelicals for, uh, issues of the body for, for child, for children, uh, what is this kind of, you know, energy, environmental destruction going to do to our children.

Darren Dochuk (01:01:34):
And so there's a way in which environmental crises of the seventies are also going to naturally nudge evangelicals in, in a different direction. Uh, and then if we look at Francis Shaffer again, uh, what evangelicals are going to see by the end of the seventies is an environmental movement that in their estimation has become radicalized, uh, and that no longer, uh, places, uh, man places, humanity in a privileged position, uh, vis-a-vis nature, uh, that has rejected the notion of God, uh, and a God ordained social and economic order. So that too is going to nudge a lot of evangelicals, more conservative ones, especially, uh, out of, uh, an environmental pro environmental stance into one. That's going to be more oppositional to environmentalist something that we're going to, we will see evolve even more in the 1980s.

Butlerfilms (01:02:29):
Let's talk about how involves in the eighties. And let's talk about sort of the introduction of a global warming, you know, it turns to climate change, um, and, and how, how, where oil fits into this in terms of oil money, in terms of changing the conversation to, you know, the huge amounts of money put into propaganda, media, Christian radio, that kind of thing, sort of denying that take the climate change is real. Again, these are like, we're like tripping through the decades, and I know there's a lot to say. And also, do you want to take a break? Are you okay?

Darren Dochuk (01:03:08):
No, I'm fine. I'm all right. Yep. Well, as we move into the 1980s, uh, there, there's no doubt that we're going to start to see the kind of ramifications of big oil money, uh, at work and at play within the

evangelical subculture, uh, when J Howard Pew passes away in the early seventies, he, he really also passes on the mantle to other power for oil men based in Texas in Oklahoma. Uh, the hunt family for instance, is going to become very important bunker hunt, the son of HL hunt, who again, a famous wildcatter from East Texas, uh, who made it rich in the 1930s by the late seventies, it's bunker hunt and, and into the 1980s, uh, that is going to be probably one of the most important if not the most important funder of the religious right of the moral majority and other organizations of that sort it's bunker hunt.

Darren Dochuk (01:04:03):
For instance, that's going to fund Francis Schaefer's, uh, some of his writings and documentaries, uh, taking a stand against abortion, lamenting the decline of, of Christian civilization. Uh, this is where a lot of bunker hunts oil money is going to be poured into, uh, again, promoting kind of these as they see it, these pioneering family values, uh, these, these true Christian family values, uh, as well as, uh, kind of economic independence and anti statism, uh, all of this, again, coming together in the Reagan years of the 1980s, uh, they are also going to support, uh, for instance, uh, Reagan's attempt a successful to roll back regulations of the environment regulations of, of Western lands. Uh, if we want to trace the history of kind of the rise of conservatives and we can certainly do so through, uh, from the presidency of Franklin D Roosevelt to the presidency of Ronald Reagan, the end of new deal liberalism and the rise of Reagan conservatism, uh, we can also do so through the careers of, to secretary of the secretary of the interior, Harold Ickes representative of this kind of Washington regulatory oversight of the environment, promoting conservation in the new deal, uh, that is going to give way to, uh, James watt, who is going to become secretary of the interior for a short while, uh, but in the early Reagan years and is going to, uh, have a profound effect on the way environmental and conservation measures and regulations are rolled back in the West, thereby therefore allowing, uh, independent oil men, uh, of the hunt variety, uh, to go into sensitive zones, whether it's offshore or onshore and start drilling for oil again.

Darren Dochuk (01:05:59):
So, uh, the, the interest, the power of oil of Southwestern oil money is clearly there, uh, with political effects, uh, in the 1980s to we're going to see the extension of this kind of evangelical, uh, parallel universe, the construction and support of universities, Christian colleges, all of which are going to, again, increasingly resist, uh, kind of the, the science, uh, the biological, uh, natural sciences, uh, that are being taught at a large state universities. Uh, and they are going to attempt to bring God back into the picture, God, back into the forefront of, of education. Uh, and again, laying the groundwork, I would say for, uh, what we see now as, as this kind of skepticism of modern science skepticism of, uh, climate change, uh, and some of the other, uh, kind of, uh, environmental, uh, principles in, in advocacy, uh, that plays out elsewhere. Does that make sense?

Butlerfilms (01:07:08):
It makes total sense. It's, it's fascinating. I'm glad you talked about why it was in my notes, too. You sort of referred to the ushering in of Reagan and Watson as the Wildcat Christianity's, um, you said revolt or resurgence gave him, gave him a whole new wattage to, to move forward. Um, so, so we're, we're into the eighties and, you know, we could, we could keep going through the nineties day. I don't know if there's a way to do it. I mean, it's pretty, it's pretty hard to include all of this, but I guess, uh, this is a question for you in terms of what you think is the most significant events that we should hit on to bring us to today and to bring us to today in terms of, um, where we are in terms of deregulation, where we are in terms of the climate change debate, you know, climate skepticism versus climate action and in what, what were sort of the key moments that kept building to where we are today? What has resulted

in this current administration's, um, you know, dismantling of most, you know, in environmental efforts in this?

Darren Dochuk (01:08:36):
Yeah, that's a good question. I'm trying to think of specific, uh, pivots. Uh,

Butlerfilms (01:08:45):
Let's see. Well, you certainly covered the past. I've got some notes here that might have taken us. Uh, well, I mean, you'd go through expansion to Israel and then in the two thousands, and then of course we get George Bush to bushes, to oilmen presidents, you know, um, but also how much of it just trying to get on a political scale, but, you know, then we get eight years of Obama and then sort of a significant backlash, just curious, like the influence, like how, how did the power players in the oil and in religion world, you know, um, having flown during this period, it's like, that is the most significant influence is really the Wildcat religion in terms of where we are today. Please. Correct me if I'm not sure.

Darren Dochuk (01:10:01):
Yeah, yeah. For sure. Yeah, no, I mean, I could, I'll talk a little bit about right now with Trump and stuff, but, uh, I mean, I, I think the story since the late 1980s is one of ebb and flow in terms of the, uh, kind of the successes and failures of Wildcat Christianity, for instance, uh, you know, one could say that things changed dramatically, uh, during the presidency of George, uh, uh, HW Bush, uh, when the United States is forced into war in the middle East, uh, into Iraq. Uh, this is really the first moment when the US is now having to fight a war wage, a war, uh, to protect its own, uh, oil supplies to protect its own access to oil. This was once the most powerful oil producing nation in the world. It has now ceded that power to, uh, other societies, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, uh, and is placed in a defensive posture as a result, uh, by the early 1990s.

Darren Dochuk (01:11:12):
Uh, and so again, you know, that, that, that confidence of the civil religion of crude the Rockefeller way now gives way to a certain desperation that is represented by American, uh, kind of geopolitics in the 1990s. Meanwhile, uh, back here on American soil, there is a great concern. Once again, that domestic reserves are on the decline, the fear of peak oil, uh, this is a fear that has arisen, uh, in, uh, different junctures in American history. The fear that the United States has is losing its own oil supplies now to depletion. Uh, once again is a concern into the early two thousands. Uh, this again on one hand is working against the livelihoods and interests of independent oil men in the Southwest, but it's also going to create a new opportunity for them. Uh, and it's in the two thousands just as this fear of peak oil, uh, is reaching, uh, an intense level, uh, that, uh, once again, the entrepreneurs of the Southwest are going to come up with a solution and that's going to be fracking, uh, and, and the hunt for natural gas, uh, prove, prove wildly successful.

Darren Dochuk (01:12:30):
Uh, and it is going to once again, put America on sure. Footing, uh, in relation to its, uh, again, possession of this valuable resource oil and gas. It's also going to, once again, empower independent oil men, uh, these independent oil men who in the 1980s, uh, were suffering in another downturn are now going to become highly successful once again, able to make big profits and able to pour those profits into their churches, into their, uh, charities and into Republican politics of the Southwest. Again, fracking, uh, like conventional oil exploration, uh, requires limited regulation to succeed at least to

succeed on that level. Uh, and so the politics is going to, of course be an extension of this, uh, this, this constant effort by these independents to roll back regulation during the Obama years, of course, uh, in the two thousands, they are going to face this ultimate threat.

Darren Dochuk (01:13:29):
Uh, once again, a liberal precedent, a liberal Gover government that is seeking to, uh, install or re-install a heavy, heavier regulatory oversight of the environment, uh, of offshore oil exploration, for instance. Uh, and so Obama's presidency is really gonna, uh, represent this kind of this ultimate enemy. And again, if we want to work in other elements, such as race, of course, this too is in their eyes and ultimate upfront, uh, to the white Christian heritage of this country. Uh, and so it's during the Obama presidency presidency, really that we're going to see once again, kind of a ramping up of a wild cat Christianity's politicking through the funding of an alternative institutional structure universe, uh, as well as a fiercely kind of tea party politics, uh, that is going to arise at this juncture. And again, conservative media now reaching a new level of influence as well. Uh, thanks again to these long standing patterns of, of oil funding. Uh, so all of this is going to come to a head during the Obama presidency, uh, and today is going to be very much responsible for, for where we are, uh, in the Trump presidency.

Butlerfilms (01:14:54):
And where does the, where does, where does climate change and science denial weave into all of this? You know, how is that, um, obviously it's against the interests of, of frack fracking and oil and oil industry, fossil fuel companies. So tell us a little bit about, um, well, this, this conversation is going on while scientists are causing the alarm that we've got a warming planet, what is happening, um, on the other side with the fossil fuel companies in relationship with their church partners, um, to question the science tonight, a science, how is this funded? How does this play out?

Darren Dochuk (01:15:42):
Yeah, good question. And, and, you know, there are different ways to get at that, uh, you know, living on an oil patch and having grown up in an oil patch, uh, one doesn't necessarily think through these things or process, you know, uh, you know, w when does one become a, a science denier, uh, or anti, you know, uh, anti intellectual, I guess I would say, uh, over the last generation or two, certainly, uh, if you're growing up in Texas, Oklahoma, or Alberta, Canada on the oil patches of North America, uh, you might not realize just the extent to which kind of a pro carbon gospel is, is rooted in the pulpits and pews of, of your churches. Uh, we don't, you don't necessarily need to follow the money per se, uh, to, to understand this, although as I've emphasized following the money does matter. The, uh, economic interests of oil matters, uh, for understanding how, uh, this religious and political movement gain steam.

Darren Dochuk (01:16:54):
And, uh, in the late 20th and early 21st century came to take such an aggressive stand against environmental causes against, uh, the anti carbon activism, uh, of the liberal left as they saw it, uh, just living, worshiping and playing in the oil patch. Uh, you come to assume a certain way of thinking a certain way of, of, of life it's in your DNA to be supportive of an industry that has provided such sustenance to your community over generations. Uh, the notion to deeply rooted in the oil patch and in the churches of the oil patch, that oil is God given, this is, this is, this is, this is a good thing. This is something that, uh, has been, that has been a blessing, a divine blessing on America. This is what has made it great. So why should we be taking such a harsh stance against it?

Darren Dochuk (01:17:51):
Uh, you know, this is something I heard, uh, in my lectures talks that I gave throughout the Southwest and Alberta last year. I mean, uh, despite the difficulties, the economic hardships, despite the acknowledgement that this does di does damage to the environment, uh, oil is in that sense in essence, a good thing. Uh, it's a God given thing. And, and so, uh, to be kind of pro carbon to be pro oil, uh, is, is again something that is organic to the churches of these places, uh, and again, to be raised in schools as well. And in churches that take this kind of pro oil stance, uh, it's no accident that you are going to be highly suspicious of, not just activists on the left, but scientists, uh, who seem to be, uh, offering, uh, knowledge offering a view of the world of climate change, for instance, uh, that just does not quite resonate with what you have heard, uh, throughout your life. Uh, in, in, again, this is the churches and schools of, of this region. So I don't know where, where else can we take that?

Butlerfilms (01:19:06):
Well, I'm curious, because I'm curious about where, if you're following the money and the science, you know, where does, how, how impactful would is climate gate, right. You know, in, in like, you know, the whole dismantling of Michael Mann's scientific, you know, analysis of the warming climate a while ago, a couple of weeks ago, um, how was that used as sort of a political weapon who funded some of that? Where, where did the Koch brothers fit into this long story of oil men influence and in political ideology? I mean, they could probably be tied to it, right. Mean there was a really interesting, um, this is, this is more recent, but a really interesting article in grist about, um, about how the code brothers funded a whole campaign. Um, and they targeted different routes. They targeted white, even white crisp, evangelical Christians, and they targeted African American evangelical Christians with like putting on gospel concerts and things like that. And then talking about how, you know, oil was going to save their community. And the climate change is real and all that stuff. Again, it's like, these are big broad spots, but we couldn't go there.

Darren Dochuk (01:20:31):
Yeah. I'm blanking on I'm blank. Sorry, I'm blanking on some of the specifics. I could have read up a bit more on that, but I mean, generally speaking. Yeah. Uh, I mean the Koch brothers certainly do factory in here. The Koch brothers are not necessarily religious. They're not known for being religious conservatives. Uh, but they, uh, we're, we're in the mode of, uh, in the mold of the independent oil Oilers of the Southwest, they were libertarian fiercely libertarian. Uh, and so throughout the last, uh, uh, 20, 30 years have been probably the most important donors of, uh, pro oil causes, uh, and by extension, uh, campaigns that, uh, are trying to create again, an opposition to, uh, those scientists, uh, that, you know, say climate change is real, that we are in the midst of a climate change crisis, uh, that is going to, uh, you know, be absolutely disastrous for, uh, humanity in the coming year. So they have yes. Funded, uh, in this case, uh, religious groups, whether white evangelicals or black evangelicals, uh, to kind of assume leadership within these, these, uh, anti, uh, climate. Well, no, I'm not sure how to, how to voice that.

Darren Dochuk (01:21:58):
I mean, I can talk a bit, well, I mean, there's the oil sands. Um, yeah. I don't know how quite, how to get at it. I'd have to, I'd have to read up a little bit.

Butlerfilms (01:22:15):
Okay. Okay. Yeah. I don't want to, I don't want you to answer anything that you're not feeling.

Darren Dochuk (01:22:19):
I mean, I, I, you know, I think it's, I think an irony we find about the pews on the side of the Rockefellers. Now, uh, you mentioned the Pew foundation, uh, I mean, I think there is a, an irony in play here in terms of science, uh, you know, environmental causes, whether it's climate change or, uh, whether it's opposing Keystone pipeline opposing the Athabaskan oil sands in Alberta, uh, you know, again, perhaps illustrating that the change that has happened even within evangelicalism, uh, J Howard Pew is of course the creator of the great Canadian oil sands, the initial oil sands project in Alberta, uh, today it's the Pew foundation, uh, Pew charitable trust that is actually, uh, working alongside the Rockefellers to oppose this very creation. Uh, so, uh, the politics of, of environment and energy, I think have created some interesting, uh, uh, changes, uh, there's some interesting ironies in play as well. Uh, yeah, kinda blanking

Butlerfilms (01:23:35):
That's all right. We've covered a lot of it.

Darren Dochuk (01:23:37):
Yeah. But again, I, you know, I'm happy to offer some more specifics, but I should have reviewed, uh, one or two texts here, which get more into the specifics of, uh, environment, uh, evangelical opposition.

Butlerfilms (01:23:52):
That's okay. I mean, if your game, maybe we could just sort of get back on for an audio interview and I could use audio to cover some of that, but we can get farther into that. Um, they're just there a couple of little, uh, strains that I don't know how much I could really get into it. Um, but let's back up in history just for a little bit and, and talk about the impact of Henry glutes and you know, who he was and how he really helped shape the narrative. And we can't go into a great amount of detail, but it seems like he'd be a pretty important player to leave out. Right?

Darren Dochuk (01:24:35):
Well, Henry Luce really was important in the way that he kind of reframed the American mission during world war II, but in the years that followed, uh, the son of missionaries in China, uh, loose his family was supported by the Rockefellers. Uh, so this is someone who deeply respected the Rockefeller family, uh, especially John D Rockefeller jr. Uh, who the loose family called affectionately. Mr. Jr. Uh, so this is someone who kind of aligned himself, uh, religiously and politically with kind of the liberal internationalist Protestant view that the Rockefellers, uh, advocated, uh, in the early to late 20th century, uh, it's in the early 1940s in 1941, that Henry Luce, uh, framed what he called or called for, uh, an American century. Uh, this is Luce was, uh, by this time, a very powerful, wealthy, uh, publicists, someone who owned time magazine and life magazine.

Darren Dochuk (01:25:45):
And he used the pages of, uh, his magazine to announce again, the dawning of a new era, uh, calling on Americans to embrace the American century by that he meant it was time to put isolation behind isolation as politics. And it was time for the United States to a willfully eagerly assume it's new leadership position in the world. This is a country because of its economic might because of its political power and because of its own kind of entrepreneurial-ism in Lucy's mind, uh, that could now take leadership around the globe to create, uh, an international community, uh, with America in the lead. And this is indeed what would happen in the 1940s and fifties and into the sixties and early seventies, the United States would really assume it's its position of authority around the globe. How is this tied to

oil? Well, it's no accident that Luce articulated this vision of an American century, uh, prior to publishing it in his magazine.

Darren Dochuk (01:26:50):
He actually spoke to, uh, an oil association in, uh, Oklahoma prior to the publication. Uh, and they're made really explicit, direct references between the unfolding of this new American century and the work that oil men were doing to not just, uh, raise, uh, American economic might and power around the globe, uh, but the work that they were doing, uh, to help develop the world to modernize it, uh, to uplift it really. And this was again, key to what Luce envisioned for the United States. It's something that would be more well articulated in it. Harry Truman's address in 1949, at which point he revealed kind of four points in, of, of, of outreach by the United States, focusing for instance, on economic development, on helping other societies develop their economies, uh, and by doing so basically uplift them as well and bring them closer to the experience and the reality that the United States enjoy the prosperity that the United States enjoy. So Luce envisioned that, and he also championed the work that major oil companies were doing around the globe in the middle East and Latin America and beyond, uh, to make this kind of vision a reality.

Butlerfilms (01:28:17):
Thank you. It's a fascinating character. Um, okay. Let's move forward one more time and tie in for me. Um, it's always a little, I didn't really totally understand it until reading your book, like the interest in Israel, the wildcatters Christians, that whole merger, where Israel was at the center of it. Like you don't really didn't really understand that. And I still can't really articulate that. Maybe you can help, help make that connection.

Darren Dochuk (01:28:57):
Well, since its very beginning actually earlier tracing back to the beginning of the 20th century evangelicals because of their, uh, their beliefs in certain prophecies because of their beliefs. In an end times that says Christ is gonna return return suddenly and return, uh, to, uh, Israel, uh, evangelicals have always been very supportive of Zionism, always supportive of, uh, the, uh, re-establishment the establishment of a state of Israel, which of course happens in the late 1940s. And evangelicals are going to celebrate that moment because in their minds, this is now paving the way for the second coming of Christ spoken of in biblical prophecy. That story is quite familiar to us. It's been told by, by several historians and, and commenters journalists, those who are aware of kind of evangelical subculture to the present date, Israel remains of course a going concern for American evangelicals for this reason. This is why, uh, again, they, they support the politics of Donald Trump who has placed his support squarely in favor of Israel and the protections of Israel in the middle East. Uh, so this is a, a narrative that extends throughout the 20th and into the 21st century. But if we bring oil into the picture, I think that also sharpens our understanding of why it is that evangelicals, especially those in the West and the Southwest are so,

Speaker 3 (01:30:31):
Uh, attached, uh, to,

Darren Dochuk (01:30:34):
Uh, the politics and the economics, uh, and, and the development of Israel, uh, here, this element of the story, again, traces back to the late forties, early fifties, just when Israel, uh, became a state, a nation

state, uh, of course Israel is very vulnerable to its neighbors. Uh, and so national security is always a concern. The second big concern for Israel was energy independence, uh, having a supply domestic supply of energy, uh, to support itself without again, making itself more vulnerable to its, uh, its neighboring, uh, enemies, uh, most of whom or many of whom, uh, tended to be large, powerful Arab Muslim oil producing States, none more powerful than Saudi Arabia. So oil go, uh, Israel goes looking then for S for people, for oil men who can help it achieve this independence. Uh, and where are they going to look to where they're going to look to the small producers, the independent Wildcat oil men of Texas and Oklahoma, and, uh, these oil men, many of whom are devoutly evangelical and already see Israel through these prophetic eyes are going to jump at the occasion and are going to start pouring their investment into Israel oil exploration, and are gonna bring their companies there, uh, and help this process along now, the politics of oil, again, play into this, the geopolitics of oil, uh, major oil companies, such as standard, uh, such as, uh, standard New Jersey or Gulf oil, uh, because they are already operating in Arab oil, producing States societies like Saudi Arabia.

Darren Dochuk (01:32:14):
They are prohibited, uh, from being active in Israel. Saudi Arabia says for instance to Aramco, uh, which, uh, is, uh, supported by Chevron, uh, and other Western major oil companies, uh, tells them that, uh, you cannot operate here in Saudi Arabia if you're also operating in Israel. So Israel is limited in its options, independent oil men who are not active, uh, by and large in Arab oil producing States can supply Israel, uh, legally, uh, and practically with the type of, uh, work that Israel needs to get done. The independent oil men are never going to be hugely successful. Uh, but to this present day, they continue to operate. And most recently, of course, uh, one of the companies, often these companies, uh, bear kind of religious titles like zine oil, uh, one of these companies has in fact just discovered a gas offshore Israel. Uh, so this, this journey has been a long one, both for Israel, and it's, it's a quest for energy independence, but also for these Southwestern oil men, again, many of whom would arrive in Israel with their Bible in hand, ready to look for oil, uh, and using Bible and scripture to help them along.

Butlerfilms (01:33:34):
That's fascinating. So how has, how, how has, how does the process, you know, what does it, what does it mean when people say prosperity gospel and, and, and the fact that this administration is, is, is guided by the profits of the prosperity gospel, what does that mean? How does it, how has that come to pass?

Darren Dochuk (01:34:04):
Well, the prosperity gospel in technical terms is very much tied to a movement within Pentecostalism within Pentecostal Christianity. Uh, again, this notion that, uh, once favor before God, uh, is, will be proved by one's prosperity by one's, uh, ability to, to make it rich, to be rich. Uh, there is a direct correlation then between God's blessing and, uh, God's, uh, in one's ability to, uh, to make money making money is not just a material goal. It is in this case, a spiritual goal, a spiritual realization of the divine favor, uh, bestowed on one by God. And so, uh, money making is in subculture, a proof again of, of one's blessedness. And, uh, that is, you know, rooted very much in, in, in kind of a, uh, a movement within Pentecostalism. Uh, but I argue that, you know, if we look at life from the oil patch, there is a kind of a broader canopy here of, of, of a broader, uh, prosperity gospel that is more capacious. Uh, and, and one does not have to be Pentecostal, uh, to believe that the, again, spectacular riches that oil brings suddenly, uh, is a sign that God, again, has bestowed favor on one self or on a community. Uh, and so that, that is, is kind of in general terms, uh, what, uh, how it, how I see the prosperity gospel in relation to petroleum, uh, we can dig further there. What else, how else would that?

Butlerfilms (01:35:55):
No, I think that's good, but I think that's it, but I think maybe could you relate it now to the current, to how we're handling the current climate crisis, like how that is now playing out, um, in, in, in our world today as to how we take on climate change, if we believe climate change, um, and, and the influence that, um, you know, whether you're you're a wild cat or your big oil influence oil on this conversation today? Well, here's another dip like, um, uh, wanted Kyle got in Kyle from young evangelicals for climate action. You may or may not be familiar with him, but he, he sinned evangelical who is now committed as like to climate action. Cause he said, you know, it's been just like we had all these decades of just a big snow campaign and his, his take on it was the fossil fuel company, took a page out of the tobacco industry's playbook to really push a political and cultural agenda change.

Darren Dochuk (01:37:12):
Well, right, there is a pro the prosperity gospel is, is very much alive and well, uh, within evangelical circles, uh, and within the, the politics of the Trump moment. And, uh, again, much of it can be tied back to, uh, the influence that the oil industry has had, uh, in the Southwest, especially, uh, this prosperity gospel as it relates to the politics of environment today, uh, preaches again that, uh, laissez Faire capitalism is a God ordained economic order, social order, cultural order, uh, at an individual level one's prosperity. Again, bears witness to one's good standing, uh, uh, before God, uh, once good standing in relation to biblical principles. Uh, and so to pursue that profit, therefore, uh, must be, uh, a scriptural, a sacred imperative for the believer. Uh, there is an urgency, therefore to seek those profits, there is a justification for laissez Faire capitalism, as I say earlier, uh, you know, oil has always celebrated, uh, kind of this laissez Faire free for all, uh, capitalist mode in the prosperity gospel of today, lends legitimacy to that.

Darren Dochuk (01:38:30):
It sacrifices that pursuit. Uh, there is also a sense that this has to happen quickly. Uh, the end is always insight, whether it's the end of oil, uh, or it's the end of this world. And so there's this, this kind of, uh, intensity with which we need to pursue these profits. Uh, this is something that Christians need to do really at any cost, uh, and those who would prevent them from carrying out that campaign, this biblical scriptural campaign, uh, environmentalist for instance, or a large federal government with regulatory oversight, uh, that does damage to the prosperity gospel, uh, kind of philosophy. And so there's, uh, obviously natural reasons why these two are going to clash and why those who adhere to a prosperity gospel within this kind of evangelical subculture are going to be absolutely opposed, uh, to those, uh, in the environmental movement.

Butlerfilms (01:39:32):
What do you think is, um, the reason why evangelicals, I guess, um, have been so influential in this area? Cause certainly not all Christians, not all people of faith, you know, are, are climate deniers, you know, and so, but, but how has this sort of small group had such a enormous impact on our political, the political landscape today? And I think maybe if you would, it's sort of fair to say you can't, you know, this is, you know, this is just a small sampling, you know, campaigns all make maybe even all evangelicals with the same brush, I don't know.

Darren Dochuk (01:40:20):
Right, right, right. I mean, evangelicalism maintain some diversity still. I mean, there is still room, I think, within evangelicalism. And we've seen this, uh, with young activists, uh, uh, working for instance with

sojourners to protest the Keystone pipeline. Uh, there, there is potential within evangelicalism still, uh, for a more rigorous kind of environmental, uh, kind of creation care crusade. And, uh, that stems from deep roots evangelicalism going back to the late sixties, early seventies, again, when evangelicals, uh, I would say majority tended to be on board the environmental movement, uh, and, and its cause. But by and large, I would say the evangelicalism of today, the majority evangelicals, especially those living, uh, along the Southern rim, living in oil, saturated places like Texas and Oklahoma, uh, are very much, uh,

Darren Dochuk (01:41:24):
Are very much in, in the other camp in opposition to again, uh, environmental causes and, and, and the environmental movement. Uh, they are attached again to this prosperity gospel, uh, that demands of them, uh, an aggressive kind of capitalist, uh, entrepreneurial view of the world, uh, evangelicals, uh, however small they may be in proportion to the rest of the nation. Uh, also tend to be a highly animated, highly mobilized group. Uh, the construction of alternative institutions of media of education, uh, are now bearing fruit, uh, allowing these evangelicals to, to learn again in their own way and learn their own, uh, earn their own, learn their own, uh, truths, uh, about science, about earth, uh, and about creation.

Darren Dochuk (01:42:25):
They are animated. Uh, there is, again, always a sense within evangelicalism of this variety, uh, that the enemy is at work. That enemy can be, again, Washington, it can be elite. Uh, it can be scientists, uh, or it can be foreign powers, uh, communists, uh, evangelicals of this variety thrive. In other words, in this world, in this, this Manichaean world, uh, they're also, again, operating with a certain urgency, uh, that the Christ is going to return and return soon, uh, which again, works against this notion that we should be improving. We should be working together as a humanity to improve our current social and economic and environmental conditions. Time is running out according to these evangelicals, there is no time. And not only that, there is no ability of, of mankind to make these types of improvements. The only way we improve our state, the only way we improve our, our, uh, position in life is to devote ourselves to this Christian gospel of personal salvation through Christ. So for all these reasons, evangelicals, especially those in, in the oil patches of North America, uh, tend to be, uh, again, highly effective at, uh, uh, spreading their influence, uh, even beyond kind of the proportions of their numbers.

Butlerfilms (01:43:58):
Okay. Last couple of questions. Are you optimistic that I don't know. I mean, leave us with something, leave us with your thoughts on, do you think that the pendulum will swing again and it, the specifically around the conversation of climate change and even, you know, the, how all of these things that you've talked about are, are even, um, part and parcel of the response right now that our country's having to the COVID pandemic. Um, can you leave us with any optimism or would you like, or not, if you were ending this documentary short, what would you like people to be left with? And that's kind of two questions. Like, it depends up in question then then of the

Darren Dochuk (01:44:47):
Right, and this is a specifically to evangelicalism. You mean,

Butlerfilms (01:44:52):
I think it could either be to even dog realism or just where, how we've gotten to this place, um, in, in, in our conversations about climate change and ant, um, and, and moving forward and how the pandemic response ties into that.

Darren Dochuk (01:45:20):
Boy, not a lot of room for optimism as far as I see. Uh, yeah, I mean, I, I think the current crisis, the pandemic moment, uh, will jar loose if we're talking about evangelicalism and evangelicals, I think it will jar loose a larger percentage of those who, uh, perhaps, mm Hmm. I think the current crisis, the pandemic pandemic moment, uh, as far as evangelicalism is concerned, will, uh, jar loose a, a larger fraction of those who consider themselves devout, uh, to, uh, more kind of aggressively embrace modern science and to, uh, stop kind of simply, uh, operating within churches, worshiping within churches, uh, learning within Christian schools, uh, kind of the, uh, sorry, I'm kind of fading.

Butlerfilms (01:46:25):
That's okay. Let's, let's take a different tact. Um, the one is, is just personally, you know, can you wrote, you wrote that you started this research a long time ago. Um, what's your, what's your particular background background? The fact like, you know, your, but you said, you know, in the book he was like, I started small Domingos. I was sitting in churches and I would hear this, that, and on there. So tell me more about that.

Darren Dochuk (01:46:52):
Well, I mean, I came to this project, uh, out of, in many ways, personal interests. This is the life I lived really growing up in Edmonton, Alberta in the 1980s, especially, uh, this was a time of another oil downturn, an oil crisis. Uh, I attended an evangelical church at the time. My father was in fact, an evangelical pastor. And, you know, I heard messages that, uh, decried, uh, kind of the federal regulatory state, uh, which was preventing Alberta's oil industry from flourishing. Uh, not only that, uh, by her messages, sermons that decried, uh, the Mo the Muslim, other, those Muslims who were in OPEC and, uh, controlling global oil, uh, and really hurting Alberta and oil producing society. Uh, and so these kinds of political messages, political, uh, kind of tones work their way subtly into kind of the broader evangelical, uh, preaching and activism that I experienced firsthand in the 1980s.

Darren Dochuk (01:47:58):
So this book really was kind of a walk down memory lane. It allowed me to process, uh, what I had learned, uh, as a young evangelical someone who at the time really didn't have the wherewithal or the ability to step outside it, and to kind of examine this subculture from a broader purview. This book allowed me to do that in many ways. And, uh, you know, I would, uh, I'm not, I would not consider myself an evangelical today very much post evangelical at best. Uh, but, uh, and I I'm dismayed by what is going on within this broader evangelical movement. Uh, the way it's been polarized, the way it has absolutely been politicized, uh, evangelicalism today, I think, is a label that, uh, resonates more as a political label than a theological or religious one. And that is deeply concerning. And, uh, frankly, I, I don't hold much hope right now that, uh, evangelicalism will be able to shake that, uh, for quite some

time, uh, there might be a younger generation that's willing to be, uh, voice their dissent, uh, with this politicization of evangelicalism politicization on behalf of staunch, conservative, uh, policies in, in terms.

Darren Dochuk (01:49:16):
Uh, but we'll see how, uh, how that unfolds.

Butlerfilms (01:49:23):
Thank you. So I've been asking people to look straight at camera, which I think you have the whole time anyway, and identify yourself, you know, this is who I am, and you can say I'm an author, um, of, of, of your book of anointed with the whale. Um, but then do a second one. That's just a little bit more informal. Um, people have done different things, know, um, someone like a Joel Salitan the farmer would probably do. I'm a Christian libertarian crazy farmer, you know, I mean, you sort of go to, so we're going with both ways because we might, we might try to do, I mean, we're just trying to do this without a narrator. So people are kind of introducing themselves to camera for the audience.

Darren Dochuk (01:50:09):
Okay. I'm Darren DocCheck and I'm a professor of history at university of Notre Dame, and also, uh, the author of the recent book anointed with oil, how Christianity and crude made modern America.

Butlerfilms (01:50:27):
Good. Do you want to do a shorter version for me?

Darren Dochuk (01:50:30):
Sure. A formal informal or informal, uh, what, uh, I, I let them try to think what, I don't know what I am or who I am.

Butlerfilms (01:50:50):
Well, you could say that, or you could make it more personal about your, like, even what you said to me at the beginning, you know, it's like writing this book was no a passionate and fun, you know, steeping living with these characters living in this time or, or not sure that to you, you don't have to do it at all. Okay.

Darren Dochuk (01:51:45):
I'm Darren DocCheck, I'm author of anointed with oil, how Christianity and crude made modern America, which is a book that stems from my roots growing up in the Texas of Canada, Alberta.

Butlerfilms (01:51:58):
That's great. Thank you. Okay. So this is the last thing, and maybe this is maybe I'm simplifying this too much, but could you help me, um, sort of narrate a little timeline between the civil religion of crude main players and the Wildcat Christianity main players. So that sort of this too, like in the, you know, we have Higgins in this time period Stewart, you know, up to today, and then on the other side, you know, Rockefeller, and then you talked very specifically giving all the details about these people, but it might just help if we wanted to do a graphic timeline to hear your voice kind of bullet point, the main characters in their time periods. Is that, does that make sense or is that what to do

Darren Dochuk (01:52:47):
Well on the civil religion of crude side, we have, of course, one family that absolutely dominates and it's multiple generations, four generations. We have John D Rockefeller sr, uh, who gets into the oil business right at the beginning. And in the 1870s, uh, creates, uh, an oil empire called standard oil by the 1890 standard oil controls, uh, upwards of 90% of oil refining, uh, around the globe in the early 20th century, John D Rockefeller sr uh, gives way, uh, gives leadership of his oil company over to several other gentlemen who will still continue to operate close to the Rockefeller family. But most important is John D Rockefeller jr. Who, uh, is senior son. And in the first half of the 20th century, uh, he will, uh, certainly be active in oil, but most importantly will become the leading philanthropist, perhaps the leading philanthropist in America at that time pouring standard oil profits into the Rockefeller foundation, uh, supporting missionaries, supporting liberal Protestant causes around the globe, uh, in the 1940s, uh, jr.

Darren Dochuk (01:54:00):
Will kind of see leadership, uh, give leadership of the Rockefeller fortune and the Rockefeller foundation in the civil religion of crude, if you will, to his five sons, uh, and those five sons will create their own foundation. Uh, but through the 1950s and sixties will be, uh, absolutely influential in extending kind of the Rockefeller vision of ecumenical, religion, and internationalist, democratic, progressive politics around the world. Uh, so that's really the lineage there. The fourth generation of the Rockefellers also factor in, uh, by the 1970s and eighties, it's this generation that has actually, uh, started to reject kind of the assumptions capitalist assumptions of their forefathers and have in fact begun to, uh, use Rockefeller money, uh, to support environmental and other progressive causes. So that's kind of the full extension of what I call the civil religion of crude. On the other side, this kind of the Wildcat Christianity, uh, rooted again also in the early stages of oil and Pennsylvania, a family such as the Stewart's Lyman and Milton Stewart, two brothers that are going to be successful oil men in Pennsylvania before facing a collapse because of the Rockefellers, they will move to California and start union oil.

Darren Dochuk (01:55:22):
Lyman Stewart will be the most important of them, uh, in the 18, 19, 19 hundreds, and all the way to his death in the early 1920s, he will be really the most important, most powerful funder of fundamentalist, Christianity of Wildcat Christianity, this fiercely individualistic, uh, uh, form of Christianity of Protestantism. Uh, he will build a large church. He will fund missionaries. You will build a college, uh, college, uh, in California at this time, again, laying the groundwork for the 20th century rise of kind of this conservative evangelical movement. Uh, there will be other Wildcat oil men who factor in Patil

Higgins for instance, uh, who really saw himself as an apostle, uh, saw his quest for oil, uh, in, at the turn of the century as something that was God ordained. Uh, he would be influential in Texas, uh, from around 1890s, uh, into the 1920s and 1930s and beyond.

Darren Dochuk (01:56:21):
But really his moment is 1901 when Spindletop oil is, uh, discovered near Beaumont, uh, in Texas, the Stuarts again will provide leadership for evangelicalism in the early 20th century. The net, the family, that oil family that will pick up the mantle will be the pews led by J Howard Pew, uh, and from the 1920s, especially the 1930s up until the early 1970s, J Howard Pew and the Pew family as a whole, uh, will be very important for funding evangelical causes, uh, through their foundation. Uh, J Howard Pew will have his own charitable trust. That will be absolutely essential to the rise of evangelical and political conservatism, uh, in the 1940s and beyond. Uh, one could say that, uh, when J Howard Pew passes away, the mantle is passed to the hunt family, especially bunker hunt who uses his, uh, family's oil money in the late seventies and 1980s to help support, uh, several religious right causes that help.

Butlerfilms (01:57:28):
That's fantastic. Thank you. I'm going to let you go. I don't have more worn you out, so thank you. Um, I am, I kind of want to do just a whole feature documentary on your book. Probably somebody who has already decided that they want to do that, but if they haven't let me know,

Darren Dochuk (01:57:48):
I, there has been some interest, but yeah, sure.

Butlerfilms (01:57:51):
That's fascinating. Um, okay. So should I stop recording?

Darren Dochuk (01:57:57):
Should I stop recording or still

Butlerfilms (01:58:00):
Go ahead and stop recording. I'm going to stop recording too.

Bob Inglis Interview

Bob Inglis (00:00:00):
Okay. It says recording red lights on

Butlerfilms (00:00:04):
Red lights on. Awesome. Okay, here we go. Now we just get to chat. Um, so we can start this very easily. If you just give me your full name and how you'd like to be represented in your, in, in our video, in your lower third, like what title would you like?

Bob Inglis (00:00:20):
Well, it's, it's, it's Bob Inglis or Robert, but if you say Robert ma I feel like my mother's mad at me. Um, but cause she's the only one that called me Robert and only when she was mad. So, uh, but it's bobbing, listen, I'm the executive director of Republic, aeon.org. Um,

Butlerfilms (00:00:40):
All right, so and so that's your official title? What's your unofficial title? How would you describe yourself?

Bob Inglis (00:00:47):
Um, uh, the, uh, the cheerleader for a free enterprise action on climate change, who says that, uh, this is actually pretty exciting problem to solve. Um, that's what it, so it's a cheerleader. I think

Butlerfilms (00:01:02):
Cheerleader, I like that. Okay. We're playing around with maybe doing some of this with graphics and animation, cause we can't be there all year around. And um, and so we can revisit that question at the end, but if it works, it might be kind of fun for people to introduce themselves and then sort of give a colloquial description of themselves and see if we can create some sort of artwork around it. They'll see. So for you, it's been, I know that you've done this, told your story a lot, but if you could tell it for us on camera for this short, I think it'll reach a lot more people that don't know it. Um, you are now a cheerleader, but how did you get there? Take us a little bit through your timeline of where you started and where you are now.

Bob Inglis (00:01:50):
Well, my first six years in Congress, I said that, um, he, you know, um, by the way, there is some static, I think you probably don't want on that.

Butlerfilms (00:02:01):
Oh, is that on your monitor?

Bob Inglis (00:02:04):
No, I think, see if you mute, if you meet what happens.

Butlerfilms (00:02:10):
Oh, right. I forgot to mute that's me. That's my bed

Bob Inglis (00:02:18):
Now. Uh, I think he's yeah. Yeah. When you come off mute, it goes, there's a static.

Butlerfilms (00:02:24):
Okay. All right. So, um, I'm going to go off mute. Sorry. I'm going to get the hang of this on here. I mean, I'm going onto mute.

Bob Inglis (00:02:30):
Okay. So, uh, answering your question there. So from our first six years in Congress, I said that climate change was nonsense. Uh, I didn't know anything about it, except that Al Gore was for it. And, uh, in as much as I represented a very conservative district in South Carolina, that was the end of the inquiry for me. So, uh, I admit that's pretty ignorant, but that's the way it was for six years. Then I was out, uh, uh, six years doing commercial real estate login in Greenville, South Carolina had the opportunity to run for the same seat again in 2004. And my son came to me, the eldest of our five kids. He was voting for the first time that year, because he just turned 18. So he said to me, dad I'll vote for you, but you're going to clean up your act on the environment.

Bob Inglis (00:03:18):
Um, his four sisters agreed, his mother agreed new constituency was born, you know? And, um, and by the way, my son was going to vote for me no matter what, right? I mean, it wasn't in his economic interest to vote against me. Um, I mean you can lose by one vote. And so, um, so what he's really saying, I think was dad, I love you. And why don't you be relevant to my future and my four sisters futures by getting with it. So that was step one of a three step metamorphosis. Um, step two is going to Antarctica with a science committee and seeing the evidence in the ice core drillings. Um, and then step three was another, um, science committee trip with a stopover at the great barrier reef and being inspired by the faith of an Aussie climate scientist, um, who is showing us, uh, the glories of the reef and the challenge of coral bleaching.

Bob Inglis (00:04:15):
And I could tell without any words, being spoken, that we shared a worldview because I could see that Scott Heron who's now become a very dear friend was worshiping God in what he was showing me. Um, I could see it in his eyes. I could is written all over his face. You could hear it in his voice as he'd get excited about telling me, as we came back to the surface, what we'd seen. So later we had a chance to talk and he told me about conservation changes. He was making in his life in order to love God and love people. Um, you know, Scott rides his bike to work. He does without air conditioning, as much as possible in Townsville Australia, pretty hot place. As long as his wife and three daughters are let them get away with it hangs a family's clothes out on the line, all to consciously loved people coming after us.

Bob Inglis (00:05:04):
And so I got right inspired. I wanted to be like Scott, loving God and loving people. So I came home and introduced the raise wages, cut carbon active 2009. That's a revenue neutral border adjustable carbon tax note to self do not introduce carbon tax in midst of great recession. When you represent one of the most conservative districts in the country, it won't go well for you. And it didn't go well at all. After 12 years in Congress, I got 29% of the vote in a Republican runoff and the other guy got the other 71% of the vote, a rather spectacular face plant, uh, in politics. You know, usually you don't lose that badly after

12 years in Congress. Um, and I had committed other heresies against Republican orthodoxy at the time. You know, I was for, uh, I voted for tarp, the troubled asset relief program.

Bob Inglis (00:06:00):
Um, I, uh, uh, was against a troop surge in Iraq. I had conservative concerns that my friend and he is my friend George W. Bush was doing nation building in Iraq. Um, uh, I was for comprehensive immigration reform, although we never, uh, called it that, um, probably the district could tell that I didn't have it out for gay folks. Um, and, uh, but my most enduring heresy was just saying that climate change is real and let's do something about it. Cause that appeared that I'd crossed to the other team that I was marching with the other, the other folks. And so, um, at that point, a foundation came to me and said, you know, English, you're an unusual zoo animal, an actual conservative, um, you know, 93 American conservative union rating, a hundred percent Christian coalition, a hundred percent national, right to life eight with the NRA zero with the Americans for democratic action, a liberal group and 23, by some mistake with the AFL CIO, the labor union, um, they said an actual conservative, um, who says climate change is real when you speak and write for the proposition.

Bob Inglis (00:07:11):
And that's what I've been doing ever since. Um, and now it's a team of, uh, five of us, uh, facilitating a community about 10,000 online. Uh, we need a couple of zeros on the end of that 10,000. So we've got to grow a lot in order to make, make this voice heard that there are conservative ways to deal with climate change and it fits with our values and the very exciting news is there a lot of progressives who would agree. Um, and so, um, that's what I've been doing ever since. I'm basically trying to say, I guess that the heresy that got me tossed out is not a heresy it's actually completely consistent with bedrock conservatism.

Butlerfilms (00:07:56):
And how so? How surprised were you? It couldn't have just been the recession. Like you obviously probably didn't consider just how catastrophic this decision that you made would be in. So I guess the question is, is what surprised you most in terms of how this, or all the reaction was against this and why? Because it's not like, you know, conservatives, you know, people like Richard seismic and things like that. It's not like there weren't people out there that, that, that thought, especially from conservative Christian point of view, that thought, you know, climate change was real and then maybe we should do something about it. So when did that conversation really turn where it went from being kind of a common sense issue to be a faith issue, to being a political issue where you have to, you have to stay in the lane and if you go in the, then you're, you know, in trouble and I'm going to mute myself here.

Bob Inglis (00:09:01):
Yeah. It's an interesting history, isn't it? You know, early Oh eight, Newt Gingrich was on the couch with Nancy Pelosi. We don't agree on much. Do we Newt? No Nancy, but we agree. Climate change is real and we need to do something about it. That was early Oh eight by the end of Oh eight, Newt had switched. We don't know. He said at the end of Oh eight. So the intervening events were two. One was the global financial crisis and the commencement of the great recession. And the second was the election of a secret Muslim. non-American socialist to the white house named Barack Obama. Actually, he's none of those things, but, um, sadly, uh, my party tried to make him into that, um, uh, which, uh, is

actually code language for yo there's a black man in the white house. Um, and so a very sad outcome there.

Bob Inglis (00:09:56):
Um, but so, uh, that began what we call the decade of disastrous disputation. Um, the good news is it ended in 2018 when Republicans lost control of the house of representatives in Washington. And that caused people like Kevin McCarthy, the Republican leader to say, Republicans need to change on climate change, uh, because we can't win essentially. You can't win suburban districts where they retro position on climate change and you can't win the majority back if you can't win suburban districts. And so, um, that's, uh, uh, then came the coronavirus. And so what we're, what we're concerned about is we don't want another decade or some period of time to elapse. Now, while we deal with financial troubles, uh, we've got to solve climate change. Um, and it, uh, we, we can't really, the longer we delay the bigger the problem gets, but it is, it is amazing to see that it was 2008, 2018 is a decade of disputation.

Bob Inglis (00:11:03):
And, um, it just became a, uh, a tribally marked thing, uh, that, uh, you know, liberals are for action on climate where conservatives, we don't talk about that. We actually think it Republican and.org. It's, it's a very undeserved inferiority complex among conservatives that apparently for a while we thought we were just no good at energy and climate. And so when the topic came up, we shrank in science denial. It's so like, if you've got a friend that's constantly talking to you about the marathons that he or she runs, and you have no interest in running a marathon every time the topic comes up, you change it, you change the subject, right. That's what it was happening with climate with conservatives is they apparently felt that they weren't any good. Um, and so they would change the T st. Change the subject shrink in denial, but now experience is a very effective, but often harsh teacher.

Bob Inglis (00:12:00):
And so it is taught us that climate change is happening. We are seeing it. Um, and, um, I think that the more groups like ours are helping conservatives to hear it in their own language, because most of this has been conducted in the language of the left. You know, we need to repent to the capitalistic system we need to do with less. We need to walk and eat bugs. Uh, well maybe that last thing is an exaggeration, but, but for that's the way conservatives heard it. And so what we try to do is say, no, no, this is about more energy, more mobility, more freedom, harnessing the power of the most dynamic force on the planet, which is free enterprise innovation. And the way you do that is start with accountability, accountability for emissions, and then everything becomes easier because then the economics are right and that will drive the innovation.

Butlerfilms (00:13:02):
So there's a couple of things that I want to read this with, with what you just talked about other right now that we're, we're talking about, you know, innovation and driving it, you know, one of the people that we are talking to, cause he's, he's, he's local to Charlottesville is Joel saddle tin. Are you familiar with Joel at all? He's probably he's from he, he, he runs Polyface farms. He, he founded PolyBase farmers. And, and the reason why we're talking to him as a farmer is he was kind of made into a bit of a cult hero. And, um, Michael Pollan's Omnivore's dilemma and the noise out there because he really talked about, um, you know, the carbon spec in the soil and like, let pigs free range, free range. And he was way back, like, I think when harder or no, when, um, when Clinton came into the white house, I

guess he brought in a chef that wanted free range chickens, and they couldn't find one anywhere near Washington.

Butlerfilms (00:14:02):
So they brought in Joel who had these free range chickens. And he got on pretty conservative radio shows and because he is an evangelical Christian libertarian. And so he was really sort of scorned by, um, the Republican conservative, right, for being like going against his evangelical values and roots and like whatever, being like crazy mom, I'm saying all this, because later on, he came out and said he was labeled as science denier after he had been like a hero to read movement, because he said something about, you know, he doesn't want, he didn't support about those, uh, um, regulations, because he's so fiercely, anti-regulation from regulation and it's a law. It's sort of a long question to ask you, um, how do you, so, so you have that whole brain, whereas I don't regulate, how, how do you, um, how do you get people into the fold that, uh, totally disagree with not regulating anything? Cause you know, salads, didn't tell you it's, don't go after the fossil fuel company news. There's more heart go after big ag because it's all about water and how we produce food. And I'm all about carbon sequestration in the soil. Yeah. So for your organization, for the things that you've found, how do you address those issues? And let me have you,

Bob Inglis (00:15:41):
Well, there are three ways to fix climate change. You know, you can regulate it, you can incentivize it or you can price it. Um, and the regulation approach is basically it's a respectable approach is just not ours at Republic, aeon.org. It's basically says, listen, we've got a scientific problem here. We've got to get down to 350 parts per million. We're going to regulate down to that. That's a something that fits if you're somebody that believes in the power of government. And, um, generally thinks that government is a helpful force. Um, second way to deal with it is to incentivize it. That means, you know, create some tax advantages for, uh, the fuels of the future, um, and make it possible for them to become more economic. Um, the challenge of both of those first two is it it's really hard to get them to go worldwide.

Bob Inglis (00:16:35):
Um, if you regulate in America or incentivize in America, you don't get China and India in on the deal because your regulations can't apply in China and India. Um, and the incentives, well, those are for American taxpayers. They don't work if you're a Chinese company or an Indian company. So the third approach is to price. It is to simply put a price on carbon dioxide that then you pair w through a, through a carbon tax, presumably upstream. The beauty of that is there the under 2000 companies in the United States that either mined coal or, or put stuff in a pipeline. So it's a very small job for the IRS. You put a price on the emissions that we know are going to come from that stuff, those fossil fuels. Um, and then you, um, compare that tax, which is a hard thing for a conservative say, right?

Bob Inglis (00:17:34):
He wants who's a conservative, wants a tax. Well, but the tax is paired with a reduction in other taxes. The bill that I had would have reduced payroll taxes. Um, and as art Laffer, one of Reagan's economics says on a video we've got on our website. He says, it's a no brainer. Why would you not want to untaxed income and tax? Anything else emissions will do? He says, um, and so, um, it's paired with a reduction in other taxes or a dividend of all of the carbon tax money back to the citizenry. So there's no growth of government. And then you apply the tax on imports from countries that don't have the same price on

carbon dioxide, and that causes it to be in their self interest to do the same thing. Cause otherwise they're paying on entry into the United States, a tax that's being sent to Washington DC.

Bob Inglis (00:18:32):
If they had collected that tax in their own country, it would have ended up in their capital and the import would have come through our ports with no adjustment. So pretty quickly other countries of the world figure out without any international agreement at all, without any bowing and scraping at the UN, without any protracted negotiations, they just pursue their self-interest, which is to impose their own carbon tax internal to their own country. And then you have the United States using the power of its market access to its market, to get the whole world in, on putting all the costs in on the burning of fossil fuels. And then you fix economics and then you have 7 billion people, not just 325 million plus Americans seeing the true cost of burning fossil fuels. You see 7 billion people seeing the true cost in the 7 billion people drive innovation in energy a little bit like the way that those 7 billion people who have driven the innovation in tech and, and, and, uh, telephones and smartphones and internet than PC.

Bob Inglis (00:19:43):
Um, and so then you have this cleanup of the air worldwide. So I think that's the challenge. If we, if we get to conservatives and we talk about regulations, well, that's a nonstarter because we conservatives typically don't like to the thought of regulations, especially even if you're concerned about climate, what you realize is if they're domestic only, you actually ended up being the double loser. If that's the only solution to climate change, because not only do you lose the jobs, when somebody who's regulated here picks up and moves to another country that doesn't regulate them for their emissions. Not only do you lose those jobs, but you lose the race. And we think it is a race to reduce emissions because once they get there, they're going to admit more than they were emitting here because we're pretty energy efficient here compared to, for example, China.

Bob Inglis (00:20:42):
And so it's a double lose proposition to do it by regulation. It's a, the incentive approach is a little bit better because perhaps if the cost of the unit comes down somewhat because it's been perfected here in America, maybe you can sell it to other power companies let's say around the world. But the challenge with that is they're probably only 10, 20,000 companies in the whole world that make electricity. So the market isn't very big. And so you wouldn't expect cost of individual widgets to come down very much. Unlike cell phones where 7 billion people want one, the cost came down because you have people competing to offer you, would you like my cell phone? Would you like mine? And they competed on cost, hard to do that when you have 10 or 20,000 customers. Um, and so that's why we think the third approach is really the one that will end up in a worldwide muscular solution to climate change.

Bob Inglis (00:21:49):
And one that fits with, with it that, that, that idea of simple accountability and pricing we think fits with the most conservative among us. Other words, that's exactly what Milton Friedman would say to do. Another one of Reagan's advisers. You know, there's a great clip that we use a lot it's on our website and I use it in speaking a great deal. Milton Friedman on the Phil Donahue show. And of course you have to explain now who filled out. And he was because if you're in front of young people, so I just tell them, it's basically a white guy doing an Oprah show is what Phil was. And so, um, he used to have, uh, have dr.

Friedman on and they'd debate. And so on one segment, it's a Phyllis says, what did I do about pollution? And dr. Friedman, if you don't want to regulate it,And Friedman says you tax it, you tax pollution.

Bob Inglis (00:22:41):
And then he goes on to explain how it is that if you have a firm that's producing say SUT, you don't want them to get away with socializing that suit, because if you do, you're imposing that cost on society. And he says, you got to step in the government has to step in and say, no, no, you can't do that. You have to scrub your stack, clean it up, hold your Ash on your property. Be biblically accountable. Don't do on your property. Something that harms somebody else's person or property. And of course that causes the, uh, that company. That's making that coal-fired electricity, for example, to have to go buy new equipment and scrub the stack, it'll increase the price of their electricity to their customers,

Butlerfilms (00:23:31):
But isn't that a problem

Bob Inglis (00:23:33):
That means that we're all paying for what we take and we're accountable. And then without any subsidies, solar and wind may beat that coal company. It making electricity nuclear may even have a comeback, but right now, if you let the coal company get away with stink in the air and socializing their suit, you, you, you, you frustrate the innovation. And so we think it's something that really fits, especially with libertarians and surely with conservative Republicans, because they realize, yeah, that what you're talking about is simply internalizing negative externalities, and some folks are listening and saying, why did he just say internalize a negative externalities? That's what it's all about is, is making those external costs apparent in the price of a product. Then you get innovation, the free enterprise system.

Butlerfilms (00:24:35):
Okay. So setting aside the path forward, ms. Solutions for a moment, let's, let's go back in history a little bit, again, instruct through history a little bit. How much, how much do you think, um, religions specifically Christian, right. And you can define them any, any way you want, you know what I mean? There's evangelicals and then there's the Christian. Right. And, uh, how much do you think they were, um, how much, how much power do you think they had and how much do you think they were integral in creating an eight debate creating sort of a small army of climate skeptics? And how did the political kind of politics sort of who joined forces? You know, did they join forces, do politics join forces with them first, or did that they joined versus with politics? Like talk to me a little bit about your experiences in that 10 year period, and even before, in terms of how this discussion about climate change became so override, it just got to be,

Bob Inglis (00:25:48):
You know, I think that the reason that, um, people of faith, especially Christian conservatives find the climate conversation of pudding is it seems that there's no place for God in it. And that we're, uh, we're not recognizing the sovereignty of God. Um, that's, that's where it, um, that's where the rub is. And so if you approach a Christian conservative and you say it's all up to us, uh, we gotta solve this climate

change thing. Um, that's not what, that's not what I believe. I believe that God is sovereign and all things. Um, I also believe that humans are responsible and the reality that you can't reconcile those two things, it's sort of like, uh, I believe that Christ is human and Christ is divine. You can't reconcile those two things. You hold them intention. And so, um, uh, God is sovereign in the longevity of the earth.

Bob Inglis (00:26:49):
Um, and its habitability. I believe that I also believe that humans are responsible. Um, and that's, that's where the conversation, if you start it there, then, uh, especially Christian conservatives can enter the climate conversation. If you start it with a breastless, Oh my gosh, we're all gonna die by next Tuesday. Um, then Christians conservatives find that very off pudding and they think, well, this is not a conversation for me, this climate conversation. Um, but what I, I find it pretty useful to ask fellow believers, you know, uh, if, uh, if God wills it, he could clean up my, a fluent that's coming out of my plant. That's killing your cattle. And of course everybody's sitting there should agree, you know that yeah. Uh, he who changed water into wine could in fact clean up that affluence. So it doesn't kill your cattle, but that's not the way that God usually works.

Bob Inglis (00:27:48):
He usually says, Hey, Angliss, be responsible. You can't put that stuff in the Creek, it's killing your neighbor's cattle, clean up your act. And so be responsible. So it's, yeah, God's sovereign humans are responsible now hold that intention and work it out. Um, but when it, when the left, I think doesn't realize what they're doing with this and particularly the secular, the evangelists of secularism don't realize it. Um, uh, so for example, I wonder if the late Carl Sagan realized what he was doing in that show when he said the cosmos it's all there is all there ever was all there ever will be. I wonder if he knew it was a direct affront to people of faith, um, because that's not what I believe. Um, in fact, there's a passage in revelation. That's pretty clear about, uh, about, uh, God being the alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

Bob Inglis (00:28:52):
Um, and so, uh, uh, Carl, I, I disagree. Um, and, but, but what happened, I think, is it for a lot of believers going way back to the scopes monkey trial and, and all the, the dispute about godless evolution, you know, um, uh, that's, that's the history of all this. Um, and, and so it, it infected people of my age. I think this, this rejection of science, because they were closer by their grandparents to that scopes monkey trial and all of that from my children. However, they really don't see this contest between faith and science. They, they see it as if anything face should be affirmed by science. Um, and that's, so it's a, it's a, it's it's people, my age and older that are the ones that are having a harder time with this than my kids and younger, because they're the ones that the, those young ones are the ones that say, no, they, they, they believe, but they also want, uh, they also believe that science can affirm that faith. Um, and it's a reasonable faith.

Butlerfilms (00:30:14):
So, but, but I think the science denial, at least as I understand it, was it that's, yes, it came out of this case, went to trial for sure. But it was also the, the, the fire was fanned and, you know, fueled by, um, the rising moral majority that had a certain agenda. So maybe you could help us understand that a little bit, what role did like Dobson or, you know, or Jerry Falwell or Pat Robertson, you know, what roles did they play in it in fostering a, um, an agenda, uh, that they believed in, um, that swept climate change and the environmental whole responsibility even creation care and stewardship into that overall

agenda, because it sure seems like they were building a building block. And, and so how did, how did their religion and their politics impact the conversation about environmentalism because, you know, environment, I mean, right. It was, it was Nixon, right. It started EPA. They didn't, the Democrats didn't have a hold on this from the very beginning and aim, right? Yeah.

Bob Inglis (00:31:37):
Yeah. I think that, uh, uh, what we have to watch out for is unholy alliances. And, uh, I think that there is an unholy Alliance that formed between the leaders of what passed as the moral majority, let's say. Um, and some people with some very specific economic interest when it comes to climate change. Um, and that's the reality that we're dealing with a very unholy Alliance there. And I think that Alliance is starting to be seen for what it, what it is and, and the corruption that it caused, especially to the faith. Uh, you know, when, when you allow your faith to be used by people with economic interest, wow. Does it get corrupted pretty quickly? Um, and so, you know, I remember in law school when I was in, uh, university of Virginia, uh, with, uh, Jerry Falwell right down the road in era bumper stickers around, uh, the moral majority is neither.

Bob Inglis (00:32:45):
Um, and, uh, I remember as a young believer being a little bit offended by that, but now I think I would say, I think that's right. It's a, it's clearly not a majority people who are biblical believers are clearly not a majority in America. Um, and, um, it's not moral to combine that faith with people of economic interest and not see a corruption of the faith. And I think we are seeing that so completely right now, um, in, in, uh, in what's happened with the rise of a Christian nationalism, um, uh, which is a strange concept to me, um, because, you know, uh, they're apparently, uh, people who see themselves as cultural, all evangelicals, it's an oxymoron. There's no such thing as a cultural evangelical, but that's what they apparently are, because if you there's some great research done by Jim goose at Ferman and a guy named Whitehead at Clemson university that shows that, um, people who identify with a Christian nationalism, in other words, that America is a Christian nation, and we should return to Christian kind of concepts in America.

Bob Inglis (00:34:16):
You ask them if they go to church or the Bible study, they don't. So they're sort of seeing themselves as cultural evangelicals. So like people you say I'm a cultural Catholic or what, no, no. If you're an evangelical, the idea is you have received some truth that now you wish to, uh, by God's grace share with others people. So, yeah, you're, you're by nature, counterculture as, as an evangelical you're, you're not, there's no such thing as a culture in which you would exist, uh, because, um, to, to love the world is to hate God we read in the scripture. And so, so you're in other words to, to be corrupted by the world to be part of the world, um, yes, you went to serve the world and you went to love them. And as in telling them the truth, if you're an evangelical, but you're not into banding with them to achieve their earthly purposes, that's not what you're into, um, you're into bringing the kingdom.

Bob Inglis (00:35:20):
And so it's a, um, yeah, I think that, uh, that's what, that's what we've seen this corruption of the faith and it's come full circle full now in, in what we're seeing in a lot of politics in this, in this espousing of a nationalism, because what that is, is a sense that we've got to return America to these Christian principles, but the people that are espousing, those things don't reflect those principles. And in fact there is so like for, from my kids, I think, you know, I think that all five of them would tell you that the

nastiest people on the planet are Christians involved in politics. Um, because they have seen them as having the sharpest elbows, the nastiest people in, in, in, in the world and in politics. Now, if I represented, perhaps say a district in Chicago and I were a Democrat, maybe my kids would all think the nastiest people in the world are labor union Democrats, you know, because they'd be the people with the sharpest elbows and the meanest people to their mom or dad, you know, there was in politics.

Bob Inglis (00:36:39):
Uh, but for my kids, I think they were pretty much convinced that the nastiest people on the planet are Christians involved in politics. And that is such a crying shame because, uh, the people of true faith or people who actually care about the common good, and they actually do care about the world and want to help. Um, they want to love God and love people. And so that's a powerful witness. This thing of combining faith and power, that's where the trouble starts. Um, you know, I remember one time was my first trip to Iraq. I was in Iraq five times, Afghanistan, four times when I was in Congress. And the first time I was with Senator Jim Dement, who was leading the trip and we're taking off from Amman Jordan and, uh, looked out the window of the plane. And I said, uh, look, Jim, it looks like Greenville, South Carolina, where we both live.

Bob Inglis (00:37:37):
I said, uh, there's a church on every corner, except it's a mosque. Um, and, uh, what happened in the conversation that followed as we came across the ocean was a very interesting conversation about when you couple faith and power, that's where the faith gets corrupted faster than the state does. The state can probably use a little bit of faith, but the faith can't use any state. Uh, because when you combine those two, then you end up with a compelled faith, which is not true faith. We want people to come to faith freely of their own volition, not because it was told to them and forced upon them. And so whenever you combine faith and power, you're really destroying the faith faster than you're achieving anything in the state.

Butlerfilms (00:38:36):
Oh, how, um, how was the Bible used in, in creating division with this conversation? I mean, we know how it was used, can be used in creation care, you know? Um, but how was, what were people quoting in the Bible to say that either a, you really shouldn't talk about care about climate change or B is not really happening or see, it's just arrogance on the part of, and I think that you can do anything about it. Yes, I can. I can think specifically inaugurate and, and, um, to people like Breslin ball, he would go, go on and say, you're not a Christian, if you were an environmentalist. So talk to me a little bit about that.

Bob Inglis (00:39:25):
Yeah. Um, there you go. Uh, it's uh, I think it all comes down to the word dominion in Genesis chapter one, you know, um, hold on a second. That interesting. It's silent over here, but it, because it's so close to the phone, I went to the computer, I guess it goes, okay.

Butlerfilms (00:39:51):
I know there's all kinds of weird bugaboos going on. Cause my stuff is silent it too, but it's sort of, it's making all these things where I get to hang this stuff.

Bob Inglis (00:40:00):

Yeah. So, um, yeah, you know, I think a lot of this comes down to the use of the word dominion in Genesis chapter one, where, um, we're told that God gave them dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air. Um, and that's what it's, that seems to be when it all turns on. And so some believers say, well, that means we really, you know, you can use it up, burn it up and abuse it. I think there's a real problem with that because if he, the word is dominion and, uh, you know, that's, that sounds like, well, maybe you can just use the earth however you want to, but then if you consider the whole of scripture, what is, what does Christ dominion look like? Well, let's see he's washing the disciples feet. Um, he's a servant of all he says.

Bob Inglis (00:40:59):
Um, and so if that's what dominion looks like as modeled by the second person of the Trinity, isn't that what we, as the followers of that, God should be evidencing is that sorta dominion. It's a servanthood. It's not a Lord it over them approach. And so I would say to those people who, who generally focus a great deal on that dominion word is yeah. Okay. It's there. I agree. Um, and now what does that dominion look like? It looks like servanthood, it looks like, uh, creation care. It looks like stewardship. It does not look like I am here to Lord it over this place. And so, um, I think either way, either if you try to quibble over the word dominion, or just study the word dominion and figure out what it looks like, you come to the same conclusion, which is a conclusion of stewardship.

Butlerfilms (00:42:06):
So that's makes total common sense. And I think most people would get their head around that. But when you have people like Linda in how much, how much damage do they do, do you remember when you made that comment? You remember reading Breslin Bo's comment, you can't be a Christian and care about environmental ism. Was that part of your orbit at the time?

Bob Inglis (00:42:26):
Well, you know, I stopped listening to Richland ball a long time ago. In fact, I remember the moment I was driving down the road and there was the radio and he had his, his clever little song about, uh, the, the people in the Yugo, you know, it's it's to the soul and to the, I guess, Elvis his song about, um, you know, another baby's born in the ghetto and he turned it into the Yugo until these liberals were in the Yugo. And I just remember thinking rush, when did it become conservative to use it up and burn it up and it just doesn't make any sense to use it up and burn it up. I mean, that's just, uh, I think you just got a dang, let me do that over. So you don't get that. Dang. Um, is, uh, I had a dang on my end.

Bob Inglis (00:43:14):
Um, so it's, uh, I'll do that over and say, you know, I remember the moment when I was listening to rush Limbaugh, driving down the road and he had his song on about the Hugo, the liberals in the Hugo. And I remember thinking, gosh, when did it become conservative to use it up and burn it up? You know, uh, where I learned conservatism was from my dad who, when he was teaching us to drive, he'd say, now let off the gas here at the Tartars, we're gonna coast to our driveway. And he used to say two things. One don't wear out the brake linings. He was an industrial engineer. And so he was very, very, uh, worried about those brake line he's. He said, don't worry, don't wear out the brake linings. And second don't burn up the gas. Now that's conservative. But when I heard Ross talking about, yeah, good, and your, uh, your big SUV and go around, you know, and be a manly man, whatever I'm thinking, when did that become conservative?

Bob Inglis (00:44:16):
It's not consistent with a conservatism that I knew from my great depression father or from his mother who saved the rubber bands off of the Jacksonville times, union newspaper every day had an enormous ball of them. I don't know what we're going to do with them, but my grandmother didn't throw anything away. Um, because you know, people were hungry in the depression and, and so they were affected by it and they were conservative and you can serve things. So rush, I just turned it off. I said, I'm done with you buddy. Um, you, you don't sound conservative to me.

Butlerfilms (00:44:56):
God, you don't have to write your brain with him anymore.

Bob Inglis (00:44:59):
No, I know. I don't have to deal with that.

Butlerfilms (00:45:03):
Okay. So let's address it in a comment and a reason why I'm asking you this is because he was so specifically pointed in the can't be a Christian and believe in being an environmentalist at the same time. Of course, I'm paraphrasing. I can't, I can look up exactly what he said, but, um, I don't remember him saying that, but if you were involved in this era, uh, you probably do. And, and, and how did he get, how does it make you feel?

Bob Inglis (00:45:32):
Well, you know, I was, I was once speaking, um, in Oklahoma and I, uh, as a Federalist society, you have a very conservative group. And I was asked, uh, basically a question that came up about this sovereignty of God versus human responsibility. And, and so I, um, answered, um, you know, talking about my friend, Jim Inhofe, and he is a friend from, we overlapped in Congress, um, uh, when he was in the house. And, um, I know him to be a very dear, uh, sweet man who cares about people. Um, for example, I know this from Lisa Jackson, um, Barack Obama's EPA director, that she in fact has a picture of Yemen Hall's family on her credenza. And he has a picture of her and her family on his credenza. And, um, so she's told me what I believe. And that is Jim is a very dear man.

Bob Inglis (00:46:32):
It's just that he's very wrong on this. So on, on, on the environment, you know, and so I, I can deal with that. It can be, it can be a very dear person and be wrong. I'm about found out that I'm wrong on a number of things, you know? And, uh, so the question is whether you have enough grace available to you to change when you find out you're wrong on something. Um, and that's, some of us don't have, don't find a supply of grace sufficient in order to change. But, but Jim, I think is this guy that really is offended by us making that out, that we are, um, arrogant enough to believe that we control the longevity of the earth and he, he takes a front at that. And so what I'd love to do is, and I said this to this group in Oklahoma, I said, I'd really love to talk to my friend, Jim, his scheduler won't let me into seam, but I really talked to, like to talk to him about how is that humans are responsible and God is sovereign and you have to work that out intention.

Bob Inglis (00:47:36):

And, um, afterwards, a guy came up to me and he said, I'm Senator Inhofe's state director. Um, I didn't know that he, I didn't know who he was sitting there. And so that turned out to be a meeting with Senator Inhofe staff, not with Jim, uh, in Washington. And so I asked him when the Senator, his grandchildren come home from Oklahoma state or university of Oklahoma and they interrupted me, they said, Oh, he's had the conversation with his grandchildren. Cause you know what I want to know. I'd love to be a fly on the wall for that conversation. Cause he's got to go something like this. You know, grandpa, what you're saying on the Senate floor is not what they're teaching us at at Oklahoma state or at the university of Oklahoma. That's not what the science is grandpa. And so, uh, it's just, it seems to me that particularly somebody of faith that should be able to say, well, then let's deal with the realities, the data that we see, if your faith can't address that, then there's something wrong with your faith.

Bob Inglis (00:48:44):

I mean, it's, it's sort of like you you're believing in fairytales at that point. Um, you know, I find that the archeological evidence of the existence in the life of a guy named Jesus of Nazareth is affirmed by archeology. Is there, there are historical records, uh, this that helps me and I should be, I should welcome that inquiry not resisted and live in some fairytale. I don't live in a fairytale. I live in a faith that has a reasonable faith and that is supported by archeology. And in likewise when it comes to climate, let's live in the data. Um, and let's deal with the data. People ask me, you know, if I, and I'm a big on what Katharine Hayhoe says about this too, she's, you know, the wonderful, um, climate scientists is actually a very solid, uh, Christian believer. Um, she, and I would say to people, you know, folks ask if you believe in climate change. And I say, no, I don't believe in climate change. Um, it's just data. It's not worthy of belief. My faith informs my reaction to the data, but I don't have a new religion called climate change. Um, I'm just applying my faith to the data. And so, um, it seems to me that's a reasonable faith when you, when you can accept data and then apply the principles that you've learned in your faith to that data. And what that does, I think is it leads you to position of stewardship paid a pretty big price

Butlerfilms (00:50:28):
For coming around to that way of thinking. And I'm, so I'm just going to back us up again a little bit, uh, you said earlier that, well, two things, um, that your kids believe that Christians and politics can be on the news people. And so my first question for you is, is can you share any of the things that were said to you or said about you or happened to you during that period when you were sort of branded a traitor for going to the other side? That's my first question.

Bob Inglis (00:51:03):
Yeah. Um, you know, I, I try to forget them once. I I've had a friend in Charlottesville, Virginia who says that, uh, you know, when, uh, has this story about the, the great forgiveness that you can do when you actually just actually forget it, not only forgive, but forget. So I try to forget, uh, the incidents, but I tell you, it's mostly just this sense that there are people who, you know, um, uh, who had hugged me around the neck, told me they love me, they're praying for me. And then you find them, uh, with the other guys sticker on them. And it's a, it's a really, it's a rough thing, you know? Uh, um, and it's, it's why a lot of politicians don't want to lose in a primary because if you lose in a primary, you have no home to go home to, if you lose in a general election, well, they'll have yet the next Republican dinner, you know, is the speaker.

Bob Inglis (00:52:04):

Um, uh, and they'll all cheer for you, but if you lose in a primary, you've lost a home. And so, you know, it was pretty painful to have people that had been so close to us of, uh, particularly I think this is what my kids would say is, do you not realize the treachery of these people? I mean, how they, uh, how they started with you and then left you, and of course, in fairness to those people, they might think, well, no, you left us Angliss. Uh, um, and, uh, there may be some truth to that. You know, that, uh, that I, uh, you know, went to a different place where I was willing to S to consider the evidence and, uh, act on it, but mostly, you know, it's, um, I, in choosing between the temporary affection of that political crowd and the lasting, uh, affection of my kids and, and what I hope will be their kids.

Bob Inglis (00:53:09):
Um, I know I chose the better, um, because really, which would you rather have it that, that the political love is very shallow and it's very transitory. Um, and that's surely what I've found out as I was benefited by being in Congress six years and then out six years, and then come back for another six. Cause in that being out for that six years, I could see in the rear view mirror, things that I'd said and done that were terribly cringe-worthy. And mostly I was able to see it because in that six years, being out, watching the people on the stage and cringing for them, and then looking in the rear view mirror and realizing that, Oh, I was exactly that way. Um, and then it means that 2.0, the new improved version as we called, it was going to be a little bit different, but, um, but in two point, Oh, there's really an awareness that, uh, do you want the temporary affection of that political crowd? Or do you want the lasting affection of your kids and their kids? And, uh, the latter is clearly the better

Butlerfilms (00:54:19):
You're here on that. And then the public's better for it too. So, you know, the, the unholy Alliance theme that you talked about before, um, what was that unfolding Alliance? Who was it with? Was it with a lobbyist with the fossil fuel companies, big fossil fuel companies, more fossil copies. One of the people we're talking to is guy that wrote a book named Darren do check ins, called it anointed with oil, and it really, really digs into the history of, um, the, uh, you know, how religion and big oil were so tied together, but not just from big oil, also from the wild catters, you know, and the oil patches and how, you know, sort of the history of how all that kind of help will help to become like this, this, this unholy Alliance, as you say, um, that we're all still living with today, uh, in your experience, how influential or how much pressure was on politicians to, um, you know, uh, deep, not just deregulate, but also sort of tamped down the, the real, um, impact of fossil fuels.

Bob Inglis (00:55:39):
Yeah, it's, it's interesting, you know, um, I don't know where it came from this sort of, uh, sought that, uh, that somehow, uh, uh, that the, the, the burning of fossil fuels would somehow be an elixir. That's a blessing to the world, but honest to goodness, I, I become aware of people who believe that there's a, a company that's drilling for oil in Israel, for example, and, uh, at some enormous depth, like 20,000 feet or something. And their whole concept is driven in part by this, uh, this notion that somehow there's going to be a blessing that's, bespoked on the world by the burning of that oil underneath Israel. You gotta go a long way to find that kind of, uh, any kind of scriptural support for that seems to me, that is a, that is an odd point of view. Um, and, uh, but somehow I think there is something to that about how it's something about, uh, I don't know that anybody could actually defend it in a sort of scriptural context, but I think it's more of a, um, or if they can't, I've never seen it.

Bob Inglis (00:56:54):

It'd be interesting to know if it exists, but, um, I think it's more guttural than that. I think it's sort of a, um, I know I'm going to sound like I need an appointment with dr. Sigmund Freud in saying this, but I think it's sort of sexualized. I mean, I think it's, uh, it's like, uh, by golly, manly men go dig in the dirt and they get us reliable fuels that'll burn 24, seven it's sissified people who go get us intermittent fuels you can't count on them. And so there's something about that intermittency being weak and the fossil fuels being strong and reliable and, and dirty and manly, um, that makes some people gravitate who need this sense of security, uh, to the manly men who go get dirty and grimy and get the fossil fuels for us. Okay. I'll make an appointment with dr. Freud and see if he can help me.

Butlerfilms (00:58:05):
Oh, you got a lot to unpack there. Um, is it, it was a concerted propaganda campaign to right. Or points of view or ways of thinking about things the way people come together. We're also, um, uh, dictated to a certain degree, right?

Bob Inglis (00:58:32):
Yeah. But I, I do think that, you know, if you look at Jonathan hates work, um, there is some indication about, it's not, it's not to Sigmund Freud, but it's, uh, I won't, I won't make Jonathan part of this sexualized thing that I'm talking about, but, but it is like this, there are people who really need security. And, um, and so for example, I, I have a, a friend, a very dear, uh, Christian believer, um, in her now eighties, who is very clear about how she's afraid that electric trucks aren't strong enough to pull her family business product, that you need diesel to do that. And she really believes that. I mean, and I I'm, I'm certain that she's mentioned that to me, at least 10 times that, uh, we can't pull our products with electricity. We need diesel diesel engines. And, um, so, uh, you know, uh, or, uh, another experience like that was, uh, I was in a showroom of a Chevrolet dealership.

Bob Inglis (00:59:47):
And, uh, uh, I watched this scene unfold. Uh, a guy comes in and cammo, he's about 75, maybe 78. He goes over to the bolt, uh, Chevrolets, uh, electric car. And he sort sorta scoffs at it. You can see that he's just scoffing as he looks at it. And so this young, um, like 30 year old, maybe 28 year old, um, salesman walks up to him, says, uh, you know, realize that he's going to have a little bit of fun. He says, you want one of those. Now he says, he says the guy in the cammo. And, uh, he says, you know, uh, that car, he says, points to the boat. He said, it could beat you off the light in anything you're driving. No way says the guy in cammo. He says, Oh, yes, way. He says this same moves. He says, no way.

Bob Inglis (01:00:45):
And so the 28 year old says, listen, I have a Corvette. I'm telling you this car could beat me off the light. And so, um, you know, so they, they agreed to disagree as they left, but of course the 28 year old is correct. An electric car can put all the power to the wheels instantly, and you don't have to grind through gears. You don't have to anyway. So, so my friend that thinks that she's got to have a diesel engine to pull her, her family businesses product it's, she needs the reliability, the certainty of it. And she feels uncertain in the electricity. But, um, you know, I think her grandchildren will realize, Oh, no, that electricity it's pretty doggone powerful.

Butlerfilms (01:01:36):
So it begs the question, what would Jesus drive?

Bob Inglis (01:01:42):
He would drive something that, uh, you know, where he's a loving and caring for the people around him. And he wouldn't, he wouldn't build a cocoon for himself where his security is based on that car. Um, it's based on something transcendent in something beyond a metal cocoon. Um, and he, um, yeah, and, and would be caring about the people around him, you know, uh, I don't know. It just depends, you know, we do it, would you rather, uh, being a head on collision and survive it, or be the one that didn't survive, if the other driver didn't survive. And I think that I'd rather be the one who didn't survive than the one who did survive with the other person, not surviving, because it'd be a sense of a responsibility and a guilt that would come with that. So, um, head on collision, I'd rather be the one that goes rather than the one that stays behind and deals with the guilt of the one that didn't survive. Um, but maybe that makes me, I don't know what that makes me, but, uh, uh, anyway,

Butlerfilms (01:03:06):
Well, I think that you did survive a head on collision and, um, and you survived and, and, and you were all a little bit better for it. Rightly, certainly suffered a health liberal solution, right. By standing up for what you, you believed in, get a lot of kiddos to your kids, to them. Um, and I know that you probably do have to get, get moving, but there's a couple other things I wanted to talk to you about. Um, you mentioned early on that it, you know, sort of, there was this 10 year period where the Christian nationalist really sort of took over and in, in that it really boiled down to race. Um, Barack Obama was in office in an office and, you know, there's sort of two sections of this, right. You know, it's like the Jerry Falwell senior coming up in, in a lot, in a lot of people's opinions, you know, getting very involved in politics when typically, even though it was really didn't get involved in politics, it as a direct kind of response to Martin Luther King, the civil rights movement. Right. And then later on in the two thousands, you just said during that period, you felt like there was a coalition and at the root of it was race. What do you mean by that?

Bob Inglis (01:04:32):
Well, I think that, uh, you know, um, I remember, uh, sitting in a park bench in Washington, DC, um, with my pollster, um, who will go nameless cause he'd be very embarrassed, but what I'm about to say, um, uh, very well known, very respected Southern pollster, who sat me down on that park bench when I was running for the Senate in 1998, I'd been in the house six years was running for the Senate. And he had heard what I had said about the Southern strategy. Um, I was around saying as a Jack Kemp, Republican, that the Southern strategy was a morally bankrupt strategy. That basically it was, you know, you, uh, you offend the black stirrup, the rednecks. And when the South is basically what I said in the paper, that's what I said. And it was quoted as saying in the newspaper. And so my pollster urgently came to see me and sat me down on a park bench.

Bob Inglis (01:05:31):
And he said to me, every issue is race. You give me the issue. I'll give you the racial connection, welfare reform, obvious. He says, tax reform, obvious tax cuts, obvious. He says, you give me the issue. I'll give you the racial connection. He said, I've never been on a campaign like this. You're going to lose if you don't get with it. And he says, um, you, you think that you can go out and convert the convertibles and then try to persuade the persuadables. And then finally, if you have time and money left, come back to your base. He says, that's backwards. You start with your base. Then you go to the persuadables and then if you have time and money left, you go to the convertibles. And so he says, I've never been on a campaign like this. You're going to lose. If you don't get with it.

Bob Inglis (01:06:25):
And I said to him, well, I'm going to lose then because I'm not doing what you're talking about doing. Um, and, uh, so we lost, but it wasn't because of that, it was because of, uh, uh, the economy is so great in October of 1998, it was a 70% right. Track territory in the United States. You know, generally speaking, you say we're on the right track, wrong track in this country, 70%, right. Track October of 98. So people weren't inclined to give Senator Fritz Hollings, who'd been in office 32 years at pink slip. So, but my, um, the thing that I think he's sadly, I think my pollster was right about empirically. It's correct. That you can turn anything into racial connection, um, any issue. And that's, it's really sad. Um, and so then the question is, what does one do with that information? Do you then use it and say, okay, I'll play the game.

Bob Inglis (01:07:22):
I'll make sure to somehow signal to white folks that I'm going to preserve white privilege. Um, or do you say no, no. You know what, we're better than that. Um, and, uh, you know, I agree with, uh, you know, one of my heroes, Jack Kemp, who, who, uh, who thought that the test of conservatism was that it works for everyone. If it doesn't work for everyone, it's not a very good philosophy. And so I believe that this free enterprise, uh, uh, focus on, uh, true family love and affection as a unit of society, that this is a message that works not just for me, a white guy, but for everyone. And so I gotta prove that, and I gotta prove equal opportunity, because if you believe in things like free markets and free enterprise, surely the basis of it is a notion of contract and fair contract and the rule of law and equality before the law.

Bob Inglis (01:08:26):
If you can't exhibit that in your policies, then your philosophy is clearly flawed. And so, um, I think that's what it takes is just a real embrace of that philosophy and say, you bet, we believe in equality, black lives matter, of course they do. And we're going to make it this an equal situation. We're not going to continue to play the race card. And, um, and, and use the, the fear of the loss of white privilege, uh, to win elections. We're gonna, we're gonna, we're going to be better than that. And we're going to prove the value of our philosophy. That's what I wish for my party. That's what I wished for conservatives.

Butlerfilms (01:09:11):
What are you seeing play out today already?

Bob Inglis (01:09:16):
Yeah, you're going to mute there. Um, there you go. Um, I'm seeing the opposite of that. I'm seeing a continuation of playing the race card of using the fear of the loss of white privilege. Um, and, and it's, uh, but I'm encouraged that I think among young people, especially, um, and young conservatives, uh, I think they're, they're, they're done with it. Uh, they're done with this idea of dividing us and of, uh, using racial resentment. Uh they're they're done with that. Um, just like they're, uh, they're done with the whole marriage equality question. They they've they've they settled that a while and what go go, uh, they're done with the climate change debate. They they're ready to act. They say clearly it's time to act on climate. And so I get the opportunity to be with young people a lot. So I'm very encouraged by them. It's, uh, it's people my age and older where we've got, uh, got the challenge.

Butlerfilms (01:10:26):
So if your poster was saying to you, I can make it about race. If you're talking about environmental issues or climate action, how, how does that tie with race?

Bob Inglis (01:10:41):
Oh, I guess, I don't know. I guess it wasn't so topical in that 1998 race, but let me think he might, I guess you might be able to say, well, if, you know, particularly if you go into the regulatory approach, it looks like that's a bigger government, bigger government is basically going to help, uh, you know, uh, people who believe in government and that's the, the left and those people like, uh, like black folks or something. I don't know, that's, that's sort of the way that you might, uh, shell that down and figure out a way to get to some sort of base reaction from people. Um, and of course it was so powerful when Barack Obama was in office because, um, uh, you know, he just, it just so, uh, possible to create a terrible reaction to him. I mean, to give you an example, I mean, you know, with the birther thing going on, I was asked all the time, if he was an American, if Barack Obama was an American and I'd say, well, you know, in as much as a couple of newspapers in Hawaii published the birth announcement of a bouncing Barry Obama in their newspaper.

Bob Inglis (01:11:54):
I think it's pretty clear that he was born in America and unless we were wrong, that a Hawaii isn't part of America, but I think it is, um, you know, and then, but to give you an idea of the intensity of that sort of rejectionism of him, of president Obama, that became so palpable is a campaign breakfast in 2010, a guy stands up and he says, president Obama is so unpatriotic. He doesn't put his hand over his heart when the pledges were cited or the national Anthem is played, and then he sits down in disgust. And so I'm standing there and I'm thinking, what do you expect of a secret Muslim non-American socialist? Any of those would have done just fine at that moment, right there. That's our Bob he's with us. Um, and I'm sending the thing. You can't do it. Won't do it.

Bob Inglis (01:12:54):
Uh, I gotta go home for my kids tonight. I said, I can't, I can't do it. So I just did it. I said to him, uh, you know, I've been with the president, president Obama, I've seen him put his hand over his heart. Um, when the national Anthem is played, I, what you just said is simply not true. I said, do you know the president, president Obama is a loyal patriotic American who loves his country, loves his wife, loves his kids. I just disagree with him on most everything afterwards, this a Republican operative comes up to me and says, don't give him that, that he's a loyal patriotic, American, um, probably good political advice, but, you know, I can't live with that. I mean, I gotta, I gotta say no, he's a wonderful guy. What's not to like about him. He's handsome, he's articulate. He's brilliant.

Bob Inglis (01:13:45):
I mean, what's there not to like about Barack Obama now I disagreed with a lot of things. He, you know, his policies, but there's no reason to turn him into a secret Muslim non-American socialist, which is all code languages to say for Yolo black man and white house. Um, uh, we need to say, no, no, this is an opportunity for us to model this behavior of saying, yeah, we can embrace the fact of this difference. I mean, I gave you another example where we were, I was at a, uh, a small gathering at a restaurant in, uh, Woodruff, South Carolina, and I'm there with one of my black staffers. Um, and this guy comes in, it's a small group about 10 people, and he gets so incensed with what I'm saying about outreach to black, South Carolinians, that he, um, disgusted Stan slams his fist on the table and, and says, if you people want to listen to this stuff, you can, but I'm outta here.

Bob Inglis (01:14:56):

And he marched out. This is after he asked me questions. Like, what if, what are your daughters came home with a black guy? And I said, well, if they love each other, that'd be fine with me. Um, and he said, Oh, he was just disgusted. He said, you know, uh, uh, this is just [inaudible]. People want to sit here and listen to this. I tried to tell him, you know, this is with my black staff are sitting there. I said, you know, I said, God made Marvin here. Black made me white. Apparently he likes the whole range of that hue because he's the one who did it. I think that's the point at which he slammed his fist on the table and got up and left. Um, but I mean, it just shows you that the intensity of this thing and how it is that we must really come against it. It's a powerful force of, of division. And, um, and the worst part of politics is people who use that to, for their own objectives, for their own aggrandizement to get elected for what to lead, that kind of rot. Um, wouldn't you rather lead to a better outcome and maybe lose in the process, but you'd be leading to something good.

Butlerfilms (01:16:20):
Yes. We're not seeing much of that these days, but that's a whole nother conversation. Um,

Bob Inglis (01:16:27):
Yeah, I'm trying not to date it so much with Trump. I haven't mentioned his name once, have you noticed,

Butlerfilms (01:16:32):
But you can if you want, but it's, it's entirely up to you how you want to treat it. I mean, certainly when you're talking about some of that stuff, we'll certainly st. Trump, you know, and, and, and just any number of treasure troves, the news clips, right. Um, I want to ask you do, did your path that were crossed with Richard seismic, who, okay. Maybe you could tell me a little bit about that and how you all interacted and what, and him and we are talking to him. Cause he's, he's, he is another story like yours in terms of having this kind of moment of standing up for things that is not, not popular and, and what happened to him and where he's going now, and we're not using, we're not doing a scratch, we're not really narrating this. And so when I'm talking to different people, I'm really asking like, you know, what do you know about Richard? So that maybe you're introducing Richard to the conversation as opposed to eight narrator. Does that make sense?

Bob Inglis (01:17:37):
Yeah. Yeah. I hesitate because it might be too intimate. Uh, what, uh, what I would tell you about rich, um, uh, and maybe it'd be better for him to sell it, but I'll tell you so you can ask him, but, uh, be judicious in your use of it, because I think it would be, um, I just remember rich coming to my office one time and, um, uh, they were about to fire him, um, at the religious broadcasters. And, um, I just, I really felt for him because he was, uh, he nearly in tears as he was telling me in the office that they're there, they're gonna fire me, I think. Um, and it was because he was saying things that basically indicated that, um, uh, that God could love gay people. Um, and, um, that's what really got James Dobson on the warpath against him.

Bob Inglis (01:18:40):
Um, I think rich may also add climate as well, but I, it could be both of those things or, and some others, I don't know what else they were after him about, but, but I just know in that one occasion, he was in my office. That was what was topical. It was, and I knew, well, golly, if James Dobson decides that you're, that you're, you could actually love gay folks and he's really out to get you, I mean, your goose is

cooked that point if you're with James Dobson in the kitchen. So, um, um, so I really felt for rich, um, as he was facing that it's a very sincere, uh, fellow who, um, you know, was, uh, uh, I think trying to help, uh, speak in, uh, loving ways, um, and was, um, punished for it by people who wanted a, um, who sounded a much harsher theme.

Butlerfilms (01:19:43):
Um, so, so one, why was he coming to you? Were you friends at that time and to like, do you remember some of those sort of the, probably things that he regrets you to the vanity fair cover and things like that, and that's actually more related to climate change where he's kind of walking on water and that they set them up that way more or less, um, that he was speaking of the fact that creation or was a calling and evangelicals should be behind it.

Bob Inglis (01:20:13):
Um, yeah, he was, he was a friend, you know, how I had various contacts with, uh, you know, cause, um, you know, uh, uh, yeah, I'd seem for time from time to time around the Capitol and he'd come to the office. So I was familiar with rich and appreciated his work for the religious broadcasters. Um, and, uh, yeah, so I, I, I don't like to say, I just remember that the, the most poignant encounter was at one where they were about to fire him and it was after he'd basically opened the door for grace for, um, for gay folks. And that, that was, uh, but it, I don't know, I don't know how that timing was in relation to, uh, vanity fair and climate and those, I don't know. I don't know what about that.

Butlerfilms (01:21:11):
Gotcha. Okay. So I'm going to wrap this up. Promise misfit, um, who's James Dobson and how has James Dobson been, you know, a real force in a lot of issues, but also in the issue about climate change?

Bob Inglis (01:21:27):
Yeah, I think James Dobson was a very talented child psychiatrist who should've stayed in that lane. Um, and, uh, to quote my friend Dick army, um, who was a Republican leader when we took control of the house in 1994, he told, uh, he told us it would pelvic in conference that he'd tell dr. Gibson, you stick with kids in psychiatry, I'll handle government. All right. And so, because what happened was people liked ops and got into all kinds of places that they really had no business getting in opining as experts. You know, it's all of us can in pine on anything we're free to speak, but if you're going to try to act as though you're an expert on something, really make sure you're an expert on it. Um, and, um, but it's, uh, and, and also just check to see if you've got some sort of, um, some sort of a hobby horse that you've got a ride all the time and, and see if people can help you deal with that.

Bob Inglis (01:22:33):
You know? Um, and in Dobson's case, I think that what I came to see as he seemed to be finding the gay agenda under every rock, um, you know, and it's like, um, me thinks she protests too much. I mean, what, why, why are we finding this under every rock really? It's not there. Um, why don't you just sorta go deal with whatever issue you got going on? Um, and, uh, so, um, I don't know why founded under every rock, um, but he sure did. And he was mining motivated about it. So, um, uh, anyway, but, uh, you know, otherwise, you know, I found him, I had to, uh, uh, you know, when we were raising our five kids, uh, dr. Dobson was on the radio talking about child rearing. And, uh, we actually learned a lot of good things from him. And, uh, I appreciate all those, all those things when he went into, uh, politics and, and, and form that unholy Alliance with some people that had interests, particularly, I guess, in climate and

elsewhere, that's when you get a corruption of the faith and a really strange thing going on. Um, and, uh, I, I do regret his, uh, singling out for special, uh, special attention, uh, gay folks who are just trying to figure out how to, how to live and, and, uh, wondering if grace could extend to them. Um, and he seemed to not find grace. Um, and so, um, I am surely sorry for that.

Butlerfilms (01:24:17):
What about the power of his sort of the money behind him and the propaganda machine? You know, what, what was the name of that? The green dragon.

Bob Inglis (01:24:25):
Oh yeah. Yo yeah. Green dragon, Cal buys.

Butlerfilms (01:24:28):
Yeah. Talk to me a little bit about, about what that is and where it played and how much, how much influence it had.

Bob Inglis (01:24:36):
You know, I was, once one semester I taught at the Nicholas school at Duke, and so I had Cal Bosner by phone as a guest. Um, and I warn my students in advance. These are all graduate students that, uh, internet, um, it ready, this is going to be something you probably have not heard before. And so sure enough, Cal Eisner gave him the dominion theology stuff and, uh, focusing on that word dominion in Genesis and, and, uh, uh, you know, I can't remember whether he called us watermelons, you know, a green on the outside, communist red on the inside. Actually it Republican aeon.org. We say, yeah, rock solid, Republican red on the inside is what that is. It's Milton Friedman rock, solid economics is what it is. But, um, so at the end of the, his presentation to my students, we hung up on the phone and I looked around the table in this seminar and all my students mouths were hanging open.

Bob Inglis (01:25:36):
They had no idea that that sort of sentiment was out there. And, you know, with the thing that was the takeaway from that mostly is what a, such a terrible witness for the faith really mean here. These young people were trying to figure out a way to care for people coming after us. And here, they've got somebody speaking in a religious vein about how we don't need to care about those people, which is really a very unwind, some presentation of the gospel seems to me. Um, and so, um, uh, that's, uh, you know, and, and this, this whole thing of creating these enemies, you know, like we got to brand them as the green dragon and, uh, they're communist and all of that really. Um, or do you want to just say, maybe you don't like the regulatory approach, maybe you don't like the incentivizing approach. Maybe you'd prefer the pricing approach, but come up with something that's more constructive than branding them as evil. Um, and you'd find that, uh, your gospel will be much more attractive then. Yeah. Um, I, I think we froze either. I froze or you froze yet that we're back.

Butlerfilms (01:27:04):
Okay. We're back. Good. Um, what about the Cornwall Alliance? What is the Cornwall Alliance?

Bob Inglis (01:27:14):

Um, you know, uh, yeah, the, the, the Cornwall Alliance is, is a group that I'd love to debate. I really haven't had much opportunity, but, uh, I would so love to talk to them about that dominion word in Genesis that they so focus on, and whether it fits with the dominion that we see exhibited by Jesus. Um, and I think it would be a productive conversation, but I haven't had it with them. I, I don't, um, you know, I, um, but they, you know, they, uh, I think that what they are able to do is they are able to use the fact that the conversation and the climate conversation is mostly been conducted in the language of the left. And so they are able to use that to, to, um, put it in a category that makes it comfortable for many biblical believers to say, okay, we don't have to deal with that then, because we see where they're coming from. So it's important, I think for, for people to face to hear from people who share their faith and who, uh, respect them that, um, they, they they're able to hear a different perspective. Um, and how it is that no, it is important to, to act as stewards of this creation.

Butlerfilms (01:28:45):
It's just such a nice conversation, Bob. Thank you. And I know you probably have to go and I can talk to you all day. I got tons of questions, but it is a 15 minute piece. And, um, but the good news is, is these interviews will be transcribed and held archive, but UVA, um, in their library probably ended up in the, in the larger library. Um, but I did, I, you know, like I said, I've got sort of lots of questions for you, but I think, is there something else you wanted to add? You know, just knowing that this is this intersection between religion politics, race in science denial and the climate cut today.

Bob Inglis (01:29:30):
Yeah. You know, I think it's a, um, Hm. I don't know how it's [inaudible]. I was saying about a story with John Casey that, but it's, uh, I'm not sure how usable it is irrelevant, but it's, it's, it's, um, it's when people help you to see things, you know, that, uh, I know I, um, you know, when, um, what we need is people who love us to help us see things that we need to fix. You know, um, for me, that was my son, uh, supported by his four sisters and his mother, uh, first step of my metamorphosis, you know, it was, um, uh, interacting with a scientist and art Antarctica, and then the, the real epiphany at the great barrier reef with my dear friend, Scott Heron, um, uh, and, and along the way we need to be, um, informed by those interactions with people, particularly people who share our faith, who, who challenges and who don't let us stay where we are.

Bob Inglis (01:30:49):
So I remember one time, a, a friend in Charlottesville, uh, said to me during law school, uh, prison rapes were a real topic. And, um, she asked me, what do you think about that, Bob? And I said, well, I don't know. Uh, I guess that's just what happens if you get sent to prison. And she looked me dead in the eye and she said, Bob, that's not right. And I mean, now to my great shame, I think, can I believe that I ever said those words, you know, I mean, Jenny was so right to confront me about that. And she helped me by doing so, you know what I mean? And so, you know, uh, another occasion like that, John Casick, uh, who went on to be governor of Ohio was at the time chairman of the budget committee. And I was on the budget committee, and this is like 1993 or so.

Bob Inglis (01:31:43):
And he's hosted a dinner for us. And, um, he sitting at the table, there's a Republican between me and John. And thankfully I can't remember who it was, but I can just see him or hear him in my memory, telling John all terrible things about Hillary Clinton. Oh, just the worst of the rumors about Hillary and the conspiracy theories. And, and so to my shame, I'm sitting there giving nonverbal assent, you know,

sort of, yeah, John, what do you think about that? And so John looks at the two of us after the verbal vomit had finished. And he said, why would you say that about her? She's a beautiful and brilliant woman. Why would you say that about her? And for me, it was a great moment. It's like, thanks, John. I needed that. I needed somebody to tell me, don't say that about her.Why would you say that?

Bob Inglis (01:32:43):
And so, um, we need people, especially in our own community or community of faith, especially to confront us like that. And to say, wait a minute, what you're saying is just wrong. Um, and, and then believe in the love that binds us to say,Well, thank you for telling me, because otherwise

Bob Inglis (01:33:04):
I'd be still saying terrible things about people in prison. I'd be saying things about Hillary Clinton. I shouldn't say, you know, um, and, uh, so receive correction and, and, and be benefited by it rather than, and then have the courage to go, try to tell other people the same correction, because you know, the worst thing in the world is not losing an election. There were saying is to lose your soul. You know, um, I lost an election, didn't lose my soul. Um, and, uh, you know, uh, you need to lead and you need to go into these communities, people that share our faith, especially in and help them to see truth, uh, you know, who would have thought when I was in law school at university of Virginia, um, Francis Shaffer was still alive and writing, and there's a lot of talk about, uh, you know, his belief in true truth. Uh, that was sort of his concept that he was coming against the idea of secular humanism and relativism. Um, I remember, uh, uh, January of 2017 getting off at the Capitol South Metro stop in Washington and seeing posters by the New York times

Butlerfilms (01:34:23):
Truth.

Bob Inglis (01:34:25):
It matters. And I thought, you know, if Francis Shaffer was still alive, wouldn't he be shocked that probably in his mind would have been maybe one of the capitals of relativism, which would be the New York times was advertising about the virtues of truth. Um, and so I agree with the New York times and with Francis Shaffer at truth. Yeah, it matters.

Butlerfilms (01:34:54):
That's good

Bob Inglis (01:34:57):
Now, um,

Butlerfilms (01:34:59):

Two questions and that's it, uh, there are some writers who had gone as far as saying that when it comes to voting against, when it comes to voting, and even if it's lumped in with voting against, um, carving Zacks, whatever, whatever it is, you know, something having to do with climate action, that really is all just bundled up in this same package where the issue with the LGBTQ issue isn't so much an issue anymore, but it still all boils down to, you said race and others have said abortion. Any opinions on that? Any thoughts on that?

Bob Inglis (01:35:36):
Oh yeah. Um, well, I think there is a blindness we've been talking a lot about the blindness on the right. There's a blindness on the left about, um, about the abortion issue for sure. Is it just don't realize how the left doesn't realize how there is a, a collision there between two very strong principles on the one hand from the left, the idea that, uh, women are autonomous and, uh, uh, I I've got four, uh, baby women, uh, that, uh, that I'm the father of, and I, I want them to be autonomous and fully capable. Um, and so I, I believe in that principle rather strongly, and then there's this other conflicting principle, which is it, from my perspective as a Christian believer that it's a life within the womb. So now that is a really difficult thing to work out. I think the left just totally misses the possibility of that other principal, and they discount it to the point where it's not even considered.

Bob Inglis (01:36:43):
And so that's, um, I think there's a blindness on the left to that. And, and that is a real struggle. I happen to think that, you know, um, history will judge this period of time as really barbarous in our view of abortion, um, that as CRISPR, uh, becomes more and more prevalent, and as we're able to almost create and sculpt human life, that we're going to be looking for brighter and brighter lines about what is human and what is not. And as that happens, we're going to have a reckoning in the future. That's a little bit like the reckoning that I'm looking at. And one of these books here, a biography of Frederick Douglas, um, you know, that, uh, we're reckoning now with slavery, I think in the future, we're gonna be reckoned with the barbarism of this period of abortion. I think that we're going to find out that it was, you mean you actually did that back then. Wow. Really? Um, uh, because, because of the need for bright lines, because we're going to be creating something that otherwise you could create an alternative me that you stick in a warehouse in feed so that we could go harvest the kidneys when mine give out. And my alter ego is in some kind of a shed somewhere waiting for me to go get his parts.

Bob Inglis (01:38:20):
That's pretty freaky. Um, and maybe a little bit overstated, but still it's a, it's where we're gonna need really, we're gonna need really bright lines about what is him. And one of my colleagues, one of my classmates from UVA law school is really big on this kind of rock camp and Ellie. Um, who's taught me a lot about this, um, and just says you really, the ethical questions arising out of he teaches ethics at UVA. Um, ask him questions Razzie out of cloning are huge and are tremendously understated.

Butlerfilms (01:38:59):
Have you watched the Watchmen? There's a little bit of that in there. It's a really weird series, a little dark, but there is a bit about the flooding. Um, so the tie it to me, tie it together for me and you, in your opinion, if you think there is a tie, like how did that collision between the right and the left over the issue of abortion impact climate change action was climate change action, collateral damage because of that issue is another way to put it. Well, I think it's,

Bob Inglis (01:39:39):
Huh? I, I don't know. I'm not sure what the connection is between, uh,

Butlerfilms (01:39:45):
For Christian voters for, for the, um, the concentrated effort to go into mega churches and talk to pastors and, and have, have had the pastor is very clearly sort of state that you vote in a block and cause it all comes down to the issue of abortion. Like you care about the abortion debate and these other issues, higher wages, whatever, um, climate action initiatives, um, supporting the environmental movement, all that has to go aside because in the end you're voting for this one issue. And there's a lot of pretty smart people that have done the research to see that, you know, that became a very, um, persuasive argument to fuel clients, quiet climate skepticism among this particular voting block.

Bob Inglis (01:40:43):
Yeah, I think it, as, you know, anytime it becomes identified as a left right issue and clearly climate change was identified culturally marked as a left with Al Gore's success. I don't think Al Gore set out to be, you know, to do that, but it was, it happened. And now of course, others have decided to use climate as a wedge and it is a particularly effective wedge, a political wedge. Um, and so, uh, now what I would say to those people on the left that continue to use it as a wedge. Do you want to solve climate change? If you do, how about drop the wedge and welcome conservatives into the conversation in a different way? Tell them that. Okay. You know what, let's leave aside the abortion question. That's something we'll talk about somewhere else. Uh, let's talk just about our common home as the Pope calls it and let's figure out how to deal with this problem we've got.

Bob Inglis (01:41:39):

And can we hear any ideas you've got about the solution? Cause that's, what's changed. You know, we're now having more experiences with climate change. I think people are coming to the awareness that, Oh, it's real, it's real. And it's really sort of silly to deny. Um, but if, if you have a solution that you think fits with your values and you can accept the existence of a problem, that sounds irrational that you got to have a solution, but here's the plan of surgery for that back problem. You're having first, we're going to take your head off as we got your head off, we're going to put your, we can work in your spine and we can put your head back on. Thanks doc. I'm feeling a lot better. I don't have a back problem. If that's your solution, I don't have a problem. So what conservatives heard about climate is the UN blue helmets on, is going to come to the United States, get with the E P a N and they're going to regulate our very breath.

Bob Inglis (01:42:35):
Well, if that's your solution, I don't have a problem is what conservative said. And so come to them a different way and say, here's the thing. We've got people socializing. They're SUT. We've got people getting away with a lack of accountability. Havoc is resulting. Let's bring the blessing of good things by bringing accountability. That's a completely different conversation. So if the left could just let us have that conversation, rather than continuing to use the wedge against conservatives, then we might just get together on this thing. Cause otherwise what we have is we're sitting in a Petri dish all together and we're doing an experiment on ourselves. Um, and we're having a food fight picking up handfuls of medium and the PTA and the Petri dish and throwing each other when that's where we are, we are, we are doing an experiment on ourselves and we'll figure it out at some point, I think and say, you know, let's, let's solve this thing.

Bob Inglis (01:43:36):
So that's a, I think you just have to agree to set aside some issues and say, we're gonna we'll deal with that later. But also particularly for people in the left to say to, to not disparage the face of people have the right. I mean, if, if you encounter a Christian conservative, don't try to win them over to godless evolution. You know, uh, the, the caricature of Billy Graham may be true, you know, that he, you know, all 17 verses of just as I am, the buses will wait, come down front, you know? Um, but for godless evolution, there are evangelist and it's almost the same thing. Uh, we came out of the slime all 17 verses come down front and sign up for godless evolution, say, you believe because if you, if you don't, they jump on you. I mean, they, they jump on you and they start saying, you mean, you believe in God, what are you some kind of, uh, you know, holding onto God and guns or something, you know? I mean, so, so that's, uh, you gotta, it happens on the left and the left needs to be sensitive to that. If we want to solve the problem with climate change,

Butlerfilms (01:44:52):
I love that. Good, good. Now you mentioned the post and cyclical. Um, that's a whole nother kettle of fish, but if we were to talk about it, I mean, how much impact do you think that the Pope's encyclical has had on the conversation sort of winning the hearts and minds of Christians outside of the Christian? Right.

Bob Inglis (01:45:16):
Hmm. I hope that the, uh, in cyclical will have any greater and greater impact over the years. Is it a, as it filters out through, uh, Catholic churches, um, of course there's some resistance to this Pope, um, uh, within the Catholic church. So I'm, I'm aware of that. Um, so, uh, but I, I find it to be a very inspiring document, um, and, um, really poetic in places, uh, and very beautiful. Um, and, uh, I would take issue as a friend that I've got at the university of Chicago and economist there who, uh, who branded it as Marxist. Um, I think he's just seen it the wrong way. I think that, uh, the Pope is talking about a kingdom of a different world. Um, uh, just like Jesus was not here to create, uh, a, uh, an earthly throne for himself. Um, doesn't need one. Um, and so it's, uh, I think we should see it as not the, the, the in cyclical crunch to create some sort of a economic system, but rather, um, uh, the Pope trying to say, these are the kingdoms of the heart. And, um, this is how we should be caring for our brothers and sisters. And, uh, let's, let's get on with being stewards and, and, and all of that, those ways, I think it's inspiring and shouldn't be seen as an economic text.

Butlerfilms (01:46:52):
Thank you for answering that. So, okay. So I think we're about wrapped in, but one thing that I wanted to ask you is, would you, now that we've talked, um, do you have a different descriptive for yourself? You said cheerleader before, and I just want to try this. I don't know if it's gonna work, but if you just looked at the camera straight into camera and just say, um, I'm bobbing with, and I consider myself a blank Yankee.

Bob Inglis (01:47:20):
Um, yeah, I gotta think about what I would say. What is, what would I consider myself a, um,

Butlerfilms (01:47:29):
You know, like someone like a sad Salitan would say, uh, Christian, libertarian lunatic farmer, um, cause he's funny, like that's just his thing. Others, you know, consider themselves, they, they per people refer

to themselves in, in this air, arenas, heretics, and others have cheerleaders. And, and if you don't want to do it, that's fine too. Cause I'm not really sure it's gonna work, but yeah.

Bob Inglis (01:49:08):
Okay. So, uh, uh, I'm Bob Inglis and I'm an albino unicorn who happens to be reproducing very successfully now as co Christo. And I've had to do that again. Um, I'm Bob Inglis, uh, might be an albino unicorn, but I'm reproducing as conservatives come to climate action.

Butlerfilms (01:49:36):
You froze on me. Pretty funny.

Bob Inglis (01:49:47):
That's great.

Butlerfilms (01:49:48):
Thank you, Bob.

Kyle Myaard-Schaap Interview

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:00:43):
My name is Kyle Meyaard-Schaap I'm the national organizer and spokesperson for young evangelicals for climate action.

Butlerfilms (00:00:54):
Thank you. Okay, so let's just get started a little bit. You and I talked to Ben on the phone about sort of, you know, the whole rise of anti environmentalist within the evangelical community. I mean, why, and we can just start right there. Let's just jump in and we can go back and revisit some other things, but why has science denial and climate skepticism didn't such a, um, uh, rooted, uh, issue within the evangelical community and specifically within, you know, the fundamentalists of it?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:01:34):
Yeah, it's a really good question. And I think there's lots of pieces to the answer. Uh, I think one is you have to go back a couple of hundred years to the middle of the 19th century, the mid 18 hundreds. Uh, and there was this real debate that was kicked off by the publication of Charles Darwin's the origin of the species, um, and the idea of evolution, uh, and it really tapped into this tension that had existed for centuries between science and the church. Uh, Copernicus felt it Galileo felt it, and it makes sense to a certain degree because science and religion in some ways, um, or at least perceived to be, uh, asking similar questions and offering ultimate answers, right? Questions, answers to ultimate questions. Who are we, why are we here? What is our purpose? Um, I would argue actually that science and religion are in fact asking different questions, but, uh, they have been conflated, um, throughout history and by many, many people to, to be answering the same questions.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:02:41):
So when Darwin published the origin of the species, this debate, uh, really kicked up, uh, in the church and there were these two major camps, uh, within the U S church, the modernists who believed that the teaching of evolution could be consistent with the teachings of the Bible. Uh, and the fundamentalists

who said, this is a bridge too far. This is erasing the teaching, the, the ultimate truth of scripture, and we have to fight it. Um, and so this, this, uh, debate and battle, uh, began to build between different factions of the U S church. Uh, and it was rooted in the findings of science. Uh, and again, like I said, it tapped into these centuries of tension between science and the church, uh, and that kind of culminated in the early 20th century with the scopes monkey trial, a teacher in Tennessee was taken to trial for teaching evolution, uh, and it became this, this climax to the culture war of the time between the modernist and the fundamentalists who would win.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:03:43):
Um, the fundamentalists ended up winning the court case. The teacher was reprimanded and, uh, the, the school was not allowed to teach evolution moving forward, but in the court of public opinion, the fundamentalists came off looking, uh, backwards, antiquated, and were kind of laughed, um, into oblivion. The, the fundamentalists kind of, um, went back to the drawing board to, to lick their wounds and, and in many ways went underground. Um, but they didn't disappear. They invested in institutions in their own schools, they built up their own churches. Um, and, and have come back in later years, um, in the form of a resurgent modern evangelical movement, Billy Graham was one of the four runners, uh, and it really, uh, took on its modern form in the evolution and the growth of the moral majority, uh, and the religious right movement led by people like Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, uh, and, and others.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:04:45):
Uh, and so there's been this tension, uh, for centuries between science and religion in many people's minds, because a lot of people see them asking the same questions and offering different answers. So that's one of the reasons that there's been some skepticism within the evangelical church around science, because many people have framed science as mutually exclusive to the teachings of scripture. Because as I said, they're perceived to be offering different answers to the same ultimate questions. I think another reason, uh, is, um, let me start that again. Another reason I think that there's a tension between evangelicals and maybe science in general, or, uh, the science of environmentalism or climate change specifically, uh, is because there has been a concerted effort to confuse the public debate around the science of the environment and climate change specifically. Uh, and a lot of those dollars have been targeted at conservative Christians.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:05:57):
The fossil fuel industry has invested billions of dollars into concerted misinformation campaigns, and those dollars have been disproportionately targeted at the population that they perceived to be most open to their message. Uh, and so conservative Christians have been on the receiving end of a barrage. It concerted barrage of misinformation, uh, and, and anybody on the receiving end of that level of misdirection misinformation, uh, is going to be susceptible to it. Uh, and so the politics of the moment have been shaped by that concerted effort over decades, by the fossil fuel industry to deliberately confuse the public around the science of climate change, the threats of climate change and the solutions that we can all pursue. Uh, so there's, there's, uh, a lot of reasons for, for why that resistance and that skepticism exists within the evangelical movement. Uh, I would also say that, um, there are large pockets within the evangelical movement, uh, that have resisted that, that have tried to communicate how science and our faith can, uh, coexist, can inform each other how science can be a means by which we can better understand God, the creator and deepen in our art in reverence and our commitment to God as creator, um, which is why I'm really excited to be doing the kind of work I'm doing with the people that I'm doing it with.

Butlerfilms (00:07:36):
Okay. This is fascinating. So, so, but let's unpack that a little bit. Um, yeah, the fossil fuel companies targeted the Christian quarter unity. Okay.

Butlerfilms (00:07:49):
But they didn't do it alone. So tell me a little bit about how that [inaudible], if, you know, if, you know, you know, like sort of how that evolved, was it targeting mega church pastors to, you know, and then how did the rank file get in line from that? What, what was, what was in this Holy Alliance and who benefited from it and who, and who didn't and who was murdered?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:08:14):
Yeah. Great question. So with the rise of the moral majority, the Christian right movement, uh, particularly Jerry Falwell, uh, and his, his effort to create a, uh, a voting block, uh, for lack of a better word, a voting block, a consistent voting block, um, that could influence, uh, political elections and, and sway, um, political decisions in his effort to create that, uh, he told and, and, you know, not just him, he and other leaders in this movement, this, uh, moral majority and movement, um, recognized, uh, as a wedge issue that they could use to consolidate, uh, conservative Christians into a voting block. Uh, and as they did that, other issues began to be lumped in with abortion. So abortion was really kind of, uh, the primary issue that they used to galvanize conservative Christians around this movement, but other issues that have kind of come to typify the culture Wars of the last several decades, um, also, uh, joined abortion in kind of the suite of policy issues that the faithful were told they need to either support or resist in order to be faithful Christian citizens, and to be witnesses and even warriors.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:09:46):
It's very violent language used many times warriors in this culture war for Christ. Um, so abortion was one of them. Uh, same sex marriage, uh, was one of them, um, even feminism and changing gender roles in society, uh, was a part of this calculus and this policy suite of issues and the environment, uh, because of the environment and environmentalism, as an ism was seen as contrary to the Christian faith, uh, as a worldview, environmentalism, uh, was understood to be a worldview, uh, devoid of God and his creative purposes and his imminence in creation. Uh, and, uh, the solutions put forward by environmentalism were perceived to be, uh, a threat or contrary to Christian values. And so this suite of issues, uh, was bundled for an entire generation of conservative Christians and handed to them. And they were told here are the most important issues for Christians to be active and engaged on.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:10:53):
And here's how we need to engage with those issues or how we need to vote with respect to these issues, if we are going to be faithful Christian citizens. So at the same time that that was happening, the

fossil fuel industry, uh, understood that that was an opportunity to double down on that message and to communicate climate change as part of that dangerous worldview of environmental ism that was threatening, um, their own worldview that was threatening their ability to, uh, pursue the kingdom of God, um, in the world. Uh, and so, uh, yeah, it, it became an opportunity for fossil fuels to invest their money and get a decent return and we've seen the results.

Butlerfilms (00:11:40):
Okay. So just two follow up questions on that, and I'll sort of bundle it together for you. One is how does the Bible unique is to, to make that argument one and two, um, what were, what was some of the propaganda that was used? I'm thinking specifically of the Christian media, the Christian radio television shows like, you know, wherever the green dragon, me just personally, whether or not you were exposed to any of that, or at least you knew about it.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:12:08):
Sure. Yeah. Um, so to the first question, uh, I have seen the, the, the, maybe the most important way that scripture is used to support this message that environmental ism is dangerous to the Christian faith is, uh, when environmentalism is cast as idolatry. So scripture is very, very clear about the risks and the dangers of idolatry of worshiping something that's created as the creator. Uh, and I've seen scripture used often to make the argument that environmental ism worships the creation instead of the creator. It confuses the object of our worship and that's idolatry. Uh, in my opinion, that's making a massive logical leap, uh, to say that, uh, to take steps to care for the works of God's hands is worshiping it. Um, I think scripture is much clearer that caring for God's creation is a fundamental component of our Christian discipleship and our call as followers of Jesus.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:13:16):
Uh, and that there is a, a long road between caring for God's creation as the good works of God's hands, and then worshiping that creation as Holy, uh, there's a big wide Gulf between those two things. And it, it takes a lot to get from one side to the other. So conflating caring for creation with worshiping creation, um, is a leap that many people have made to make the case against, uh, environmental care and concern for Christians. And, you know, they've, they've used different methods to communicate that message. Uh, the, the Cornwall Alliance, uh, is one example. Um, they produced and put out a video series called resisting the green dragon, uh, which cast environmental ism as this threat to the Christian worldview as, as an idolatrous worldview, um, that was infiltrating churches and had to be resisted. Uh, and that kind of message, uh, is, is consistent.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:14:20):
Um, that's, that's used by, by lots of different parties and lots of different organizations and people who are trying to perpetuate that notion that environmental care equals environmental worship, um, and that's idolatry and Christian should run from that. I was never personally exposed to those kinds of resources when I was growing up. I learned about that. I learned about resisting the green dragon when I was in college. Um, however, many of the young that I do engage in the work that I do with young evangelicals for climate action have either been exposed to certainly those messages about the risk of idolatry, um, that is pervasive. Uh, and even some of them have been exposed to some of those resources that have communicated that message.

Butlerfilms (00:15:15):

Did you ever see, have you ever seen it? I still haven't seen it. I could say, is it a kid series, like a heck? Yeah.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:15:21):
It's not a kid series a it's I believe it's meant to be used as a study resource for adults in churches. Um, I actually have not seen, I believe I've seen portions of it cuts from it. I, I haven't sat through all of it. No, I haven't seen most of it, I don't think, but I'm very, very familiar with its argument and the argument that it's putting forth. Um, it's, it's, it's a message that we, um, encounter a lot in our work.

Butlerfilms (00:15:54):
Okay. So let's, let's go back to the timeline, just a little on the phone, you know, you had talked about, you know, you get, you paid me a little more detail on Billy Graham in the sixties, and then it was kind of like 2.0 with Falwell and the gang. Um, if you, if you could just revisit that a little bit and give me a little bit more detailed, but also also, um, in that perhaps if this is the right place to ask, it is like, what, what is the difference between evangelical and fundamentalist, you know, and when the moral majority came in, you know, that, that splintered off, as I understand it, it's sort of splintered off. And then to a certain extent, evangelicals are painted with the same brush.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:16:40):
Yeah.

Butlerfilms (00:16:42):
It seems to me. Yeah. So maybe you can address that a little bit.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:16:45):
Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for that. Yeah. So I think the headline is that it's complicated. The history is complicated, um, and I will not claim to understand it fully, um, and even have a bit of fear and trembling claiming to speak authoritatively about it. But as I understand it, um, the, the emergence of Billy Graham and his crusades in the fifties and sixties and seventies, um, and, and his work of preaching the gospel in a new and compelling way, uh, in many ways continued, um, the,

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:17:26):
It continued the thread that ran through American religious history, um, through both of the great awakenings, right? So we had the great awakening soon after the revolution, another great awakening in the 19th century, where a massive revivals were happening all over the country. Tent revivals preachers were crisscrossing. The nation. Thousands of tens of thousands of people were making commitments to Christ. Um, this strong kind of emotive religious fervor, um, has always been a part of American Christianity. And Billy Graham tapped into that in the middle of the 20th century. And in many ways that's shaped evangelicalism as a movement, this, this idea that, um, the spirit moves in each of our hearts and draws us to, to God. Um, and that it's a choice that each of us has to make to choose God, um, and that we need that conversion, um, to, to, um, be brought to God so that the spirit, the Holy spirit can then work in our hearts and lives to change us, and to bring us closer to God and closer, uh, to the kind of humanity that God always intended us to be, uh, free from sin.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:18:43):

In other words. Um, so that's always been a fundamental shape of American religious experience. Um, and Billy Graham really tapped into that in a new way, um, with the rise of the moral majority and the Christian, right? I mean, it should be said, Billy Graham actually warned point blank about what he saw to be the dangers of joining evangelicalism, the religious fervor of evangelicalism with a political party or a political movement. That's why he, um, to a certain extent, I mean, he was a counselor to presidents and whatnot, but to a certain extent, he abstained from a lot of public debates and discussions. He drew some ire from, um, opting out of the civil rights debate of the sixties. Um, he was not involved, perhaps he should have been in, in that, uh, in that debate, uh, especially, uh, but in many other political and kind of social discussions and debates that were roiling the country at that time, he kind of opted out, um, he didn't want to corrupt, uh, his effort to bring people, um, to God, um, with politics, uh, the rise of the moral majority and, and the, the religious right sought to marry this religious fervor with a political agenda.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:20:03):
Um, and so that was something new, uh, with the rise of the moral majority and the Christian, right. We saw this wedding of a political agenda with a religious identity or a religious commitment. Um, and in my view, that is one of the major differences between mainstream evangelicalism and kind of evangelical as a social and political and a cultural label, uh, rather than evangelicalism as a religious commitment. Um, there are many cultural evangelicals and even political evangelicals, um, who understand their political identity primarily as a political identifier, um, which is to say they are committed the Republican party. Um, and to some extent too conservative governing ideals, but, um, even in the, in the last few years, it's become much more about group identity. Uh, and then there's, there's kind of mainstream evangelicalism, which is actually, uh, politically, uh, heterogeneous, um, politically diverse, uh, it's ethnically and racially diverse.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:21:13):
Um, a quarter of, at least a quarter of American evangelicals are people of color. Um, so there's this broad stream of, of mainstream evangelicalism that I think is represented best by institutions like the national association of evangelicals, um, whose president is an Asian American, um, has people of color on its board, um, other evangelicals, um, like soon Sean RA, uh, jemartisby, uh, other people in the movement who are pushing evangelicals to engage in conversations around race, around justice, uh, as evangelicals. And then there's a faction of the evangelical movement. That's typified by people like Jerry Falwell jr. Uh, Franklin Graham, uh, and others, Pat Robertson, um, in the eighties and nineties that have made evangelicalism about a political identity and a group identity. Um, and that to me is, is the, the tragedy is that in the American conception of evangelicalism, people tend to think first of the relatively small faction of political evangelicals, um, at the expense of the larger group of religious evangelicals who understand evangelical to identify the flavor of their Christian commitment, um, which is ethnically and racially diverse, which is politically diverse, um, and is not represented well by, um, the small faction of political evangelicals.

Butlerfilms (00:22:53):
So, so what's, what's the hardest part of your job. And in terms of, you know, how do you do it and how do you combat like a pretty well oiled voting machine, um, uh, to get around this issue of climate action?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:23:07):

Yeah, one of the most exciting things about my job for me is that I get to do a lot of work with young people and for young people and millennials and generation Z behind them, uh, they kind of recognize the danger of marrying their religious commitments with a particular political agenda. Um, they're a lot more suspicious of the project of the religious, right. Um, maybe than our parents and grandparents were. And so a lot of young people are questioning some of the assumptions that they were taught growing up assumptions. Like while we, we just have to vote for the candidate with the R behind their name, because that's what good Christians do. Um, they're thinking more deeply about, uh, evangelicalism as a religious identifier. How does my faith inform my politics rather than how does my politics informed my faith? Uh, so young people in very exciting ways are, uh, beginning to kind of buck the trend of our parents and grandparents that, that did allow for this significant consolidation, uh, uh, voters into a very narrow group.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:24:20):
Um, and they're beginning to think about these issues in different ways, uh, would their faith informing those decisions first and foremost. So really one of the hardest things about my job working with young people, isn't so much convincing them that creation matters that God cares about God's world, that we have a responsibility to it. That climate change was real that we have to do something about it. Uh, they get all of that by and large. Uh, the, the biggest challenge in my job is convincing them that there's something they can do about it, and that they actually have agency to create change. So skepticism is much less a challenge than cynicism and apathy.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:25:06):
Great question. Um, lots of stories about people just like them who are making a difference, uh, because you know, one of, one of the things social psychologists tell us is that a major barrier to action is, uh, feeling isolated and alone. Uh, you feel much more motivated to do something. If you see lots of other people who are like you already doing it, then it's really easy to join in. It's hard to start something on your own. And that's why I think young evangelicals for climate action is so important because it's, it's offering a witness to young Christians around the country. Many of whom may have received messages, um, that, you know, climate change is a hoax. It doesn't matter to Christians. It's a threat to our Christian faith. Uh, they can see young people of faith who are, uh, walking in a different way who are taking action.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:25:59):
That's rooted in their faith. Uh, they're taking action precisely because of their faith and not in spite of it. Um, so telling lots of those stories, uh, being that witness by doing that work, you know, going to the prayer breakfast like we did in February in Washington, DC, uh, handing out our open letter to Ted Cruz and other people walking in the door, asking them to pray for climate change and then go home and do something about it, and then holding our own prayer vigil outside of the prayer breakfast, as, as others prayed inside, um, doing that kind of thing, uh, as, as a witness, um, is, is really powerful for young people to see. Um, and isn't is inspiring, um, lots and lots of other young people join in, uh, and then just giving them, giving them tools that kind of demystify the political process.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:26:49):
I think a lot of young people are cynical or apathetic about the political process because they don't understand how it works and they don't understand how to leverage their voice, um, within the system. And so even something like calling your member of Congress, you'd be shocked how few people in

general, but young people especially have ever done that. So we'll host workshops where we'll talk about different forms of advocacy that we can all take. And then we might call our members of Congress together. Um, all at the same time, they can look around the room and see everybody on the phone and different parts of the conversation with the staffer, taking their call, and then we'll debrief it afterwards. And they'll say things like, I couldn't believe how human the interaction was. I couldn't believe that the person I was talking to was just another person and that they listened to me.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:27:38):
And then we'll tell them stuff that we've learned through years of building relationships with congressional offices. Like, Hey, when you hung up that phone, that staffer made a note in a spreadsheet that they got a call from a constituent about this issue. They're going to compile the numbers in those spreadsheets for each of the issues that they get calls about and present those numbers to their member of Congress every month when they meet that member of Congress is going to pay attention month to month about which issues are getting the most attention. And if an issue is getting lots of attention month over month, that's going to signal to the member of Congress that this is an issue that his constituents care about his or her constituents care about, and that he or she needs to start paying more attention to. That's how it works. That's how our advocacy creates pressure, communicate something to our member of Congress and leads to change.

Butlerfilms (00:28:33):
Okay, good. I hate this music. I want to be on a different, she's jumping a dog with you. So this kind of advocacy, you were pretty, um, your organization and others were very, um, had been working hard on the, what is it? The great, um, great outdoors outdoors active, right. American outdoors act. So tell me a little bit about how this sort of political boots on the ground advocacy work, um, has resulted in D you know, we're getting a pretty major, major piece of legislation at least through the house. Right. I don't know where it sits in the Senate.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:29:15):
Yeah, yeah, sure. Uh, so, um, the great American outdoors act is a bill that essentially will, uh, support funding for our national parks in perpetuity. And most importantly, it will clear the funding backlog for the land and water conservation fund. Uh, this is, uh, the primary fund that provides money to our national park systems. And it's been backlogged years and it's, um, it's been hundreds of millions of dollars in the hole, and it's meant that, you know, roads and national parks are broken and can't get fixed. Restrooms are out of order, just means our, our national parks are, are crumbling. Um, and, and our national parks are some of the greatest treasures we have. So the great American outdoors act was an effort to fund this and many other things, um, permanently, uh, it's been an uphill climb for many, many years politically, but recently there was a window, um, to get it passed, uh, and young evangelicals for climate action and our, uh, parent ministry that evangelical environmental network, uh, launched a petition.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:30:27):
We reached out to, uh, members in our network that we've been building relationships with year over year. Um, and we said, Hey, here's this bill. Here's what it will do. Here's why it's important, uh, for Christians and how it will, um, advance our call as Christians to care for God's creation and to be caretakers of God's world. Um, will you sign this petition that we can bring to members of Congress to, to show your support? Uh, and we got over 63,000 signatures, uh, from across the country, uh,

supporting the great American outdoors act. And then we were able to bring that to the offices of members of Congress that we have built relationships with, um, and say, Hey, look, uh, you might think that evangelical Christians don't care about this. That's not true here over 63,000 evangelical Christians, uh, who do care about this and who want you to do something about it.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:31:25):
Um, that messaging, that kind of messaging is particularly powerful for Republican members of Congress, because many Republicans, um, have been sent to Washington with a large share of the evangelical vote in their district or in their state, they understand evangelicals, um, at least historically and currently to be a major part of their support base. So when we can say a major part of your base cares about this and wants you to do something about it, that's a really, really powerful motivator for that member of Congress, um, to consider acting in that, on behalf of that bill, um, or any other bill. Uh, so we were able to get that letter in front of dozens of members of Congress, uh, particularly in the Senate, cause that's where a lot of the resistance was at first. Um, and, uh, it made a difference. There were at least a few key swing votes in the Senate, um, that, you know, told us directly that, uh, our letter was in our petition was, uh, a major contributing factor to their vote, um, in support of the bill that eventually passed the Senate. Thanks. Great.

Butlerfilms (00:32:40):
Great. Um, so let's make sure that you're, are you sending back to where you are? You're all you look the same in your monitor, right?

Speaker 5 (00:32:50):
Mmm.

Butlerfilms (00:32:53):
What are some of the Republican senators in particular that told you this? Were they surprised where they were, they surprised that this issue is turning and that they're younger? Can they better pay attention to the ground and their younger constituents?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:33:09):
Yeah, to be honest, I don't think a lot of members of Congress who are paying attention are all that surprised because this turning has been happening for a while. Um, I think maybe 10 or 15 years ago, it was kind of conventional wisdom that conservative evangelical voters, um, were just apathetic about the environment and climate change specifically about, but just the environment in general. Um, it just wasn't high on their voting priority list. Maybe many of them did care about it personally, but it wasn't going to affect their, their advocacy or their voting. Um, and that's been changing over the last 10 or 15 years, particularly, as you said, with young voters, um, as millennials and gen Z, um, are poised to comprise 40% of the electorate in 2020. Um, it's becoming harder and harder for members of Congress to ignore that younger generations in particular of, uh, evangelical Christians really care about this.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:34:13):
And, uh, as the polling suggests might actually be willing to, um, change their voting patterns based on this issue. Um, so I, I don't think any members of Congress who have been paying attention, we're all that surprised. Um, in fact, I think a lot of them were grateful for the political cover. Um, a lot of the

work that we're trying to do, frankly, uh, now is to provide the political cover for members of Congress who have told us we want to move on climate change. We wanna move on environmental issues. We just don't feel like it's safe enough to do it yet. Um, a lot of what we're trying to do is provide that political cover and help them understand that it's safe for them to step out and not just safe, but strategic for them to step out on these kinds of issues and make these kinds of votes on these bills because they have the support from their voters to do it.

Butlerfilms (00:35:11):
And is part of your argument that it's also biblically you feel called to do it, if it's biblically mandated, you know, is it a moral issue as well? Protect our world issue?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:35:24):

Yeah. Oh, absolutely. Yeah. I mean, that's, we're always asking ourselves, um, what is making our work different than other environmental organizations in this space? Uh, what unique value are we to this movement, um, that other environmental groups don't, or can't, um, in the same way that we can. And the answer in my mind is we can make that moral case. And we do, like I said, our, our mission statement at young evangelicals for climate action, um, ends with,

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:35:59):
Sorry, I'll just do the whole thing. The mission statement at young evangelicals for climate action is we are young Christians, uh, around the country who are standing up and taking action to address the climate crisis as part of our Christian witness and discipleship. Uh, in other words, we don't do this work because we're Democrats or Republicans. Um, we don't do this work because we're environmentalist's, even though people in our network would identify as Republican, as Democrat, as independent as an environmentalist. That's not our primary motivation. We do this work because we're Christians and we believe that part of following Jesus in the 21st century means doing something about climate change because of the way that it's impacting God's world, that he has called us to care for. We have a responsibility to be caretakers of, and because of the way that climate change and environmental degradation pollution writ large is harming our neighbors.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:36:55):
Uh, a central tenant of Christian teaching is Jesus' command to love God and to love our neighbors. He says, that's, you can sum up the entire law. You can sum up all of my teachings. You can sum up the kingdom of God and those two commands just love God and love your neighbor. Uh, and climate change specifically, and pollution and environmental degradation in general is harming God's world, which has no way to love God because God made it and God loves it. And it's harming our neighbors ability to live and breathe and have clean water and thrive and provide for their families. Uh, so we believe that acting on climate change and addressing environmental degradation is a way for us to get better at loving God and loving our neighbor. So, absolutely we are making the moral case every day, um, in, in all of our work with members of Congress, with our grassroots, with other evangelical leaders, that's central to what we're trying to do.

Butlerfilms (00:37:54):

What did people think of this movement as young white evangelicals for climate change and, and it really paid evangelicals probably with a fairly white brush in general, in terms of, um, is there room for people of color in your world? Are people of color in your world? Is there, how does this tie into the environmental justice movement, but the work you're doing and is there a throw on a face?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:38:25):
Yeah, absolutely.

Butlerfilms (00:38:26):
Your way or the highway?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:38:29):
No, not at all. So, uh, ACA for a long time, uh, has been committed to entering into conversation and becoming accountable to people of color and communities of color. Um, like I said earlier, the evangelical community in America is 25%, um, black indigenous or people of color. Um, white evangelicalism as a political phenomenon gets a lot of media attention, right. And evangelicalism, like I said, is still largely white. If 25% is people of color than 75% are white. Um, however, uh, Y ACA has been committed for a long time to, um, reflecting the true breadth and diversity of the evangelical movement. Um, so we, uh, have, um, several people of color on our steering committee, um, who drive the work of the organization forward, who inform the work of the organization, um, at a fundamental level. Um, we, uh, have made a commitment particularly in the last year, um, to becoming an anti-racist organization, naming the ways in which evangelicalism is embedded in, uh, the structures of white supremacy in America and seeking ways to disentangle that, um, and, and taking the lead from our brothers and sisters of color, um, as we do that work and following their leadership in that.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:40:02):
So we've worked really, really hard to try to, um, create a movement that is inclusive of everybody. Uh, and especially when you're talking about how love of neighbor is a central motivator for the work that we do. Um, it's impossible then to ignore the, the work and the call of environmental justice, environmental justice is all about working for communities that can live and breathe and thrive. Um, and so when, when we are motivated by the call of Jesus to love our neighbors as if their present circumstances and future prospects were our own, then we have to take environmental justice seriously, and we have to, uh, enter into relationship and partnership with EGA organizations. Um, I will say, you know, we, we do work with other organizations of, of different faiths, because if we're going to make this moral argument, other religious traditions have moral arguments to make too. Um, and so we're, we're always in dialogue, in partnership, in conversation with, uh, all kinds of organizations, environmental justice, um, multi-faith, um, organism conversations, you know, in dialogue with partners of different faiths, um, strategically, it makes sense for us to walk of them sometimes and to walk separately sometimes. And we all recognize that, but that doesn't mean that, you know, we're not talking to each other, we're not learning from one another. We're not building relationship together and finding ways to work together when we can.

Butlerfilms (00:41:51):
So have you, and do you have any experiences or examples of very real pushback that you've gotten from those sorts of contingents of the evangelicals that are involved in the white supremacist community? Like, have you, have you personally, or the organization then, you know, th the, the target

of some of that EIR and I'm asking for examples, cause I think it will help people understand too, you know, that this isn't just, Oh, it's happening because you want it to that these are real battles, which I assume they are.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:42:24):
Yeah. Yeah. I mean, certainly we get pushback all the time, um, to do the work that we're doing in the space that we're doing. Um, you know, it would be impossible to do it without getting pushback. I don't, I don't think we'd be doing our jobs right. If we weren't getting some resistance and pushback, I hesitate to say whether or not we're getting direct pushback from, um, you know, elements in inside white evangelicalism that are sympathetic to, you know, white nationalism and, and more overt forms of white supremacy. I'm more prone to say that, um, the, the structures and the messages of white supremacy tend to shape all of us, um, in, in America, they shape all of us in different ways. And the evangelical community is no different. And I think most of the time when we're getting pushback, it's not coming from a place of overt white supremacy or white nationalism.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:43:28):
Um, but I think there are ways in which, uh, white supremacy sees commitment to identify insiders and outsiders, um, can inform some of that pushback. Uh, white supremacy is very good at defining who's in the center and who defines normal and who is deviant and on the outside. Um, and I think some of the pushback we get is rooted in that a lot of the pushback, um, tries to place us outside of quote, unquote, normal evangelicalism to say, Oh, these people aren't actually evangelicals. They're not actually committed to the same things we are. Um, they're outside of the center that we call normal. Um, so I would say that's, that's probably one of the ways in which we see white supremacy shaping some of that resistance. I wouldn't say we're getting, um, you know, people making overtly racist arguments to us about why evangelicals shouldn't be engaged in this work.

Butlerfilms (00:44:33):
What about on the science denial side of it? Any anybody lobbies who could arguments that you on that, on, in that end?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:44:41):
Uh, you know, we, we, we get arguments from time to time that carbon dioxide is plant food and more of it can only be good because plants need food. Um, and we're a planet of plants. Um, you know, arguments about, uh, how in fact, the last 14, 15 years there's been no warming at all. Most of the time, it's pretty easy to identify the, the, um, false to the fallacy in the argument. Um, you know, th the dataset is too small, um, that sure co two is plant food, but even too much oxygen will kill a human. Um, and too much water will kill a human. Um, so we're talking about balance. Um, so yeah, there, there's always going to be those kinds of myths that continue to crop up that again, have been seeded by this concerted misinformation campaign. Um, people who are writing books about how CO2 is plant food are getting their money from somewhere.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:45:43):
Um, think tanks that pedal these kinds of talking points are getting their money from somewhere. And it's actually not that hard to trace it back to, um, the fossil fuel industry. So we are certainly still hearing some of that. What I'm encouraged by is that we're hearing a lot less of it. Um, and I think we're seeing even the goalposts of public conversation move in really exciting ways, 10 or 15 years ago. A lot of the

resistance we might get from our community, um, is, you know, that the science is completely a hoax and that climate isn't changing at all. Um, and now most people accept. Yeah, okay, something's happening. Uh, temperatures are increasing whether it's getting weird, but we're not all that sure humans are responsible for it. And, and now we're even seeing a shift where a lot of people accept the climate is changing. Humans play a major role, but now the question is what can we even do about it? Uh, which is an exciting place to be at cause now we're actually debating solutions. Um, and so, you know, there's always going to be pockets of resistance who continue to hold on to messages, you know, that climate isn't changing or that humans aren't responsible for it or that climate change is good. Um, cause it's, it's going to feed more plants. Um, but that voice is getting smaller and smaller and quieter and quieter.

Butlerfilms (00:47:08):
You are, you're old not to watch inconvenient truth and things like that. Why do you think outwards you're such a lightning rod? Why do you think that was used actually exact opposite way?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:47:18):
Mmm.

Butlerfilms (00:47:19):
Did that also help make it a political issue as opposed to a common sense, you know, environmental issue?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:47:28):

Yeah. Yeah. Uh, you know, we do tend to hear the name Al Gore, uh, more than any other name, um, in the work that we do and when we do receive resistance. Um, so he continues to kind of be this outsize figure within, um, resistance in our community around this. And, you know, I, I was only 11 during the 2000 election. Um, so I don't understand a lot of, um, the context behind the partisan acrimony toward him, but, you know, it didn't help that he was part of one of the most contested elections in American history. Um, the Supreme court case and bitter battle, uh, between him and George Bush, certainly didn't help. Um, I think, you know, 2000, the year, 2000 may not have been as bitterly polarized as it is now, but we were certainly on our way to where we are now, then.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:48:33):
Um, so partisan politics was, was very powerful even then. Um, yeah, and, and, and I think he became to use the same trope. He became a convenient scapegoat, uh, people, people could look at him and conveniently write off what he was trying to say because of who he was. Uh, and you know, that, that just confirms again, what a lot of social scientists in the psychological research tell us that when it comes to these kinds of highly polarized, very emotional issues, the messenger is almost always more important than the message. And that's why we're focusing on young evangelicals because young evangelicals are the best messenger to reach their parents, their grandparents, their pastors, their members of Congress, leaders of their denominations. Um, because when someone, when someone stands up and says, this is my story, um, this is why I care about climate change. And they use language that you resonate with.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:49:36):

Um, they tap into values that are important to you. And when it's somebody that was baptized in your church, that you made baptismal promises to somebody that you taught Sunday school to, uh, when they were in third or fourth grade, uh, you're going to listen to them in a way that you're not going to listen to someone like Al Gore. Um, so I, I wish I knew all the ins and outs of why Al Gore becomes, became such a lightning rod. Um, I just know that he did for many people, uh, and it underscored the, the truth that we need to cultivate messengers, who will communicate this issue in ways that our community can hear it. And that's what we're trying to do.

Butlerfilms (00:50:17):
Let's talk about language for a minute. Um, it was certainly language that you and I don't have to go into it. It's like why things like global warming change and stuff like, but let's also talk about the language of, you mentioned it a little earlier, um, that you said warriors, you know, it was pretty aggressive language, you know, um, ultimate battles, you know, talk to us a little bit that, about that. I know this is before your time, but you try to unravel these things. You know, you obviously know what was seated, give us a little sense, a little bird's eye view of what it might've felt like, um, to be in the middle of these conversations about monitoring and how the language was. So, um, and it's fucked up in all the other issues of course, but it was fucked up with Eric, you know, that these are, these are biblical battles with biblical language.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:51:13):
Yeah. Huh? Yeah.

Butlerfilms (00:51:16):
You said three, but I'm trying to get it too, is like, there's a lot of, well, how could anybody believe all that? Like, you know, it's like, well, why would you know, you're seeing stuff? So what do you mean science? You know, I think, I think that for a lot of, lot of people in the world that will look at this Gita note, if it's Cod to understand that if you're completely steeped in it, you're surrounded by it. If you were learning this from, from day one, it's your hope, you're hearing it from the pastor who you positions, the hardest your community. You know, it's not just a matter of, no, come on, get over it. You can read the newspaper, you know, you're not even trying to get up.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:51:57):
Yeah, I think so.

Butlerfilms (00:51:59):
And like the power of language to a heavyweight community that,

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:52:07):
Yeah, yeah. It's a really important question. Uh, language is important. Language shapes our worldview and it, it shapes our choices and it shapes the way that we live and move in the world. Um, and I guess I would say that's true for everybody. That's not just true for evangelicals. Everybody is shaped by the language around them, by the language of their community, um, and by the worldview of their community. Um, so evangelicals are just like everybody else in, in that way. Um, a lot of the language within, uh, the evangelical movement, um, I guess I'll say this evangelicals by and large, um, are shaped by scripture, uh, something that defines evangelical identity and that many sociologists use as an

identifier is commitment to scripture. The Bible as the ultimate rule of life and faith is kind of the language that, um, we use. Um, and that can mean different things to different people.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:53:21):
Uh, some people on the more fundamentalist end would, would claim to what's called inerrancy. They would say that the Bible has no errors whatsoever. And it's teaching about science and it's teaching about anything at all. All we have to do is read it as it's written in the English, and there are no errors whatsoever. Um, there are more nuanced positions than that, as I said, that's, that's kind of on the fringe, I'd say most evangelicals. And certainly most Christians hold to some form of what's called biblical infallibility, which is to say that scripture is authoritative in its ability to direct our life and our choices and to, to teach us, um, the general shape of the world and our place in it. Um, but it recognizes that the Bible was never written as a science textbook, for instance, um, that it's infallible in all the ways that it was meant to teach.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:54:19):
Uh, and so I think a lot of, I think we're a lot of it may have gone off the rails in, in some evangelical communities is when this good and proper respect for the authority of scripture actually was elevated. Like we talked about before to an idolatry, um, where we elevated the Bible and scripture to be something that it was never intended to be and is not supposed to be, um, which is a science textbook or, um, something else. Uh, and we forgot that actually the true word of God is Jesus. Um, that Jesus, um, informs our understanding of scripture and not the other way around. Uh, and so I guess I'll just say that evangelicals by and large are shaped by this, this understanding that scripture is our ultimate rule of life and faith, but the specifics of how that gets lived out, um, is different across different communities.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:55:22):
And some communities take that to the extreme. Uh, and when that's the case, some of the language can tend toward, you know, violent culture, war language, uh, because when, when the scripture becomes completely in errand without error in any way, um, as it's written in the English, uh, then it becomes really easy to kind of define an us versus them. Um, and there's no doubt that within the evangelical movement, there's been kind of a fortress mentality. Um, and I would argue that it goes all the way back to the 19th century debates around ultimate authority and which answers you accept to ultimate questions. Um, so yeah, like you said, when, when you're steeped in a community that uses this kind of language talks about scripture in this way, you look out at the world and say the same thing other people might look at you and say, which is, how can you believe that it's right here.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:56:27):
It's so easy. Just read it. Um, many people might say to evangelicals who are skeptical of climate change, just read the newspaper, just go outside and look at the weather. Um, just listen to the scientists and evangelicals mate say right back to them, just read the scripture, just listen to the teachings. Um, it's all right here. So, like I said, at the beginning, uh, I think we're a lot similar. Um, I think, you know, evangelicals who are skeptical about climate change are probably a lot more similar to people who look at them, uh, with confusion, then, then they might think, um, I think we are all shaped by our communities by the teachings of our communities, by the language those communities use and by the sources of authority that those communities hold up. Uh, and when those sources of authority are, um, uh, very strict black and white understanding of scripture and its teachings, then it may lead to, um,

some of the positions that some evangelicals have taken in terms of skepticism toward the environment science and climate change.

Butlerfilms (00:57:39):
It's like the in, right. But now with your group, your base is now challenged, challenging empire again, right. Full circle.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:57:47):
Okay.

Butlerfilms (00:57:49):
Um, okay. So I know we have limited to time left, so I want to get into your story. So tell me about how you, Kyle came to the, uh, a, uh, anybody. Well, I won't call you environmentalist.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:58:03):
Yeah.

Butlerfilms (00:58:04):
The person who's dedicated their life to environmental action.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:58:07):
Yeah. So I grew up in a very committed Christian home. Um, went to church for as long as I could remember was told the stories of scripture for as long as I could remember. Uh, and it taught me lots of really beautiful things. Um, it taught me how to love God. It taught me, um, how to be concerned about my neighbors and to, to show them love and care and concern. And it taught me, um, how to pursue, uh, justice and to, to, to live in the world with empathy and care and thoughtfulness. Um, it didn't have a whole lot to say about what my faith had to do with my relationship to the natural world. Um, I wouldn't say there was outright antagonism toward that, but, um, there was certainly silence, uh, and that began to change when my older brother went away on a semester abroad program to New Zealand and came back totally transformed.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (00:59:06):
Um, he went on a, a program that was meant to help students study at the intersection of science, ecology, biology, and scripture, uh, church teaching theology, um, trying to understand natural world through the lens of Christian faith. Um, and, and he came back, um, a radically different person. And that was really powerful for me. It was one of the first times that I saw someone I know and love and care about go through that kind of change. And I think the, the most striking moment of that whole period of, of change for our family was when he announced soon after he returned home, that he was now vegetarian, um, at the time for my Midwest meat and potatoes family, that was nonsense, uh, especially for me at 16 or 17, I didn't know anybody who had ever made that choice. Certainly no one liked me who had made that choice from a rootedness and commitment to the kinds of values that, that I also share.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:00:08):

Um, but he was really patient and kind and shared with me his own journey and how he understood that commitment specifically, and other commitments that he was making to be consistent with the faith that we were taught, um, with the values that we were taught at church at home. Um, and again, that was one of the first times that I had, uh, my faith connected to this issue of environmental care and concern. I went off to college, a small Christian liberal arts school in Michigan. Um, and that transformation accelerated, I took classes, had professors read books, went to talks, had conversations with peers about all of this. Um, and it began to click more and more of that. In fact, um, my faith has a whole lot to say about this. Um, I think that that transformation for me was accelerated by my own experiences that I had.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:01:06):
I, I took a few service learning trips to West Virginia, where, uh, I met communities who were being affected by, uh, the practice of mountain, top removal, coal mining, um, which was poisoning their water. Um, I sat in the living rooms of mothers whose 11 year old daughters were dying of a Varian cancer because there are cancer clusters in these communities from the poison water. Um, I went to Kenya and I talked to farmers like Margaret, um, who was a mother and caretaker of, um, close to a dozen kids and could always feed her family until five or 10 years ago. At the time I met her when the weather patterns started changing and it became harder and harder to farm. Um, and she was thrown into food insecurity because of changing weather patterns, uh, going to new Orleans and hearing the story of a grandfather named Robert who lost his elderly mother and his three year old granddaughter in the flood waters of hurricane Katrina when his home was lifted off its foundation, uh, and sent down his street, which had become a river when the levies failed. Uh, and all of these experiences began to confirm for me that in

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:02:20):
Fact creation care, which is the term often used, uh, within Christian circles for, uh, environmental concern, environmental action that creation care is in fact people care. My faith taught me my, my upbringing in my committed Christian home taught me a whole lot about loving people. Uh, and if creation care is a way for me to love people, then that was beginning to connect back to those values that were taught to me. Um, at the same time I was studying religion. I went off to get my degree from seminary and, uh, I've since been ordained in my denomination. So for me, it's impossible for me to separate my work on climate change and environmental care from my commitment to serving the Christian Church and advancing the kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice, peace and flourishing for all people on earth to separate that from, um, my work as a, as a, uh, an environmental activist. Uh, and it's impossible for me to separate my faith in my understanding of my faith from environmental concern as well.

Butlerfilms (01:03:32):
Are you a vegetarian now?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:03:34):
Hi, great question. Uh, my wife and I, we call ourselves hospitalitarian. I think we coined it. We, we do not buy our own meat, um, by and large, but if it's offered to us in the context of community or hospitality, if we go to someone's home, um, and we're offered me, we will partake, um, recognizing that relationship is more important than kind of a militaristic commitment to never eating meat again. Um, but no, we, we don't buy meat, um, with our own money as far as we are able.

Butlerfilms (01:04:09):
That's great. I love the phrase.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:04:10):
No.

Butlerfilms (01:04:12):
Um, just a few more bison. So, so why do people we're talking to you as a farmer? Um, it also wasn't evangelical, uh, farmer in Virginia. His name is Joel Salitan, uh, you know, told him that, um, he got a little heat for becoming, being branded as a climate skeptic. Right. Cause I guess the Obama regulations, environmental regulations.

Butlerfilms (01:04:40):
And his argument is, well, I am an environmental steward and I do it in, in, in service to my faith, but I just do it in a different way. And, and, and, and he really gets into the politics of, of, for him. It's not a faith issue. It's almost like a libertarian, like less government regulation and control. So in your work, how do you, like, how would you address Joel in your work, um, in terms of trying to get political action on, um, either environmental regulation or finding?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:05:19):
Yeah, it's a great question. Really important one. Um, I think frankly, the pushback that he received, I think is an indication it's a symptom of the brokenness of our national conversation around climate change, that there isn't space for people who, um, have different ideas of solutions that other than, you know, government regulation or, um, large government programs to address the issue in a lot of the communities that we go to. And that we, we work with a lot of the pushback that we receive, actually, isn't always rooted in the science, um, or even the politics it's when you really get down to it. It's rooted in the perceived solutions. Uh, for a long time, the climate movement has been pretty homogenous. It's been, um, Senator left to far left, uh, and it has not included a whole lot of conservative voices. And as a result, many of the solutions that have been put forward have been heavy on growing the government and large, heavy handed government regulations.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:06:24):
Um, one of the things that we believe at young evangelicals for climate action is that we're actually going to get to the best solutions and the most durable solutions. If we can actually have a robust and productive dialogue around all the different solutions that people want to bring to the table, there are solutions that libertarians like Joel Salitan can bring that can be useful. There are solutions that conservatives can bring forward that rely on market incentives that can be useful. There are solutions that Progressive's can bring forward, um, that will be useful, but because we're so bad at talking to each other across difference, it's hard for us to even hear each other's ideas without automatically labeling them as a skeptic or a denialist or whatever else you want to label someone. Uh, so in the work that we do, we're, we're really trying to cultivate that space where we can build relationship with one another, to a point where we have enough mutual respect, that we can discuss different solutions in ways that

will actually lead to shared understanding compromise and bipartisan solutions that will be durable, which is to say that won't pass a, on a strict party vote and won't face years and decades of resistance.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:07:48):
Whenever the political pendulum swings the other way, like we saw with the affordable care act, other major pieces of legislation that were passed on party lines. So, um, I, I welcome, you know, Joel's voice. I think it's so important. Um, and there are even solutions in Congress right now. Things like growing climate solutions, um, which focus on farmers as, uh, people who can, uh, as people who hold some of the solutions that we need, people who can sequester carbon in their fields, we can create markets, um, that will, uh, create reliable prices for that seed restoration, um, and allow farmers to be part of the solution. Joel can do exactly what he's doing, um, and get paid to do it. It sounds like a pretty good solution to me. Um, and of course it's only one of many policy solutions that we need in order to address the crisis at the speed and scale that we need to do it.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:08:45):
We're going to need a lot of different policies in place. Um, but like I said, they can be a mix of market driven solutions of more libertarian tinge solutions, more progressive solutions. But the fact that Joel is attacked as a skeptic or a denialist simply because he doesn't like government telling him what to do. Um, I think is a symptom of a larger problem, which is that we're, we're just not good at talking to each other about any polarized issues across difference. And I think we have to get better at that really, really fast if we're actually going to address this crisis at the speed and scale that we have to

Butlerfilms (01:09:27):
Is for the types of changing you're talking about even possible right now with the current political environment. Like, do you, do you see Mmm, the leadership today, uh, being able to, I don't know, make any of these moves, I guess I put it, but you know, what I'm saying is, you know, what are we doing here? Like how important is the next four years to the topic of climate change?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:10:00):
Yeah, we're at a critical moment right now when it comes to climate change, the window is closing really, really rapidly. Uh, I will say that I believe the key to durable bi-partisan action, which is what I believe we need is to convince enough Republicans that it isn't their political self-interest to move on this issue. And we're seeing some of that movement already. Uh, the Trump administration has already shown that they are a bad faith partner in this dialogue, and, and we're not going to look to them for any sort of leadership, but even if there is a Trump administration for the next four years, he can be moved. If enough Republicans step out and say, this is the way we're going get in line. Um, I believe that that he can be moved if that happens. Um, if the white house switches hands and the Senate, um, either flips or gets closer to 50 50, then I think the task is different. There's clearly going to be a lot more political will for solutions to be accomplished. The risk is again, pushing through

Butlerfilms (01:11:14):
Solutions along strict, a strict party vote, a strict party line that further alienates the country and fractures that along the ideological lines that were already fractured on, we saw what happened when the affordable care act was passed along party lines, massive society, transforming legislation that was passed on a partisan basis. And we saw all of the time, energy and money that has gone into defending that ever since. I mean, we're still arguing in the Supreme court right now, um, 12, 11 years later. Um, if

we actually want solutions that will be durable and resistant to that kind of attack and resistance in the future, we need to do the work of building a bigger constituency of support around policy solutions. And that's what we're trying to do. Um, we are bi-partisan in our work, but we recognize that because of who we are and who we represent, we have a unique ability to communicate effectively with conservative lawmakers and with conservative constituents.

Butlerfilms (01:12:27):
So we are trying to bring together, um, our constituency, which tends to trend conservative. Um, although it's not completely conservative, um, and other voices in the climate movement to say, how can we find common ground here so that we can take advantage of, uh, either the, the window of political will that will occur? Um, if the white house changes hands or how can we, uh, make the most of four more years of a Trump administration to force his hand, um, by building enough political will amongst the constituency that to do anything but support strong climate action would be politically, um, catastrophic.

Butlerfilms (01:13:13):
So one, the people we talked to his body less. So in terms of that, you know, Bob certainly was at the forefront of politician, Hoboken, conservative, Republican politicians, sort of taking a stand on that and lost. And of course we know the story. Let's see. So it's the purposes of this short documentary. We're not using a narrator. So that's why I'm asking you about different people, because you help introduce us to the next person like bongos. Like, do you think that someone like it when you answer it, you could use his name? Was it, you know, does he provide a sort of inspiration tracks that you are still laying today? Or is he sort of a cautionary tale for the politicians that you meet with every day?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:14:05):
Yeah, it's an Maureen question. Uh, I believe Bob was a pioneer and a visionary and a trailblazer. Uh, it takes real courage to step out in the way that he did and do what he did. Um, and I, I I'm inspired by Bob because Bob did it, not for a love of his seat or a love of his career, but because of his love for God and for his commitment to what he understood to be the central teachings of scripture, which is to love God by caring for God's world and to love his neighbor, um, he understands that and the moral case for action was too strong for him to do anything else. Um, I'll just say first and foremost, we need a whole lot more of that kind of leadership in Congress. If we're going to make the kinds of progress that we need to make, uh, he was okay with losing his seat.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:15:01):
Um, that's rare. I will say, I think his story may have been a cautionary tale when it happened in 2010. I think it was, I don't think it is anymore. 2010 was the height of the tea party wave. It was the height of the, the, um, backlash against the, the first two years of the Obama administration. Uh, he was part of a historic, um, swing in the house. Uh, I think we've seen 10 years later that the tea party movement has largely fizzled. Um, one of its standard bears ran Paul himself kind of declared it dead recently. Um, it's, it's certainly continuing to shape public debate, but not nearly to the extent that it was in 2010. So I think taking one story like Bob's, um, and using it to, to kind of become a cautionary tale for any Republican would be unwise, um, because it would require taking it out of that context and placing it into completely different political contexts.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:16:07):

Um, the last 10 years since Bob lost his seat, um, we have made significant progress, um, building up grassroots among conservatives, um, countless conservative environmental organizations have sprung up since then have been doing the work of communicating the conservative case for smart prudent, common sense climate action that grows jobs, um, that promotes freedom and Liberty. All of the things that conservatives one, um, we've been making organizations have been making that case for the last 10 years. Um, and again, especially in the house, elections are really, really hard to extrapolate out for other people. Um, the election in 2020 is going to be a very different election than 2010 was, and even then 2018 or 2016 was. Um, so again, uh, I guess I'll just say that, um, the context of an election matters a whole lot and two years is a really long time politically speaking, um, for, for, for public opinion to swing for a political consensus to change. Uh, so I, I do not think that Bob needs to be a cautionary tale anymore. I think that Bob should and deserves to be held up as an example of, of a prophet, um, who was ahead of his time and, and hopefully whose message is finally resonating, um, with conservative members of Congress.

Butlerfilms (01:17:45):
That's great. Thank you. And, um, if Richardson has, like how influential was Richard to the work you do time? Is he relevant still today?

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:17:55):
Yeah, I think Richard similarly, um, I understand Richard T to be a prophet as well. Um, it's really, really hard to do the kind of thing and the kinds of things that, that rich did, um, at the time that he did it. But again, he did it not for a love of his job or a love of appeasement. He did it because, um, he couldn't conceive of doing anything other, um, and, and that to me is really, I think it's one of the best things that Christians and evangelicals have to offer to this movement. This conviction of here I am, I can do no other, um, I am too committed to this story, the story of good news, um, for everybody and for the whole world to committed to that story, to do anything other than stand up and say, this is where I stand.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:18:49):
I can do no other, um, this is what I believe God is calling me to, and this is what I believe faithfulness looks like. Um, regardless of the consequences, if we can get enough evangelical evangelicals, um, enough Christians to recognize that that kind of prophetic imagination is part of their religious heritage. And for them to understand that part of their calling on the issue of climate change and other issues is to stand up with that same kind of conviction and say, here I am, I can do no other, um, this is what scripture demands of me. This is what my savior demands of me. Um, and I, I have to do this regardless of the consequences. If we can have enough people stand up and do that, we'll see a sea change. And, uh, we are seeing that more and more every single day.

Butlerfilms (01:19:42):
Thank you. Okay. So you have less than 10 minutes or about 10 minutes. Okay. So I've asked everybody to say, um, at the end of the interview today, look to camera and identify themselves again. But this time in a shorthand, like how would you identify yourself? And, you know, I think Bob might be said, you know, I'm like a, a white unicorn recovery. You, um, and you can not do it if you don't want to, but might be a way to introduce everybody since again, it's just sort of a non-scripted piece.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:20:17):

Okay. I'm Kyle mired, Scott. I am a follower of Jesus trying to figure out what faithfulness looks like in the 21st century.

Butlerfilms (01:20:32):
Okay. Thank you. Now give me one that's slightly irreverent.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:20:38):
Mmm

Butlerfilms0 (01:20:44):
Hmm.

Butlerfilms (01:20:45):
[inaudible]

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:20:48):
I have what I want to do, but I'm nervous about it. Um,

Butlerfilms (01:20:52):
If you do it and you decide that you don't want me to use it, you can trust me. I promise not to use it back and say, I don't want you to use it.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:21:00):
Okay. I am Kyle mired Scopp and I am a recovering, conservative, evangelical.

Butlerfilms (01:21:11):
It's great that you can think about it. If you change your mind, just let me know. Okay. So let's see, I'm wanting to talk to briefly about Corinda Noosa. And, um, I just was wondering if perhaps maybe you could put us in touch because she might be a good person to kind of like bounce your spouts off your story a little bit about reaching out to, you know, lots of communities and who's involved in your booklet need to do that.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:21:41):
Yep. I can, I can connect you with Karena. Um, I think I'll also connect you with melody Ang who's, uh, the chair of our steering committee who I think could speak to that really well, too. Um, so yeah, I can do, I can do that.

Butlerfilms (01:21:55):
Okay. Thanks. I don't know how much room we have for all these different people. It would be nice to like, kind of potentially, um, it get one of those women on here as well. Um, is there anything else? I think we, you know, we're adding, you know, as you know, this is a shoot, it's a 15 minute video, we've got lots of different voices. So you've been generous with your time for this, knowing that very little of it will end up on screen, ended up in ABA archive and we interviews our access quite a bit by students in

up. Cause we're going in to learn more about the subjects. Hopefully you won't feel like this was a total. No, we did.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap (01:22:38):
I don't know. And like I've said before, I've done enough of these. I understand how it works. Um, yeah. Happy to be a part of it.

Butlerfilms (01:22:45):
Thank you. Um, okay. And then I guess there's, I'm going to stop my recording here for a second. I guess you could stop your recording. Okay.

Joel Salatin Interview

Joel Salatin (00:01:01):

Right? So I'm Joel Salitan and uh, our family owns Polyface farm here in Western Virginia, and we direct market beef, pork, chicken, Turkey, rabbit, lamb, duck, uh, all sorts of things on, in a pastured livestock approach. Uh, no. What else was I supposed to say? Um, that's who I am. Do you want me to say more? Uh,

Butlerfilms (00:01:33):

So tell me, tell me about your philosophy. You know, you described yourself, you always described yourself. Tell me about why giving yourself the Monica you okay. And, um, how that relates to what you do.

Joel Salatin (00:01:44):

Okay. Alright. So, you know, several years ago I created a moniker for myself. Um, that's the, the Christian libertarian environmentalist, capitalist lunatic farmer. And, um, all of those, you know, words have of course a generally an opposite meaning from others, you know, who expects a libertarian to be a Christian or a libertarian to be an environmentalist or a capitalist to be an environmentalist. Uh, and then of course the lunatic on the end is just, you know, just for fun. Uh, because everything I do is, is lunatic, you know, compared to the conventional orthodoxy, but I chose that moniker because, uh, I wanted to, I wanted to push the edges out of the box. What I found was when I went and did, you know, speeches and presentations, as soon as people found out that I was an organic farmer, you know, they assumed that I was also, um, you know, uh, a gay, a worshiper, uh, you know, the, the regular, um, for bigger government, more taxes, kind of socialist liberal, uh, you know, that whole, that whole mindset.

Joel Salatin (00:02:55):

And so I decided to create my own mind. I could either be frustrated by that because at some points I sound like a raving communist and are socialists. And other times I'll sound like a, like a complete, you know, uh, um, ultra conservative capitalist. And then you throw the Christian in and, and how can this guy believe in God? And what happened was I started getting a lot of media, uh, actual media attention on how could you be a Christian and actually care for the earth? I thought, I thought everybody that believed in God was a concrete adore, you know, or at least to have that mentality. And so, uh, so I can either be frustrated about the whole thing or I said, well, I'll just have fun with it. And so I created the

moniker, the Christian libertarian environmentalist, capitalist lunatic in order to be able to come into a room and be very upfront with everybody, be careful about the box you put me in.

Joel Salatin (00:03:47):

And, um, and so what that's done is it has, it has made me a friend, uh, across a lot of bridges. I've been able to build a lot of bridges that most people don't be able to build, but I also can irritate everybody. You know, what I find is that, that, that, there's, there's both that, Oh, wow. You know, he's a Christian and actually believes that we ought to build soil and, and talks about the he's a libertarian and talks about the commons really, you know? Um, so, so, you know, those are, those are, those are quite, uh, uh, whatever, uh, normally tense dichotomy, you know, in, in culture. And so I found that, uh, that I was able to inform, um, just, just, you know, inform my culture better, uh, simply by embracing the seeming dichotomies rather than, you know, being frustrated about them.

Joel Salatin (00:04:46):

And so, yes, I am a Christian. And so I, I, uh, my, my life is informed by the Judeo Christian ethic, which is basically, I don't own anything, even though the courthouse says I own this land or whatever, I actually don't own it. Uh, God owns everything, it's his stuff. And I'm simply a steward and, um, or a caretaker, uh, in a, in a pilgrimage going through. And so if God owns it, then, um, like any owner, he wants a return on investment. Um, he certainly doesn't want his stuff trashed. And so, you know, my obvious question is, well, what would a, what does a dead zone, the size of Rhode Island, um, in the Gulf of Mexico? You know, what kind of return on investment is that for God stuff, that's not a very good return on investment. If I owned it, I wouldn't want somebody to trash my, my sculpture, you know, my, my creation.

Joel Salatin (00:05:43):

And so, so yes, uh, that informs on a macro scale, how we view, uh, basic environmental stewardship. It also informs how we treat the animals and treat the plants, um, honoring and respecting their design and their, their phenotypical, um, distinctiveness to affirm their being this, if you will, uh, as, as, as a chicken or a pig or a tomato or whatever. And so, uh, it, it, it actually, it actually not only frees me to, um, to, to do and to be what I think honors God, but it also puts a boundary around my own, uh, my own, uh, creativity and abilities. So that I'm, I'm, I'm bounded now by a much bigger purpose of much bigger, a much bigger design than just me. And so in my world, the world doesn't revolve around me. Uh, it, it, it's, it's a much, it's a much bigger, it's a much bigger thing.

Butlerfilms (00:06:53):

So when you were trying to get out of the mold of being labeled as kind of a, you know, liberal, you know, liberal, big government thinkers, or, you know, environmentalist, you know, lefty, um, you know, obviously those labels weren't attractive to you, one and two. Um, why do you think that, that, that, I mean, there's very real reasons for it, but why do you think that the environmentalist were painted with that brush one? And why was it so distasteful to, um, to you or to, to not necessarily to you, but to many, uh, in your faith community, in the evangelical faith community, um, you know, sort of, why did all of a sudden caring for the earth or, or being good stewards of the earth become something that was associated with the liberal, you know, immoral cause

Joel Salatin (00:07:50):

Yeah, if we, if we go back in time a couple of centuries, but if you go back several centuries, what you see is, is generally a kind of a, I'll call it a pagan animistic view toward nature. I mean, think about the bubonic plague. Um, you know, in the, in the mid, you know, 14, 15 hundreds, the bubonic plague was thought to be some sort of a spirit, you know, a spirit. And so they had all these, you know, these, these woodcuts of the spirit of the flu, the spirit of the plague, the spirit of measles or whatever, you know, and there were all these different, you know, the, the, the grim, the grim Reaper, you know, uh, portrayed as different kinds of diseases and kinds of things. And so, uh, there, there was, uh, there was a very, um, um, you know, uh, nonphysical, spiritual orientation to two things that were practical in life, but as people began, um, you know, with the microscope and we started developing more, um, more hard science and realized that the moon was not green cheese and that the moon revolved around the earth and, and, um, you know, some of these more physical, you know, gravity and, and that the earth was round and not flat, and it wasn't held up by Atlas.

Joel Salatin (00:09:17):

It was, it was, uh, you know, suspended in space, um, and, and revolved around the sun, the sun didn't revolve around the earth, uh, and come up every morning and set every evening on the edges of a platter, uh, the earth revolved around us, you know, as those things started to develop, uh, what happened was that, that humor, at least in the developed world, um, we lost a lot of our, uh, our, our spiritual nonphysical orientation. And so when the romantic, the British romantic poets beats, uh, I mean, uh, Keats Shelley, um, started talking about, there's nothing as beautiful as a tree and romanticized nature and started and started casting new kind of divinity on nature, the, the, the, uh, the Christian community, which by the way, led much of this physical discovery, I mean, Isaac Newton and, and these guys all in there, they were very Judeo Christian ethic oriented. Um, and so, so as, as the romanticist began to,

Butlerfilms (00:10:35):

Um, uh, uh,

Joel Salatin (00:10:39):

Tray nature as something more than just physical, just physical stuff,

Butlerfilms (00:10:44):

Tough,

Joel Salatin (00:10:47):

The, the church, the Christians rebelled against that and labeled it as earth worship rather than earth stewardship. And so there was this bifurcation, you know, by 1900, uh, and into the early era in the early 20th century, uh, there was a bifurcation so that, um, essentially as, as the environmentalist's, uh, you know, progressed the, the conservative church community saw it as a, uh,

Butlerfilms(00:11:25):

Uh,

Joel Salatin (00:11:26):

As, as, as a spiritual lysing of the physical universe. And, and of course, Romans chapter one talks about those who worship the earth instead of worshiping the creator. And so there, there's some pretty specific biblical references to this problem. You know, we, we, we take care of the earth because it's God's earth, not ours, but we don't worship the earth as if it's some spiritual entity. And so what happened as typically happens, um, then as this, as this, uh, uh, separation developed well, then everything, what happens is it becomes extreme, then everything in environment, everything that a, an environmental assess is now, you know, hogwash. And of course the environmentalist, everything that a, that a Christian said that was considered hogwash. And of course the concrete, the door, the concrete, the door mentality, didn't help things, you know, the, the way the concrete, the doors came and conquered everything, killed people and destroyed civilizations all in the name of God.

Joel Salatin (00:12:34):

Uh, the crusades, you know, none of that helped this narrative, uh, as we moved into, you know, into the 20th century. And so what's happened is that the, um, the, the, I'll just say the radical environmental movement has, uh, has taken on the, I would say the, the, the trappings, if you will, it, it now care, you know, it's a movement with, with, um, nuances that are kind of hanging off of it, like threads, um, that, that, that have embraced, uh, well, they don't believe people can do this. They believe government needs to do it. So then you have, you have government programs and government agencies, the environmental protection agency, we have to, we have to trust a bureaucrat. We can't trust business. We can't dress trust the citizenry. We can't trust the individuals. And so then that feeds right into the narrative of a bigger government. We need a, we need a government, we need a government bigger than a tree. We need a government bigger than a corporation, you know? And, and so, so that, just, that just feeds this, this, this, this, uh, bifurcation between, you know, the whole, the whole conservative, um, uh, individualistic, uh, Liberty minded, um, uh, you know, conservative Christian community evangelical community versus the, you know, the whole, uh, kind of top down government government has to, you know, government has to keep us all in line kind of thing. And so it just feeds on itself.

Butlerfilms (00:14:09):

It does, but it was also pushed a little bit too, right. Wouldn't you say, with, with various, you know, large, um, interests, you know, uh, lobby interests, big, big industry interests, saddling up with politicians to join forces with, you know, church leadership, um, to sort of make these issues, uh, bundle them into one. And it seems to me that some of the environmental issues, the issues around climate change, regardless of if you agree or disagree as to how to look at it or resolve it, it's still got swept up into this whole other arrangement where it, you know, in sort of entire portions of at least, you know, the Christian community started to not believe it at all right.

Joel Salatin (00:15:01):

Well, yeah. And I think, I think this is, this is the broad brush approach. Uh, you know, we love categories, we love pigeonholes, right? And so when, uh, when a conservative says, uh, says the phrase property rights, what the environmentalist hears is destruction, you know, uh, exploitation rape, right. And when an environmentalist says, um, uh, protect the earth, the, um, the, the conservative Christian here's, um, bureaucracy, uh, regulations, and, uh, and, and making, uh, making a mud puddle, a wetland, you know, uh, by regulation and, and taking away, taking away my ability to, uh, you know, to, to, to build a frog pond in my backyard, that sort of thing. And so, so both sides have, have gotten, uh, you know, entrenched in their, in their perception of the other side and their defense of their position

and feels threatened by the other side. And so, you know, that's why, that's why, when I, when I, uh, embrace creation, stewardship as a Christian, um, you know, I'm people say, what happened to you?

Joel Salatin (00:16:24):

You know, have you been drinking lefty? Kool-Aid? I mean, I mean, if I, if I go into church and say, Hey, guess what, um, how about when I, we have a potluck next week? How about we don't use styrofoam? Uh, let's at least use paper, and if not that, why don't we go down to the salvation army or the, or the thrift store and buy a bunch of, uh, you know, plates and we'll wash them and we won't have anything to throw in the trash, you know, as soon as you say that, you're what, you know, Hey, Oh yeah, we gotta, you know, we got a greeny weaning tree hugger over here, you know, um, that, that's, that's the idea. And so, uh, so, so what happens is you, you just don't have a conversation, you mistrust each other and you just don't have a conversation.

Butlerfilms (00:17:08):

So you and I both, both lived through a lot of this, and I was probably pretty unconscious about it while it was happening. But, but, but how do you think this dialogue became, how do you think these, this divisiveness became, so sharpen pointed, you know, we can talk about propaganda campaigns and this, that, and the other, but for you personally, like in your lifetime, do you know, how do you think that this, this whole, you know, conversation became so polarized?

Joel Salatin (00:17:45):

Well, I don't know that, that, I, I don't know if have a definitive answer to how, how this became so polarized. I do believe I do believe that, um, that there is this dualism. I mean, it's, this goes clear back to, you know, to Greece and to the book of Galatians in the new Testament, where, where we have this notion that that spirit is good and physical is bad, kind of a, uh, a dualism philosophy and everything. Physical is evil and fallen. You know, the garden of Eden, everything that's physical is fallen and bad. And the only thing good is what you don't see, uh, you know, the, the spiritual and, and that's a very Western reductionist kind of thinking. It's a, um, yeah, I'll just say it's a very restaurant. Western reductionist comes from the Romans and the Greeks, and it's, it's come on down in Western culture today.

Joel Salatin (00:18:42):

We don't see that kind of thinking in the Eastern cultures, whether it's, whether it's a, you know, Hindu Shinto or, or, uh, Israel light, you know, we don't see it in, in those because, because they, they take, they view physical. And then this is my mantra. Now I view physical as simply an object lesson of spiritual truth. So when people come to my farm, I want them to drive out the lane after visiting here saying to themselves, Oh, that's what forgiveness looks like. Oh, that's what abundance looks like. That's what mercy or beauty or name, name, your spiritual truth. Um, that's what it looks like. And so that's a very, uh, many Christians are scared to death of that because it starts putting, it starts putting spiritual, spiritual threads. It starts, it starts wrapping, uh, physical things in spiritual threads. And, and that, that has not been in the Western, you know, Christian and a four millennia that has not been in well, at least for a long, long time.

Joel Salatin (00:20:03):

But, but goodness, the Bible is full of, of, I look under the Hills from whence cometh, my help, your help. Doesn't come from the Hills. It's a metaphor for, you know, for, for, for God riding in, from out of sight.

And he comes over the Hills, you know, with his angels or whatever. Um, and so, so the, the Bible is full of, uh, it, it blurs this, the Bible doesn't have this, this stark, uh, kind of difference between physical and spiritual. It wraps it all. As one, in fact, you know, first Corinthians 10 31 says whether the, whether you eat or drink or whatsoever, you do do all to the glory of God, it doesn't say, you know, how you meditate or, or, you know, how you go into a trance. It says you eating and drinking. I mean, those are as, as, as those are his physical processes, as you can imagine, I mean, you know, humdrum day to day, the point is hummed Andre today, yet God still cares.

Joel Salatin (00:21:00):

And I think, I think that the Christian community has allowed itself to think, Oh, God only cares about doctrine and about systematic theology and, and, uh, and, and, and prayer. And, you know, what's considered kind of spiritual stuff and that's all out here in this mystical, spiritual, unseen world. He doesn't really care that much about what's on our table, how we handle the cow, you know, whether we use compost or chemicals, uh, and whether there are, whether there are fishing in the river or not, because, you know, he says it's all gonna burn up anyway. So it must not be very important. You know, that's, that's kind of this idea and I'm suggesting, you know, in revelation it says, I will destroy those who will, who destroy the earth. And so God doesn't see it that way. He sees it very, very differently. And I think the Christian community has allowed itself to kind of cherry pick cherry picks certain passages about dominion and control and things like that, biblically, which are in there.

Joel Salatin (00:22:03):

So, so, so the thing is, yes, we humans. We do have dominion. We are in control, but it's, it's, it's not, it's not dominion. I can do whatever I want. It's, it's, it's like, it's like, I'm driving the train. God puts it on the track. And I supposed to keep it on the track. If the train goes off the track, then, then I'm not practicing proper, uh, dominion care as God sees it. Uh, a train without a track is not a very effective train. And so the whole, my idea is, let me find those tracks. God showed me those tracks and let me run that engine the way you want me to run it.

Butlerfilms (00:22:42):

So, so, so when people, you know, politicians and radio personalities and everything else, they'll come out and say, well, it's just plain arrogance for a Christian to think that they can, you know, steward the earth or change the changed what's going on right now with environmental problems. Um, what's your response to that? It's unchristian, and it's, man's arrogance to think that he has any control because God has all the control.

Joel Salatin (00:23:13):

Uh, I, you know, one of the, one of the most tragic things in life is to realize, yes, God, God can reach down. Now, we're going a little bit of theology here, but yes, in sovereignty and providential, uh, um, um, ability, God has the capacity to reach down and do everything, anything he wants to, if he wants to volcano, if he wants to plug up a volcano. I mean, in, in, in, uh, reading, uh, I think, I think God created the heaven and the earth Genesis, you know, uh, first chapter. So, so I think God can do anything he wants to, but the fact is that God limits himself in many ways to what we do. And, and the Psalms, the Psalms right, uh, include, uh, um, passages about, um, those of us who limit God, I mean, and there, and there are plenty of examples, uh, in the Bible.

Joel Salatin (00:24:18):

I mean, Moses is a good one. Uh, God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of the land of Egypt. And Moses said, well, I don't talk very well. He argued with God and God gave him Aaron, uh, his brother to be his, his mouthpiece, his spokesman. Well, Aaron's the one that made the golden calf. Aaron was a thorn in his side, the whole rest of his life. And so that was plan B. Aaron was not God's plan a was plan B. And so perhaps the biggest tragedy of life is when God sits back and, and he's, he's, he's watching, how am I going to handle this knowledge I have? How am I going to handle this grace? He's given me, how am I going to handle this mercy? He shown me and, and I can handle it well, or I can handle it poorly. And I think that, um, and so, yes, God can intervene at any time, but most of the time he doesn't, uh, and that's why that's why bad things happen. You know, God doesn't make a drunk. God doesn't make an addict. God doesn't make a murderer. Okay. Those are made because God sits back and lets us go our way. And that's a, that's a very sobering thought, you know, that we can, we can take our engine and run it off the tracks. That's very sobering.

Butlerfilms (00:25:40):

So you've been called everything from you to the high priest of the pastor, to, you know, sort of the savior of the organic farming movement, the most influential farmer on the planet. Did you ever expect to be sort of heralded as the hero of sort of the green, organic farming movement? And is it, does it come with a little bit of a double edged sword?

Joel Salatin (00:26:05):

No, that certainly was not on my, uh, on my agenda, you know, on my bucket list when I was, uh, a young guy I'm not quite so young anymore. Um, but, uh, that was not on my bucket. It was not even on the radar. All, all we wanted to do, we just wanted to farm. We wanted to love this place we wanted to, to, to practice redemption on it, into abundance. Um, w is nature fallen. Yes. You know, uh, we, we appreciate that narrative, but, but, but the redemptive capacity of nature to heal of biology to heal is, is just, um, you know, unspeakable it's it's immeasurable. And so we just, we just wanted to love this place, caress it into it's it's a primal abundance, if you will. And along the way, this, the success that we had we found was highly unusual and it attracted attention.

Joel Salatin (00:27:04):

And then people wanted to ask me questions and I wanted to know what I thought and how do you do this? And, and so, um, you know, so it was very serendipitous for me, you know, I, I literally feel like I stumbled into it or, you know, a Cinderella or something, but, but yes, it's not always, it's not always easy because you have to, you have to be careful about the words you say. Um, you know, you carry a lot of responsibility. And frankly, when I get asked to, and I have, I've spoken at, um, you know, uh, Rutgers and Yale and Harvard and UC Berkeley, and you go into these, I'll just say, bastions of liberalism. And, and when you go in there and I know, I know how few people like me get in there, you know, are able to make a presentation.

Joel Salatin (00:27:59):

And so that's a heavy responsibility. I I'm an ambassador for, uh, for, I think the Judeo Christian ethic and biblical truth. And, uh, that means I'm, I'm representing the Lord, you know, and I don't take that lightly. I, I'm not, I'm not smug about that. Um, it's, um, it's wonderful. You know, it's a privilege, but it's also a very humbling thing to realize I could misspeak. I could be, I could come across as arrogant. I could come across as a buffoon. I could, I could be smirch. I could, I could, I could harm, you know, the reputation of, of God. And I don't want to do that.

Butlerfilms (00:28:42):

So why did you write the marvelous subpoenas to pigs, to the faith community specifically?

Joel Salatin (00:28:48):

I wrote that, yes.

Butlerfilms (00:28:50):

You've said,

Joel Salatin (00:28:52):

Yeah. I wrote that book. I wrote that book specifically to the faith community. What's fascinating to me now, a couple of years now, since it's been out, is that I get actually more feedback from the non Christian community that is relieved. That is relieved, that there is a, a different interpretation of scripture. Then I get feedback from Christians who read it and say, Oh, wow. So, so I, I, there, there's kind of, they're tying to three reactions, um, in the Christian community, I've gotten lots of letters from people say, Oh, I'm so glad somebody finally articulated what I think I've been odd man, out odd woman out in my church for, you know, years and years and years. Nobody understood me. Finally, somebody put into words, you know, what, I'm what I'm thinking. And, um, and I, I mean, not just, Oh, it just warms my heart.

Joel Salatin (00:29:47):

And then, and then the, uh, another feedback is from the, uh, non, non Christian community. And they're just, they're just really thankful and grateful that somebody's a held, held the Christian community to task, you know, actually held them accountable and be, um, uh, they're, they're, they're, they're grateful that there is another interpretation there. There's another, there's another way to, to, to implement the Bible in our, in our daily lives. There's another narrative. There's another, there's another story to do. And then of course the third reaction is from Christians who just say, um, this is just too, you know, it's too difficult. It's too greeny weenie. You know, I, I'm not sure you're even a Christian, uh, you know, anybody that says this is probably pushing it, fortunately that doesn't come very much. Um, but, but, uh, you know, those kinds of things happen.

Butlerfilms (00:30:52):

So you get, you really, you know, you're really between a rock and a hard place. So it looks like half the time, you know, sort of your, your greedy weenie or the greeny weenies turn on you as they recently have, because you were quoted, maybe you've misquoted, it's saying, you know, as a climate skeptic, a science denier, um, really, but that, that, that, that rocked your pedestal green world. So obviously, you know, it was out of context, but, but let's talk about that a little bit, you know, it's like, what first I'm, what are your views on it? It's an, you know, why, why can't you speak your views without being labeled with one brush? Like it's almost like fake news all over the place, right?

Joel Salatin (00:31:43):

Yeah. So, so that, that pushback came primarily when I was asked to make a presentation at the red pill conference in, uh, where was it, Wyoming or something like that. And, um, you know, I was completely unfamiliar with what the, with what that conference was. I was unfamiliar with most of the speakers there, but, you know, I routinely get asked to go new places where I'm unfamiliar, but that's part of my,

as part of my bridge building, you know, and I'm, I may go to a, to an extremely, you know, an extremely, uh, whatever liberal place I'm going to get asked to go to an extremely conservative place. And, uh, and so what happened was since I was there and, and that, and I learned later that the red pill conferences known as climate change deniers and all that, then, then my assault, my present, my, my, the fact I was there, um, uh, put me in that camp.

Joel Salatin (00:32:45):

What, what people didn't know was that I so infuriated the leadership of that conference, they almost threw me out. And, uh, and I will never be invited back there because aye, aye. I called them to task publicly. Even the, the, the, the top name of the he's a British guy. Um, and in a, in a public panel, I called him out, uh, for the things that he was saying. And yeah, I got, I got clap by the way attendees, but they weren't the leadership. And so I got crucified by the leadership. And so, so this, this is a perfect example of where, um, we are, uh, and I don't want to go to the whole, you know, racial violence thing right now. Um, but, but these are related. We live in times where the, the story, the narrative has gotten so confined. And if you, if you misstate one word or, or there's, or you, you don't whatever sign on to the narrative, um, huh.

Joel Salatin (00:33:52):

120%, then you're the enemy. You know, that's kind of, that's kind of where we've become. Uh, for example, you know, I don't like prisons now, most conservatives let's build more prisons, throw them in jail. I hate that I'm completely opposed to prisons because they have an 80% recidivism rate, anything that was 80% of failure, you would think, we would say, well, maybe this ain't working folks, you know, but, but the conservatives, they just want to build more prisons. And, and, and of course they think the liberals are soft on crime cause you don't want to put everybody in a prison. And of course then, then as soon as I say, I don't want more prisons that conservative say, Oh, he's a softy. You know, he's a liberal lefty softy on crime. No, um, I want punishment, but I think there are other ways to do it besides prison, but, but the sound bite culture and the, as, as you mentioned, the, um, you know, the broad brush, I think that's a great way to say it.

Joel Salatin (00:34:49):

The, the broad brush does not allow nuances to be teased out. And so where I am is, is the, is, are we in a time of climate change? Absolutely. You have to be an absolute idiot to not see the satellite phone. I mean, I was up in Alaska two years ago and I wrote on an expressway that that 50 years ago was on a glacier. I mean, in other words, the glaciers melted and gone, and they built an expressway up the Valley where the glacier used to be. I mean, you have to be an idiot to not realize that there is a, there is something going on. Okay. Now the question is, well, is it human cost? If it is, how much is it? And, and you know, what's the situation and you have to appreciate, you have to realize, you know, I'm 63. And when I was in high school, I grew up every, every scientist, every environmental scientist was predicting that by now, you know, 50 years hints at that time, the earth would be in another ice age because the collection of gases was going to block out the sun, the sun wasn't going to get to the earth.

Joel Salatin (00:36:06):

And so we were going to turn into an ice age, you know, by, by, by a, you know, 2100. So that was, that was the narrative that I got from all the credentialed scientific experts, you know, growing up now, you know, we're all gonna burn up. So I look at those two things and I say, so what's common. What, what's the one common denominator in these? And you know what, the one common denominator is it's, it's

carbon in the atmosphere, that's the common denominator. Uh, and so I look at that and say, so how do we get carbon out of the atmosphere? Well, we, we put it in the soil. How do we put it in the soil? We put it in the soil with vegetation. So how do we get more vegetation covered on the planet? Right? Cause carbon inhales, carbon dioxide, it splits off the carbon and makes tissue and it exhales oxygen so that so humans and animals can, can breathe.

Joel Salatin (00:37:05):

And so, you know, this is the great, the lungs of the earth. This is the great cycle of the earth. And so I find what's interesting is that both of these narratives, the common denominator is carbon in the atmosphere needs to go in the soil. So you know what? You can call me a simpleton. You can call me a climate denier, whatever you want to call me, but I am dedicated absolutely absolutely dedicated to putting carbon in the soil and on our farm, on our farm right here in 50 years, we have gone from an average of 1% organic matter, organic matter kind of is it, it's not the exact carbon in the soil, but, but they're, they're kissing cousins. All right. So it's, it's close enough. Um, the, the, so, so we have gone from 1% organic matter in our farm soils to today 8.2% organic matter. So that's a, that's a click of 7% organic matter. And all we would have to do in the United States is to move that it move our current organic matter 2%, two percentage points. And we would be back to pre pre 1950, uh, atmospheric carbon levels.

Joel Salatin (00:38:20):

And we've moved it on our farm. We've moved at 7%, not just 2%. So can it be done? Absolutely. It can be done. Does it take rocket science to do it? No, it doesn't take rocket science to it. All it takes is a fundamentally different way of interacting with our ecological womb that God made for us. He made it and said it was good. He wanted us to be here. He wanted us to proper and to prosper and enjoy its abundance. But we, we have have short circuited and cheated. We've cheated on the, on the rails, run our engine off the track. And instead of trying to figure out how to get the engine back on the track, we just keep putting the pedal down and hoping the old wheels will spin out through the field somewhere. And we're just tearing up everything.

Butlerfilms (00:39:11):

We talk a lot about the influence of the fossil fuel fuels, you know, on climate change and how that's marched forward over the decades. Um, and I want you to talk about it's, it's, it's, it's, it's put the spotlight also on agriculture and in with the big industrial farming, but also, I just want to put this to you because there's kind of interesting. We did talk to, um, a guy named Darren do Chuck, who wrote anointed with oil. Um, I don't know if you've seen that book it's sort of recently out, but he kind of traces the history of big oil versus versus Wildcat, um, oil patch oil. And so we kind of dumped the two different ones, you know, the civil religion of crude and Wildcat Christianity, where Wildcat Christianity is much more, um, you know, it's, it's, it's, uh, it's sort of like the birth of the modern tea party to a certain extent, you know, very libertarian, no government, no rules we're on our own.

Butlerfilms (00:40:15):

And then the similar religion of crude was sort of brought up through the Rockefellers and everything else and how they use their, their money and influence. Um, those are sort of two different questions, but, but that's just one of the framing conversations we're using around oil. And I think what you bring to this story very importantly, is that it's, it's, you know, getting the carbon back into the soil is, is, is a

farmer's job. And, but what, what do you, what are you up against in terms of being able to do that in terms of our modern it, the way we feed people today, the modern farming systems today?

Joel Salatin (00:40:52):

Sure. So, so, um, if I may, I'd like to just give you my thumbnail sketch of, of my kind of philosophy of oil of petroleum. Um, and that is what I feel like is that by the end of, of, of, uh, of the, of the 18 hundreds. So as we moved to the, to the turn of the century at 19 1900, um, it's, it's almost like, uh, it's almost like God looked down on humanity and said, you know what, I'm going to give you people one more chance to get it right. I'm going to give you cheap energy for a couple of generations, so you can fix everything that you've messed up. And if we had used that, that Bonanza, that gift of all of cheap energy, you know, energy had never been cheap in the history of humankind. It had never been cheap, uh, you know, from draft power to, you know, um, uh, cloth windmills, you know, energy was very, very expensive throughout human history until that point.

Joel Salatin (00:41:54):

And suddenly it became extremely cheap 500 years ago, North American. This is just one example. 500 years ago, North America was 8% water. That water was primarily Beaver ponds. We had 200 million beavers. Uh, some of which we know now by skeletons were as big as a Volkswagen automobile, massive megafauna, you know, big, big beavers. I just like to, you know, encounter one of those dudes. And, and so all these beavers, and this concludes the, the, the arid Southwest Nevada, you know, New Mexico, Utah, um, uh, West Texas had had massive Beaver ponds. So, I mean, today, just for perspective today, uh, our North American landscape is less, less than 1% organic, organic, less than 1% PA uh, water. And so we've gone from 8% to 1% water. So just imagine, just imagine if we could recreate that 8% water, think of what it would do for, for, uh, for, for, um, mass for, for tempera, for temporal, uh, amelioration of atmospheric change, you know, because you've got thermal mass, you know, cause water lakes, uh, you know, don't do as much don't change the fast ambient temperature, flood control, drought, uh, amelioration, uh, I mean, they're just, they're just lots and lots of major, major ramifications.

Joel Salatin (00:43:28):

And so this is why this is where a permaculture, uh, and again, of course, for a Christian to say permaculture, I mean, that's like, what in the world are you talking about? But, but I completely embrace the permaculture concepts because they're essentially looking at an at God's template at creations design and template and saying, how do we duplicate that? How do we humans step into that beautiful design and template and, and, um, and, and leverage it, you know, uh, uh, massage it if you will. And so if we had used, for example, that cheap energy and our mechanical prowess to rebuild pawns all over farmland and North America, this century today, we would be flood proof, drought proof, and would have recreated Eden instead. But here's what we did instead. We used it for chemical fertilizer for, uh, and for creating a food system that transports the average morsel more than 1500 miles from field to plate and is a completely calorie guzzler, a petroleum guzzler in, in the food space. So, so here we are a century later, and we're far worse off than we were then because we've damaged. And the, and the price of energy is now escalating and getting more and more expensive. So this is the squandering, this is the squandering of the grace. This is the squandering of the mercy, in my opinion, that, that, um, that we've had now I forgot the question.

Butlerfilms (00:45:15):

I think you handled the question pretty well. My question was sort of all over the place you came to it with very fine points. So thank you very much. Now, would you, um, would you consider yourself a wild cat farmer if you were a wild cat oil or wild cat Christianity or a wild cat farmer?

Joel Salatin (00:45:35):

Uh, well, uh, probably certainly more than, than, than the conventional, uh, yeah, I'm, I'm, uh, I'm a pretty, uh, free, radical out here, but, but again, it, it's not just, it's not just doing whatever you want, but my freedom is not about being free to do anything you want or anything you can, it's about being free to do what you should to do, what you thought those are. Those are, that's a big difference. It's, it's, it's, it's, uh, one is a complete hubris. The other is, is a license to perform within your, uh, you know, with, within God's design God's desire. And, and, uh, those are two very, very different things. And I don't think, in fact, you know, I just spoke at the, the libertarian national party convention last week in Orlando. And I, my message to them was you, people need to buffer your individual Liberty and property rights, property rights agenda.

Joel Salatin (00:46:42):

And before you take the second breath, when you say property rights, do you need to say in that breath, but we need to protect air, soil and water. And in fact, we need to see them increase and we want policies that will help them increase. How can we, as, as, as Liberty minded folks, uh, um, you know, incentivize and encourage, how can we, how can we incentivize and encourage, um, that as a result of us being here, there's more soil there. There's more potable water, there's more breathable air. Uh, how can we do that? And I told him, I said, if, if you would do that as in practice, you would find bridges that you can imagine that you could build, but right now you never use the word commons and you never used the word stewardship, you paint yourself into a corner and you don't have the friends that you could, if you, you know, if you appreciated this.

Butlerfilms (00:47:45):

And so you're, you're at the libertarian convention. So are you obviously still aligned that way? And it would, a question is like, how do you, how do you see what's going on right now? And this probably won't even make it into the documentary or anything, but, um, just in terms of, let's just take the environmental issues right now with the current, um, group of people that are sort of in charge on, on the federal level and the state levels and, and the, the blanket of pastors and Christians that are around them and using, um, you know, Christianity and the Bible to justify certain political agendas. This isn't necessarily a new thing. It's sort of always, you know, always embedded in there. Right. But right now it's pretty, pretty out there. And I'm just curious as to how you feel about that. So it isn't as a Christian, as a steward of the land and, you know, what do you, what's your opinion on whether or not, you know, this merger is to is beneficial or detrimental.

Joel Salatin (00:48:56):

So, so I'm gonna, I'm going to be the Maverick again. Um, I, so what I would, first of all, I think that, that when the cultural, when the cultural clout is at a certain point to create something, like, for example, the environmental protection agency, when it has moved to that point, that is simply indicative that people are tired of it. And, and, and so I think that culture does change. Culture does shift. Um, I think that the idea of, of going out with a BB gun and shooting Robbins, for example, that was done routinely when I was a child, I can assure you that the young, that the next generation did not do that, I'm sure there were some, you know, uh, obnoxious boys that continued to do so, but I can tell you that there is

an awareness of, of wildlife and nature, just from the power of everything from national geographic to, you know, to, to, you know, uh, uh, rivers on fire to the, to the, uh, teardrop coming down, the, the native Americans.

Joel Salatin (00:50:13):

I remember those, uh, that, that powerful ad campaign and S S so, so what happens is the societal pendulum, if we could imagine the societal, let's say kind of consensus pendulum, it never hang straight down. It's always, it's always on it. You know, it's always to one side and what happens is it has to swing. It has to swing far enough off of center before it starts coming back, the cultural pendulum. And so, and, and the, the problem is we, people were, were impatient. And so in my view, in my view, the, the understanding of environmental stewardship and pollution that created the environmental protection agency was already moving so rapidly in the culture. You know, I'll be a total heretic, but I don't think the EPA created any environmental care in our culture any faster, any faster than it would have come by individual communities, uh, um, holding a corporation accountable or saying, we're not going to take this burning river anymore.

Joel Salatin (00:51:31):

And I mean, there are all sorts of, of nonprofit and for profit entities, you know, from, from river keepers to Robert F. Kennedy jr, to, you know, mean I can do down a litany of a very liberal, uh, you know, friends OK. That I, that I admire and love, um, and their work, their work, um, uh, all I'm suggesting is the power of that, of that sacred, um, message did not need a bureaucracy to get traction. The culture was already moving that way, which is why an EPA could be created. And, but the problem is we're impatient. We want it. Now we see a movie and we want it now. And, and there are plenty of people who think the only way to, uh, to actually ride herd is to have another government agency. But then the problem is then what happens is it all those bureaucrats get in there and they start writing rules, rules, and rules.

Joel Salatin (00:52:40):

And the next thing, you know, um, you know, a farmer can't even build a pond if we want one. Uh, and so, so a lot of environmental good cannot be done, uh, because of that, uh, you know, the, we didn't need a government agency to tell us DDT was bad. Rachel Carson did that with silent spring. I mean, an example is the Upton Sinclair who wrote the jungle and, uh, and ended up, you know, Teddy Roosevelt gave us the food safety inspection service, which now makes it illegal for me to, to, to, to butcher a pig in the backyard, which is, you know, heritage, heritage wisdom, and, um, and sell the sausage to people at church or my neighbors. So, so this overreach, this bureaucratic overreach, this is why I'm not a pure environmentalist because environmentalist tend to just, just

Butlerfilms (00:53:35):

See, uh, you know,

Joel Salatin (00:53:37):

Continuous, continuous growth and escalation of government manipulation in the, in the marketplace and the landscape and the culture. And, and as, as an individual business person, who's trying to pay taxes and stay alive. You know, uh, people ask me what keeps you awake at night? What keeps me awake at night is, you know, did I, did I sign the form, right? Did I, did I comply with this particular requirement? And I could do that on all sorts of fronts. And so this is why this is why I'm not a socialist.

Um, although I very much appreciate that on a local level, a community might, might want to do some things that would be socialist by the book, and I would even be in favor of them, but it's on a community level. It's real different than us on a federal level. A federal federal level, uh, um, is, is a, is a one size fits all. It's a winner, take all thing. And so I'm absolutely convinced that much of the divisiveness and, and the, the, the vengefulness and hatefulness in our culture is because we have walked away from the 50 state experiment where each state can kind of make their own try innovate, innovate their own creative response to, you know, societal issues. And we have arrogated it to the federal level where it never should have been. And that makes the stakes so high, the winter, the winter, uh, so, so big and the loser so small,

Butlerfilms (00:55:07):

All that it, that it, it ups the

Joel Salatin (00:55:11):

Ante. It ups the steak for every disagreement.

Butlerfilms (00:55:16):

Wow.

Joel Salatin (00:55:16):

W what if we, what if one state, for example said, we don't think state, we don't think education is the governmental, um, is a governmental, uh, responsibility. We're not going to be involved in education at all. We're going to, we're going to drop our taxes down to real low and let and let Paris buy whatever education they want. Another state over here says, Oh, we think education is absolutely a complete government thing we're going to pay for, for every bit of it. And we're going to not allow charter schools, private schools, it's all going to be public, and everybody's going to be indoctrinated at the government school. Well, it wouldn't take long for people to be able to look at those two models and, and say, well, this one works part of this works. Part of that works. I like a little bit of this, a little bit of that.

Joel Salatin (00:56:04):

And, and, and, and what happens in you, do you have all these wonderful, simultaneous experiments going on, you actually have diversity diversity on the landscape, but what happens when you have a department of education at the federal level is that experiment becomes almost impossible. And so suddenly the stakes are so high and the, um, that, that, that then, then every, every, every experiment is for sale. And when every freedom and every idea has to be purchased and is for sale, well, then you have K street, but, but, but, but if, but if every idea and every action we're not for sale, we wouldn't have K street.

Joel Salatin (00:56:58):

Now, what would that be perfect. Would that be a perfect world? Absolutely not. Absolutely not. There, there would be, there would be, uh, things that, you know, going on going on over here that I wouldn't like, and there would be things over, but, but at least, at least it would be at a smaller, decentralized, diversified scale where input and change are easier. It's a lot easier to turn a speedboat than an aircraft carrier. So, so, uh, you know, our founders said government is best to put policy decisions at the lowest

possible level, um, at, at the most local level possible. And I'm, I'm a, I'm a big believer in that. And I think that's a, that's a general, you know, libertarian concept. Um, but I'm not an anarchist at all. I think the government absolutely does have some really, really good functions, but, but I think, I think when we, for example, if, if we, if we used the English common law, we're where we get our common law, uh, heritage from England.

Joel Salatin (00:58:09):

It came around the commons that, that grew up. That was the, that was the trade off that was made to keep royalty. So the peasants, the peasants, um, wanted to, uh, you know, uh, uh, whatever, you know, eliminate the, the royalty, the nobleman and the King. And so there was this bargain made, well, we're gonna, we're gonna make commons that way. You can have a cow and a garden and all this and common law grew out of a jurisprudence that the peasants used to protect themselves from noble Duke, uh, Lordship, kingship, overreach. So that, so that the, the, the culture created a system to protect the poor, to protect the peasants from the, from wealthy overreach, that was the tradition of common law. And so, and so when, uh, when, uh, a Lord or a, a nobleman, you know, a Duke, uh, came in and, and aggressed or took, or, or, um,

Joel Salatin (00:59:22):

Used the commons, the peasants could actually take him to court. And, and he was a, he was a bad guy, you know, it punished him. And so today, today, for example, instead of having, I'll go back to the EPA, instead of having an EPA, if we had British common law, still, still operable in our country, instead of a bureaucracy, if some, if somebody dumped a bunch of dioxin in the stream running by my house, I would take that corporation or that individual, or whoever to, to common law court and have a jury of peers determine if that guy's a scope law or not. What we have with bureaucracy is I don't take him to court. I turn him in to the bureaucracy, which is wined and dined by the corporation. And, and so what happens is you have this unholy Alliance, this, this fraternity, this revolving door that we all know about, and, and what happens is now I'm fighting both the bureaucracy and the, the bad evil corporation.

Joel Salatin (01:00:32):

And, uh, and, and it's a stacked deck. Uh, and so, you know, most of most Americans have no idea what are our British common law heritage has given us as a remedy for things we, we, we, we, and our time, and, and you're in my lifetime, you know, we've grown up with just, well, the, the, the government agency handles it, the government agency handles it. And I think we're learning that in a lot of ways, government agencies don't handle it. And in fact, they actually aid and ABET the wrong side of the argument. And so, you know, for, for my, for my neighbor, farmers, whom I dearly love, but they spread chemicals everywhere and, and all that, I can have a conversation with them and, um, and, and, and make a lot of sense. And they walk away kind of hug, Hey gang, I make some sense, you know, and you look at his fields and yeah, you gotta make some sense, but then they go and read their, their USDA, the USDA bulletin from the scientific experts at the land grant colleges. And, ah, nah, Salitan is a nut. He's a lunatic. He's crazy. You know? And so, so if I could just, if I could just, uh, debate the private entity, the farmers out here, I can make great inroads, but I'm debating not only the farmers, but all of the credentialed experts and government officials that put out the bulletins that poopoo what I do. And so, so it's, uh, you know, it's, it's, it's a stacked deck

Butlerfilms (01:02:04):

At some point you should run though, and then maybe like, turn it from me and shine.

Joel Salatin (01:02:09):

Well, you know, I, I've been, uh, I've been re I've been actually officially recruited to run for various offices, you know, Senate governor, uh, Congress by the socialist party, the greens, the Democrats, the Republicans, and the libertarians. So I figure if all, if all five of those parties want me to run for them, um, it, as many people as I irritate there must be something there that that's attractive. I'll, that's all I'll say.

Butlerfilms (01:02:49):

That's great. Joel. I know you probably have to go, but can I ask you just a couple more questions? Um, what did you have a hard out?

Joel Salatin (01:02:59):

No, I don't know. It's, it's, it's actually, it's actually raining here. I, I had to come in from, uh, you know, from, from doing some chainsaw work and I jumped in the shower even got cleaned up for you. So, uh, yeah.

Butlerfilms (01:03:12):

And we could use the rain. So that's this,

Joel Salatin (01:03:14):

Absolutely. Yes, yes.

Butlerfilms (01:03:17):

Um, well you skirted my question on whether or not faith belief leaders belong on a, on a, on a political stage. So I'm going to ask it to you in a different way, the Eva, do you think evangelical faith leaders, do you think with the, so some of the time period we're talking about obviously is, is, is during the, sort of the height of the rise of the moral majority, right. And because one of the things that we've found is that at some point, you know, the national association of evangelicals, people like Richard seismic and stuff, you know, when had, uh, uh, uh, you know, had their own sort of epiphany and went from being climate deniers to climate change action, you know, that they creation care became something very important to them, spoke out about it. He lost his for other reasons, too. He, he lost his job as the head of the national association of evangelicals. And, and from that point forward, the, the conversation started to change pretty significantly with the rise of the moral majority. So I guess my question is, is, um, does, does the moral majority, does, does that particular time period in history and the particular folks that were growing the political religious union, um, did that, was that hard on evangelicals as a whole, did that sort of give evangelical community a black eye? And that's a little bit of a leading question, but it's just a genuine question. I'm just curious,

Joel Salatin (01:05:01):

Oh, listen, uh, this is the whole point that this is one of the huge points of marvelous pigness of pigs. This is why I wrote the book is because I believe that the evangelical community squandered it's, it's political and, and spiritual equity during that period of time. Listen, if those folks, and I get chill, bumps telling him that this is very, very, uh, it's very personal for me because I grew up in this dichotomy, uh, you know, growing up in the sixties, all of our friends were, you know, hippie marijuana, you know, uh, beat at bearded brawls, whew. You know, Woodstock. That was our farm friends, but our church friends

were straight laced, you know, and, and let's go to McDonald's and get TV dinners, and we're not going to breastfeed anymore. And you know, that whole, that whole, um, um, kind of, uh, mechanistic technology, narrative, we're humans, we're super we're, you know, we can do anything. We can, you know, we can go to the moon, we can, you know, all this. And so, uh, so what, what I found was that, um, that the, the, that the equity that I wanted to see was, um, was squandered. And I think that if we had, if, if, if our community, if the Christian community had said, wow, we're fearfully, wonderfully made, this is so, you know, life is so amazing. Um,

Butlerfilms (01:06:37):

Uh, where did you lose me?

Joel Salatin (01:06:41):

I can't hear you. I can't hear you. Where did you lose me? I lost you at work human. Oh, okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's fine. That's fine. Okay. Alright, I'll go right back to it. Um, so, so, so, you know, there was, there was this thing, Oh, we're super human. You know, we, we can build anything, we can do anything. We can go to the moon, we can do whatever we want. And, and, and so there was this, there's this tremendous, uh, hubris narrative and, and, and making fun of people that did compost and, uh, uh, people that didn't want to CA chemical fertilizer people that didn't want to, uh, have factory farms. And, uh, this was all, you know, branded as elitist and all this stuff.

Butlerfilms (01:08:34):

Okay. I think you're back.

Joel Salatin (01:13:21):

So, so what was happening there, uh, was w with the moral majority, you know, as they, as they went this direction, was they squandered the, the spiritual and emotional equity in the culture that they could have had. Just imagine if the moral majority had said, uh, as, as, as in their messaging, you know what, um, we think God created the universe, God created the earth and it's his, and we're going to dedicate ourselves a fresh and a new to taking care of it, which means we're going to start, um, uh, pushing for compost instead of chemicals. We're gonna push for, you know, uh, uh, the pinkness of pigs instead of just, uh, grow them faster. Fat are bigger, cheaper. They are B

Joel Salatin (01:14:28):

In fact, we believe life is so fearfully and wonderfully made that, that, you know, it's far beyond our comprehension. And we think that the scientific community, which has turned plants into nothing but NPK and animals into nothing but widgets. We think that just makes a mockery of the beauty and the awesome newness of, of, of life mystery. And so we're going to start buying from local farmers. We want to have it be connected to our food. We want to, you know, you can see the narrative. All right. Can you imagine, can you imagine if that had been the narrative, what that would have done, not only in bridge-building, but also in garnering cultural equity to their, you know, uh, well, to their, to their other agenda items, um, people, people would have been listened to other things, uh, that they said, um, you know, interestingly, I had, uh, a very, uh, fascinating, um, meeting with the vice presidents of Chick-fil-A. And as you know, Chick-fil-A is, you know, has a reputation for being a, uh, kind of Christian owned company.

Joel Salatin (01:15:45):

And they actually came up here and spent a day with me. And what made them interested in my message was after I talked with them in Atlanta, we went out to dinner, a couple of them, and they thought I was an absolute kook, but they told me later, what, what hooked them? What reel them in was when I asked them, does God care, how we raise animals and how we eat? Does God care? That was a brand new thought to them. And these were, these were middle-aged, you know, Sunday school teachers. Yeah. These were these, you know, these were good people, but they had never, they had never taken that practical application of is what I say in the Pew. Am I seeing that in the menu? And the fact is that factory farming, it pollutes the ground, it disrespects the chicken. It gives people mercy, difference it, drugs up our dinners. It, you know, it, it, it stinks up the neighborhood. The air is all full of fecal particular. I mean, the everything about it, it segregates the food system. And instead of integrating, I mean, everything about it is, is terrible. Is, is against being a good neighbor, uh, doing on others as you would want them to do under you all the, the, the, the spiritual things that we see. It's totally opposed to that. And when I asked, well, does God

Joel Salatin (01:17:10):

Care? The lights went off. That was their aha moment. And I think, I think that that is, um, I think that that question needs to be asked. And that's what I'm asking the Christian community that I found that's my entry point is, does God care? Because you either have to say, well, he does. Or he doesn't. And if you say, well, he doesn't care. Well, there's, you can't win that argument as a Christian, of course, God cares. He cares. If the Sparrow falls, he says, he numbers the hairs of your head, he cares about everything. And if you say, then if you say so that that's not acceptable, so you have to say, yes, he does

care. Well, then the obvious followup is will then if he cares, then what's the protocol. What's, what's the God pleasing protocol.

Butlerfilms (01:17:56):

And, um,

Joel Salatin (01:17:58):

And I found that that's very, very effective, but the average, the average Christian has been so, so busy feeding themselves on all these liberal socialist, greeny weenie, tree hugger, you know, uh, liberals, th th th th they, they they've. So, um, uh, drunk that Koolaid that they, they they've been so antagonistic on that, that they haven't had time to embrace a totally different positive message.

Butlerfilms (01:18:31):

What happened with Chick-fil-A.

Joel Salatin (01:18:36):

Uh, so, you know, they, they, they asked me for a roadmap. They said, how can we use pastured chickens and fix Chick-fil-A? I mean, they were serious. And a year later they made the decision. It's just too hard. It's just too difficult. And that's not their clientele. I mean, here's the problem. If, if they, if somebody in chicken leadership and Chick-fil-A said, we're going to go this direction, all, not all, but, but many of their, of their, uh, conservative, uh, clients are conservative patrons. What happened to those guys, pastor chicken, come on, you can't feed the world that way. It's elitist, there's a high price. Now we can't put money in the missionary barrel, cause we're spending more on chicken. You know, you have all these, you know, these other, these other things. So it was just, it was just too difficult.

Butlerfilms (01:19:24):

Do you have some hope though that that will change?

Joel Salatin (01:19:30):

Uh, not really. I mean, I look, I, I, I just don't have time to, to really think about it too much. Uh, I think the change won't be them. What I want is I want to start a competing franchise that would have our kind of food. And, uh, and I think if we started over from scratch, what I've learned over my lifetime, trying to, you know, poke around these kinds of things, is this very, very difficult to take an organization that's devoted to cheap food, uh, to, to, um, efficiency, to only efficiency, um, to take an outfit like that that has no food ethic, except how can we do it cheapest possible and, and, and get them to buy into a, uh, you know, a D a different ethos, a different ethic. It's a lot better to just start a different outfit from scratch and, you know, with a different mission statement, a different value, a different value system, and, and, uh, build up, you know, uh, an alternate, an alternative, an alternative deal rather than, rather than trying to convert them from, from within it's. Uh, every business has a culture. And when the culture is, is 180 degrees different than mine, it's real hard to, you know, to work with that culture better, to just start a new outfit with a new culture.

Butlerfilms (01:20:59):

Jellinek the way you think. So, part of the, part of this documentary is about the rural of science denial, um, specifically with, with climate change and climate skepticism. So, and, and it all kind of, it, it's all a

bit of a, um, it, it is all interwoven, right? Like when you said that the, the evangelical community and the rise of the moral majority, they squandered an opportunity. They squandered a position of power. Um, one of the things that, you know, they had people that were very much in favor of creation care, and it kind of got stamped out. And, and one of the tools they use to stamp it out with sort of coming up with this idea of the climate change, isn't real that this is just a bunch of scientists, you know, being scientists again and not, not, you know, not telling us the truth, um, in their hubris and their arrogance. And so I'm just curious if you have anything to say about the role of sky science skepticism within, um, within, within the religion itself, but then within the evangelical community and sort of the historical roots of it, if you're familiar.

Joel Salatin (01:22:14):

Yes. Okay. So, yeah. Uh, and certainly I've been, I've been vilified for saying that science is subjective. Oh, no. Science is objective, but science science, as we know, it has two limitations. There are two limitations of science. The first one is you have to be able to see it. If you can't observe it, you can't, you document what's happening. And the second thing is you have to be able to repeat it. It has to be duplicated. And the problem with, with origins, for example, where did the earth come from? How did we get here? Uh, so the whole, the whole, um, you know, uh, everything wrapped around origins, um, is

Butlerfilms (01:23:01):

It,

Joel Salatin (01:23:02):

Nobody was there to see it and you certainly can't repeat it. And so that's where, that's where the, um, that's where the, you know, the Christian community. And I think Riley's, I certainly share this with them is that science can't know everything and doesn't know everything, because it can only, it can only process what is observable with the human eye measurable, and it can only, um, it can only whatever embrace what you can duplicate. W what'd you can repeat. And so, I mean, goodness, it doesn't take very long to find plenty of subjective science experiments. I mean, much of the, you know, uh, I mean this whole glyphosate debate with Monsanto with Bayer corporation, does it cause cancer or not? You look at the scientists on both sides of that thing. They're looking at the same experiments, the same data, all those experiments were skewed.

Joel Salatin (01:24:01):

All those, you know, those were, those were not set up correctly. Uh, um, I mean, I remember 20 years ago when Cornell, uh, ran a test and showed that if, if cows had, uh, had hay or grass instead of grain, uh, two weeks before slaughter, they wouldn't have cold. They wouldn't have damaging. He called they have call, but not the kind that, that the high path that he called that kills us. You would've thought that the industry would quickly say, okay, we got a new protocol, you know, we're gonna, we're gonna, um, uh, you know, feed cows, you know, forage for two weeks. So they don't have this deadly Ecolab in them. Uh, but no, the, the, the, the industry pooh-poohed the scientists at all, they didn't set it up. Right. And of course, you know, uh, um, when Monsanto was doing studies on, uh, um, GMOs, genetically modified organisms, and they did potatoes, you know, and, and so they set the, set, the experiment up and guess what they, so they had to do animal feeding trials and they use geriatric rats.

Joel Salatin (01:25:01):

Well, geriatric rats already have fully developed, you know, sexual organs, brains, livers, and all that and routines. And they did the experiment and see there's no result at all of a, of GMOs. Well, when the Scottish scientist repeated the exact same experiments in Scotland, except he used juvenile rats instead of geriatric rats, guess what? He saw big differences in sexual organ development in, in, uh, in cognitive ability, in emotional stability in liver development and all this was well-documented. And of course, then he lost his job and was vilified. Um, but, but this is how you set up a scientific experiment. The fact is, you know, it's very difficult for us to appreciate all the variables and the F, and it's very difficult to set up an experiment for something that we don't believe in. And so you, you kind of, that's why you have theories. You have, you know, a kind of a theory, and then you, you test the theory. But, but if, but if an idea, if a theory of an idea, if an explanation is so far, um, you know, out of it,

Joel Salatin (01:26:28):

If, if an idea, if an idea is so far out of the box of your, of your paradigm, that you can't even conceive, it will, then you can't put that variable in your experiment. You can't test for it because you can only test for what you, for what you can, you know, what you can imagine. And I mean, like right now, right now, there's a whole, the electric universe thing. There are a growing number of scientists who, who believed that the sun is not nuclear, it's actually electrical. And there's a lot of reason to think so. And, um, and so it's an actually an electrical transformer rather than actually a nuclear nuclear, you know, some sort of efficient thing. And, and so there are numerous scientists who've embraced this. Uh, we're very familiar with the disagreements of, of scientists on this thing. And so, so I, blanket science says, no science, those are individuals.

Joel Salatin (01:27:22):

Those are people, people say, not scientists say people say. And so now does that brand mean, so then I'm supposedly now I'm, I'm some Neanderthal, you know, knuckle dragger, because I refuse to, I refuse to, to just agree that there is some sort of a, you know, an extra, extra terrestrial scientific, you know, mantra that comes down out of the heavens, and this is our new, you know, this is our new, uh, uh, you know, divine, uh, directive, uh, you know, um, scientists are people too, just like you and me, I'm limited. I don't see a lot of things. You don't see a lot of things. Scientists don't see a lot of things. And so, um, and so I'm, uh, w w look, when the, when the computer models on climate change, when the computer models on top climate change will, will reverse as well as go forward, then we'll have something, but right now they don't reverse.

Joel Salatin (01:28:27):

If you reverse them, we're all dead back in, you know, 500 years ago, we're all dead. So, so this, this modeling there, there's a lot of, there's a lot of nuances. I mean, I grew up with Paul Ehrlich, you know, he was this wonderful voice of environmental biology, you know, and he said by the 1980s, there would be no oil. I mean, I used him in my debate, you know, I was on the debate team in college and, and, uh, you know, we use Paul early for everything. I mean, the guy couldn't have been farther off on his predictions for everything, and he's still making predictions that we're still, you know, repeating Anthony Fowchee said 2 million of us were going to die. And when the violence started in the streets, you know, the scientists, the, the health, the CDC said, we're going to have to, we're going to fill up our cul-de-sacs with body bags. You know, actually every, it was probably really good for everybody to get out and scream and yell and, and get outside and, and, uh, you know, and get exercise. So, um, you know, so, so the, the scientists don't have it all figured out. It's a much bigger world than the scientists have been able to figure out.

Joel Salatin (01:29:51):

There we go. We're back. Yeah. So I've got, I've got one more, one more little, little itty bitty to, to finish that off.

Butlerfilms (01:29:58):

Okay. But you also have to bring it back to, like, you gotta admit, like, you know, you're very nuanced in your thinking of all of this, but, but you also, you know, or person ups, you know, you use science every day, but there, there is, there are people who have just have not thought about it that closely. And so around the one particular issue of climate change, would you say, it's not happening, nothing's happening. That's just a bunch of bullets, you know, you know, and that's where it almost like the, the, these age old nuanced arguments were really used as weapons, you know, to sort of just love and people who weren't going to think about it that clearly, and they were changes real, this isn't happening, even though the hurricane just came and whatever, you know, just ruin our day. You know? So that's the thing too, where it's like, I kind of, if you could just speak to that a little bit, like, it's, again, it's a broad brush thing, you know, it's like painting everybody with a broad brush here, believe this way, and you're not completely scientists ridiculous, you know? Um, but also it, it is used, it's used as a, um, it's weaponized. Sure.

Joel Salatin (01:31:18):

It very, very much is. So, yeah. So, so the, so the climate again, are we seeing climate change? Absolutely. I mean, just look at the satellite photographs. It's easy to see that there are changes. The question is, are these changes that the earth has never seen before? Are these changes because of humans are the, what, what is the reason? I mean, there are plenty of scientists that, I mean, the scientists that I follow say that whatever change is happening is not due to greenhouse gases. It's due to lack of vegetation, lack of bacterial, uh, exit dates from vegetation that allows clouds to condense because it's water vapor that actually cools the atmosphere more than anything else. GHG is only 5% of the problem. And it's all about water vapor, which is tied to vegetation and the back bacteria. So, so again, uh, um, to me, I come back to, well, what do I know?

Joel Salatin (01:32:14):

What do I know? And I know I, uh, the one thing that I know is that the, the carbon should be in the soil, not in the atmosphere. And, and so if I just zero in on that and say, that's what I can help and do, then I can do that. And you know what, that is not helped by burning extra petroleum with long distance globalized food system. It's not helped by tillage. It's not helped by monocrop. It's not helped by chemical fertilizers. It's not helped by any of this stuff. And so, uh, in fact it's hurt by that. And so let's, let's just, instead of trying to have everything figured out, we have some real obvious stuff in front of us. Let's just, let's just work on that right back, Joel. Yes. Here we are. Perfect. If you're digging. Yeah. I'll say what I said. I want, I want it. Yeah. Yup. Alright. Um, sorry. This is becoming a little bit of a trick. I don't know why. Yeah. Well, a lot of it could be weather too. I mean, you know, we had this storm come in and now it's moving out and sometimes there's, you know, some, some atmospheric atmospheric conditions,

Butlerfilms (01:34:59):

Perhaps. I wonder if it's moving my way. Okay. All right. I won't tie you up too much longer. This has been such, so we're so excited to include this in this piece. And as you know, you know, it's a long conversation that doesn't, and we only have a short amount of time. The, the interview itself will be

archived with you. And, um, so I guess one last two last things, the very last thing is, is I'll have you identify yourself again to camera, um, at the end of the interview, now we just say, I'm Joel Salitan and you can, you can give us your moniker, or you can give us a new moniker if you want, um, something a little bit, you know, as informal as, as you do. And, and we're asking people to do that because it's just sort of a nice way to, to have people introduce themselves and, and, and not have it all be so serious. Sure. Or we can, we can do that. And then I'll, I'll ask you one more question. Okay.

Joel Salatin (01:35:58):

All right. So I'm Joel Salitan and I farm full time. I'm also a bit of an author written, uh, over a dozen books. And, um, what gets me up every day is being able to walk out the back porch and know that I have the distinct privilege and honor of participating in land healing and redemption and watching this object lesson of grace and abundance. Um, literally literally transform, uh, under my, under my caress. That's a real honor and a privilege.

Butlerfilms (01:36:36):

Thank you. That's beautiful. And well, I should ask you before we completely done. Is there anything else you wanted to add to our conversation?

Joel Salatin (01:36:44):

No. I mean, you've been pretty comprehensive. You've thought about this a long time. So, um, so no, I think, I think it's, I really, I really feel good about the direction and the different things that it went and hopefully I didn't shoot myself in the foot too much.

Butlerfilms (01:37:03):

That's okay. I think, um, you definitely didn't shoot yourself in the foot and me, you know, I think your honesty is, is what makes, um, you know, it's going to obviously cause you, cause you great deal of fans and a great deal of heat and it's still working for sure. It gives people food for thought food for their table and food for thought. Right. So if you were to pick a Bible verse and I'm not even sure how I'd be able to use this in this piece, but if you were to pick something from the Bible, um, that you lean on to reinforce your, the values that carry you, carry out on the farm and farming and how you steward the earth. Um, you've mentioned a few in the course of the interview, but is there any, any other that you'd like to recite or, or, or mention, or, or even put in the context of, of, of, of how you, how you lead your, um, practice?

Joel Salatin (01:38:03):

Hmm. Mmm, well, certainly, uh, certainly in Ecclesiastics, most of the book, you know, a time to reap a time to sow a time to tear down a time to build up that whole, that whole passage there in Ecclesiastes is, is it's just so beautiful. It speaks to the seasons, the seasons of life, and it speaks to balance, uh, you know, I I'm very much a nurturer, but part of that nurturing is man, I love ripping out multi floor Rose, you know, I mean those brambles, I just love to do so. So, you know, um, life's not just, you know, 70 degrees and puffy blue clouds and blue skies all day. Uh, and so there's a tension, there's always a tension in life. You're always kind of, um, on this point between, um, you know, between positive and negative between building up tearing between, um, you know, uh, uh, uh, growing or birthing and killing and, and, and, and Ecclesiastes is speaks to that at a time for everything under the sun. Uh, it's, it's really a, really a wonderful, uh, powerful, you know, agrarian type passage.

Butlerfilms (01:39:21):

Great. Thank you. I'll have to go, um, um, immerse myself in that and, and look at it. We've finished a piece. I think I told you about, um, just, just, you know, it was a long independent feature about, um, a group in Oklahoma and it was kind of a tension between, you know, progressive faith leaders and conservative faith leaders. And, um, there was all this conversation about biblical literacy and, you know, and I w and I, I suspect you probably, and you mentioned it a little bit too. You find that, again, this isn't really for our show, this shorter or anything, but, you know, the, the literal interpretations of the Bible, do you, do you find that to be helpful or harmful in today's political climate? And if that's the last question I promise.

Joel Salatin (01:40:17):

Yeah, well, listen, um, uh, this is why we have to depend on the Holy spirit to lead us, and we have to come at it pretty humbly, um, you know, things, some of the things that we should take metaphorically, we take literally, and some of the things we take, literally we should take metaphorically and, uh, and sussing out the difference between those two is, um, is a little tough. I will tell you this, uh, and just interesting story. Uh, so I was, I was, uh, doing a presentation about a hundred miles South of here in Virginia, uh, years. And I'm a part of the two day conference was to go on a bus tour, out to a couple of farms that were doing the kinds of things that, you know, that I was talking about in a conference. And so we went out to this farm and, um, this guy didn't realize that I was on the bus and had come out.

Joel Salatin (01:41:13):

And he very differential deferential to me. He said, Oh, you know, uh, uh, Joel's here. And I was just in the, in the car. I wanted to see what he was doing too. I love visiting farms and meeting farmers. And, and, uh, and he said, I want everybody to know that everything I've done here, I got right out of Joel's book. He was referring to, you know, salad bar beef about raising beef cows. He was, he was a beef cattle farmer, and I'm looking around and in, in five minutes, I'm realizing everything he's doing is exactly opposite what I said in the book. And, and, and he tells everybody everything I'm doing, I got straight out of the book and, and, um, and the thought struck me in that moment. Wow, here's a guy who lives in Virginia near me about my age, speaks English, you know, grew up in the same culture, reads my book and misses it by this much, the Bible spanned, you know, millennia a different culture than mine, a different language than mine, a different time than mine. What am I missing? And it makes me, it makes me pause. It makes me pause. It makes me, it makes me be very careful about, about, um,

Joel Salatin (01:42:34):

Well, about just thinking, uh, I have the inside track. Um, there there's, there's a lot there. And so there's, there's there's room there to learn. And that's why, that's why we're admonished to study, study study. Why? Because of just a casual reading, uh, was something from a translation, from a different name, language from 5,000 years ago. Um, a different culture, man. You can miss you. And I, and I know I've missed plenty so you can miss a lot. Yeah. So, uh, gotta be a little bit careful.

Butlerfilms (01:43:11):

Good. That's a good way to end it. Thank you, Joel. Thank you. Thank you. I know, um, it's a bit of a pain that we've, uh, we've got you in charge of this whole setup with the camera.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond Interview

Butlerfilms (00:01:03):

Okay. So I'm going to just say that we can start with one, you just telling me who you are and how you'd like to be identified in the film. And then really, you know, first question is too is like, how did you, how did you start your journey into the environmental golfer? Like who, who, how have you become who you are? Okay.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:01:28):

So I am Reverend Mariama, white Hammond. I'm the pastor of new roots AME church in Dorchester and I'm the city of Boston. And, uh, is that enough of a description of who I have, who I am? Or did you want more?

Butlerfilms (00:01:44):

Okay. That's perfect.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:01:46):

Wow. Well, how did my environmental journey start? Well, I think, um, so I'm in my forties now. And, um, when I was in, in high school around then is what we started to hear about, um, the hole in the ozone layer. And for me, that was the first time it ever had occurred to me that human beings could have that kind of impact on the planet. Um, I, you know, taken biology class class, we'd learned about, you know, the Earth's crust. It just, I don't know, it just always seemed like the earth was stable and would be there. Um, and so when the hole in the ozone layer was exposed, it really, um, made me think about really the power and the danger of human impact. So I remember organizing with other folks, I remember coming home and telling my mother, okay, we have to get rid of everything that has core four carbons in it.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:02:40):

And at the big thing for me is, um, this was the nineties. And, um, for those who remember, there were lots of horrible hairdos in the nineties and all of them could only be sustained with hairspray and hairspray had these bad chemicals. And so we had to give up hairspray, um, as, as a, uh, teenager, that

was like a big deal. We gave up aerosol hairspray for the environment. Um, but in reality, in a lot of ways that that moment is an example of where the world really did come together and they really did recognize our impact. And, and we did something about it. People mobilize leaders mobilized, we move these chemicals out, and that was exciting to me. However, I, after that, um, I went to the first, um, meeting of the environmental club at my school. I was very involved in lots of other things, but I'd not really been involved in the environmental club.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:03:31):

And I remember getting there, I remember being the only woman of color there. Um, and I very much remember, um, them sort of talking about dolphins and polar bears. And this was in the nineties when, when violence was a huge issue, street violence was a huge issue in Boston. And I remember sort of this deep disconnect between people talking about, um, saving animals. I'd never seen while I felt like they were relatively unconcerned about the lives of people that were a mile or two miles away. And so I found myself, um, in the same position, I think many people of color do, I think at the same position, many folks in, um, rural or low income communities do, would you see really immediate issues right there in your life? And you feel, it feels like at times you had to make a choice between saving the future of the environment and things that you didn't recognize or being committed to the things right there in your own community.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:04:35):

And so like many people, I went to that one meeting and I never went back, even though I felt a deep connection. So the shift happened for me, um, in 2005, um, I was, um, leading a youth organization. Um, and, uh, that summer, I remember we got a call from a, uh, nother youth organization and we, they knew we ran a summer program and they said, you know, we want to bring this young person to, uh, apply for your summer program. At that point, we had finished our application. So I said, you know, we're done, we're done for the summer. This is no, no, no. We really feel like you need to bring him. And we think he'd be perfect for the program. And I sort of said, well, you know, we do this every year. Um, but if you can get them here by the end of the day, you know, we'll give them an interview.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:05:22):

And the youth worker brought him, his name was Corinne Barry. He, I mean, he was amazing in that interview. Um, we brought together arts and social justice and really wanted to create a space for young people to use their art, to talk about the things they saw in the world. And he, um, his knowledge of hip hop culture, his knowledge of how arts could be a catalyst for, for positive social change was, was huge. Um, and so he got involved with the program. I was so impressed with him. Um, I'm really excited to see what would happen and how his leadership would unfold. And then on my birthday, um, I remember I had had the young people that weekend and I had said, we'd gone to a retreat. Of course they didn't sleep. And you know, the toothpaste and the hair and people falling in love with someone, they only met six hours ago. All of those things that you expect from young people. And, um, I remember, um, when I dropped them off, I said, you know, this has been really great. You guys are amazing. I can't wait to see what comes of this. I'll see you on Wednesday. And I told him don't be late. Cause it's my birthday. And I woke up that morning hand. Um, the first thing I heard was that Kareem had been stabbed and bled out, um, two o'clock in the morning on June 29th. Um,

Speaker 3 (00:06:44):

So I, um,

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:06:47):

I spent that summer trying to help our young people process it, trying to help them create something that honored his memory. Um, we did our, our, our civil rights tour and, and, you know, study of, of social justice. And I got back at the end of the summer and I realized that I had never given myself the space to grieve. Um, and, um, so I sent though all the staff home, I said, take a week off. And that weekend as we, um, headed home, there started to be reports of this, um, hurricane that was making its way to new Orleans, a city. We had been to a city where we, uh, uh, had met other youth organizations like the one I w uh, I was directing. And, you know, so I watched both the natural disaster that was painful. It was painful to recognize that again, our human decisions around pumping oil, our human decisions around where we developed things are human decisions around our lack of respect for the creation, those decisions added up to a hurricane being much worse or having a much worse impact than it could have, and that impact landed heaviest.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:08:06):

And some of those parts of the city that I knew that I'd been to, where people didn't always have the resources, uh, to recover people didn't have the resources to get out safely. Um, so I watched the natural disaster and then I watched what was a completely unnatural disaster of racism and classism, and just a lack of respect for human life and human dignity mean that people were dying in the streets. I was there when folks were airlifted to Massachusetts, I remember greeting them. I remember some of them were there cause they had pets and they refuse to leave their pets. And we were one of the few States that would take people with pets. So hurricane and its aftermath, um, I spent two weeks in Gulf, port, Mississippi, helping people find clothes, helping people find a place to stay, helping people feel good, fill out FEMA forms. I had heard of climate change,

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:09:12):

But I saw what it would do to people's lives. And I saw that the communities that I have served, the communities, um, that I've given my life to would be the ones hurt the most, not just because of the, um, natural disasters that would be bad about, but the unnatural disasters of racism and classism, and just a lack of respect for human life. And so for me, I stopped believing I had to choose between one or the other hurricane Katrina is when I saw, um, that everything I cared about, everything that God was calling me to my, um, work to see God and every single human being that worked required me, not just to acknowledge climate change, but to force us all to ask some real hard questions, um, about the way we as human beings need to shift this. It doesn't have to be this way. Really doesn't have to be that way this way. So that's, um, how I got involved, but also how my heart broke and then allowed me, um, to lean more deeply into what it means for us to face this and, uh, to take the opportunity that God has given us to do right. To do better.

Butlerfilms (00:10:54):

Thank you for telling me your story in such a heartfelt way. I can see it still so real to you. I know that you're you talk a lot about how history is a key factor in informing us as to how we move forward in understanding historical context. And one of the things that this short documentary can do from the religion race and democracy lab is kind of dive into that a little bit. And so you talk about the history of the environmental movement and I'd love it. If you would talk to us about it too, where it's the

conservation movement, the environmental movement and how it didn't necessarily line up with environmental justice and the things that you've come to talk so eloquent about it baked into that is this intersection between religion politics and corporate interests. And I don't know if we all sit back and think about the intersection of those three very large things and how they have really informed conversation about climate change today and in the world of, of, of, of religion and science denial too. I mean, certainly what we've found in our research is just, just even though it was all happening on all of our watch, knowing just how influential the evangelical community, the moral majority was in framing and shaping the conversation around climate change and environmental justice. It's a big topic and a hard thing to talk about. I thought I'd just throw it out there.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:12:38):

Yeah. Yeah. So for me, when we talk about where, where it began, where it starts for me, it starts with the creation. You know, I think that, um, in our creation story, God talks about each day creating a part of the natural world, the sun, the moon, and the stars, the water, the air, the trees, actually, all of those things take up the first five days. And then there's one day where all of the animals come and then the humans, we're like a part of that last day. Um, and then God rests. And, and so for me, if God creates it all over six days, um, and for me that that's not necessarily a literal six days, but why would one creature think it was more important than all of the rest? Why would one creature be allowed to destroy and treat with total disregard all of the rest?

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:13:56):

And the truth is for us as humans. I mean, the Bible is full of examples of how we've treated each other with disregard, with blatant disregard. So I think for me, there always has been, and quite frankly always will be a deep connection between our lack of care for each other and our lack of care for the creation. For me, I don't understand how you claim to worship the creator and have no respect for the creation. So when I look at, um, the historical context, I see this deeply tied to colonialism. You know, I've gone back and read the writings of John Locke and his, his belief that like, God, you gave us the right to the land. And in that same peace, he says, God gave white people have the right to black people because we were inferior beings. So it's not that I imagine the connections are there quite frankly, many of the thinkers and leaders on who our society is based. Blatantly said these things. Now we can, um, consider them a product their time, their, you know, ways we can, um, recognize history as, and, and recognize them as flawed human human beings. But the reality is that by no means means we should continue mistakes, tragic mistakes, yeah.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:15:38):

Impacted people's lives and have put at risk our variability to survive on this planet. So, you know, I look at the conservation movement, a movement of predominantly white, um, predominantly rich folks to protect certain parts of land while completely destroying others, to, um, preserve some communities while allowing other communities to be dumping grounds for the leftover chemicals, um, for, um, you know, people living in spaces that were unhygienic and unsafe. Um, so we, we save some things, we protect some beauty, but we don't protect the notion that all creation is sacred.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:16:32):

That's what I think we need is a, um, movement that brings back our ability to see what a sacred in each other to see what a sacred in the natural world. Um, and so you have had an environmental movement, the traditional environmental movement coming out of that conservation movement. Um, that's fighting to protect, you know, open space while not standing with native American people who did a really good job of protecting open space and whose rights have been violated again and again, um, you have folks, um, you know, saying we should move to renewables I'm for that, but not asking questions about who should benefit from those. Cause maybe it, the benefits should be first with those communities that were right up next to the coal fire plants. It is a travesty and an injustice to fight, to shut down coal plants while making sure that the best of what we now have to offer is unaffordable for the people in the very same neighborhoods that have been inhaling that toxic air. So I think there has be a deep connection. Cause I think the original sin was both a violation of the environmental creation, but also a violation of some of the other members of our same species.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:18:04):

She's who we did not treat with dignity. We didn't recognize them as God's creation. We didn't recognize them as God's children. So if we want to shift, I don't think we can choose either, um, you know, emissions and environmental shifts or social justice and relief for the poor. That's. One of the things I love about, um, uh, Pope Francis is that he says these two things, they come from the same root they must be addressed together. So you have the environmental justice movement that comes up and says, um, we, aren't just talking about saving trees. We want to talk about where, um, the impact of all of those negative decisions have been. Um, so I think in the climate movement, we have a real opportunity. Um, I think particularly in this moment that we're in with COVID with the racial uprising, we're recognizing there are some parts of our system that are rotten, quite frankly, they always have been now is the time not to be narrow minded and just fight for solar panels or just fight for emission reductions, but too,

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:19:19):

For a society in which the creation is honored. And that means all of the living beings, including many of the humans who have been overlooked, many of the humans who did not cause this, but who are the most deeply impacted people who live in islands, who've been doing a really good job of living in relationship with the creation, but whose communities, some of them will cease to exist. That is such a grave sin. We quite frankly, should all be repenting. And in my tradition, we say, repentance is now real. If you don't ask, how do I turn from my evil ways? So there's a lot of repenting to be doing for relationship with the natural world, but our relationship also with each other, and then what's most important is that we also turn in a different direction. And we put first those who have been harmed the most.

Butlerfilms (00:20:30):

Tell me about the church that you've formed and how you are putting those words into action today.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:20:38):

So it's funny to me because my mom is a pastor. My dad's a pastor. So growing up, if you had asked me as a teenager, I would have told you the one thing I'm definitely not doing with my life is becoming a pastor. I was really clear about that. Very intent. Um, and so for years I worked running a youth organization really involved in local nonprofits and, you know, trying to do to get involved in. I made a lot of the ways I think people would think are traditional. Um, I came to a point where I, um,

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:21:08):

Recognize that for all of its flaws. I am one of the younger generation who is frustrated that the church is maybe not moving as fast as it should be to respond to the needs of, um, this present age. Um, but I, I looked up and I said, wait a second. This still is a group of people who come together weekly to talk about the big issues of the time that are intergenerational and make a commitment to each other. I'm not sure God would have me use some other structure. I can't

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:21:49):

Know this point where I recognize, um, the church could be a real catalyst for people to come together and imagine who they're called to be. And, um, then live out a different way of being together. Um, so we are, um, a multiracial multi-class community of folks. Um, we're a small little group and these days we're living our lives on zoom because of COVID. Um, but we, um, many of us come because we are overwhelmed by the environmental crisis. Um, we see its connection, um, with the way that human beings are treating each other. And I think at the foundation, our congregation believes there is a better way that God has called to something different and better than this. And so we are trying to figure out, cause I, let me tell you, if you think we have all the answers, don't want you to think that, but we are a community.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:22:47):

We spend a lot of time in prayer and discernment. We're asking that how do we live in a way that shifts away from, um, the way things are now, but doesn't put our planet in peril that doesn't put our lives in peril, um, that allows us to raise our children together and love each other in a different way. Um, so one of the things, as an example, we've really been talking about this idea of Sabbath. We talked about how COVID, in some ways, gave us this, all this opportunity for Sabbath to stop. And it allowed us to stop burning quite as many fossil fuels. It allowed us to stop jumping in our car and going everywhere. Um, it allowed, it allowed us to be with our families more. Um, we believe that is actually a part of the solution to the climate crisis.

Butlerfilms (00:23:35):

Okay.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:23:35):

Because when your heart is turned towards people that you love, um, it can help you to move out of the cycle. My dad talks about my dad used to say, um, we overwork, um, to try to earn money, to buy

things. We don't need to impress people. We don't even like. And, um, I want to live in a world where I don't try to buy my way to joy. Um, and I feel like we, um, uh, really leaning into each other. And so our congregation, many of us are concerned by the climate crisis. And we think that the answer is deeper community, stronger community. We believe and trust, um, that God will help us not as much to change somebody else, but to change ourselves, um, and then fight so that other people can join us. Um, and new ways of living and new ways of being, um, the don't put, uh, the stability of the planet at risk.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:24:44):

And quite frankly, don't turn us one against another. Um, don't have us feeling lonely and depressed. Um, we see a deep connection, um, between, uh, the isolation that people feel, um, the, the animosity that people feel to each other and the climate crisis. We think all of it has on the same route. And we are trying to, you know, figure it out through potlucks and marches and babysitting and a whole bunch of different ways of sharing, how we build a community. Um, that's not based on the same foundation. Um, that's rotting in front of our very eyes.

Butlerfilms (00:25:28):

You've said this in a couple of different ways, but one of the two, two of the people that we've talked to in this, um, who were kind of involved in the political side of the climate change conversation was, um, bobbing was, is congressmen. Don't know if you're familiar with them or not. Um, and Richard seismic who I know Richard was sort of deed from right from, from the, um, national association of evangelicals for his stances on other things, but also on sort of, you know, having conversion moment, to fact that changed real, both of them said that that issue, that the conversation around climate change, which was of course like embedded with the religious evangelical religious leadership, um, for political reasons, but also both of them have said, but always, it also just comes down to systemic racism as well. And I was wondering if you could comment on that as to sort of, what do you think they meant by that and what do you think that means?

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:26:33):

So I think, um, I would tie it back to a certain way of trans leading the Bible. Um, that has been a problem the very beginning. So a lot of folks look at this term dominion, right? That that's in, um, uh, Genesis and basically people have interpreted it that some people have a right to be on top a right to be on top of everything. Right. And that's what white supremacy is. The belief you have the right to be on top. I God given often, right. To be on top. So yes, that is why, um, white communities and quite frankly, white churches could have people come to church on Sunday and their Sunday best, and then leave in the afternoon to go watch a lynching. Anytime you have a religion that doesn't see that, that people don't see a conflict between those two things. Um, that's a problem.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:27:35):

It's a problem. Cause that's just not what Jesus taught. And so Christianity, um, has, has been deeply in this country embedded in the notion, um, that a certain group of people have the right to dominion over it all. And so part of the inability to accept climate change is because it is the result, these impacts of the result of human beings being out of order in so many ways. Um, and I think once you recognize how out of order we are, you have to ask, what other ways have I been out of order? Um, so I think we do, we have, uh, and, and, and I've even seen this with white evangelicals who are like really, um, warm and want to get to know you don't even recognize the way that white supremacy is so deeply embedded, um, in white evangelical culture. And this is what I'm talking about.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:28:38):

These are conversations I've had with friends of mine, who, um, I do believe love me and they have lived their lives in a culture that said, um, they were the best, um, when people are hurt or people are go to jail, it's because there's something wrong with them. It's not because there might be systemic problems. Um, if the planet is falling apart, it's really because God is going to come back. Not because we've been terrible stewards. Um, and so, um, yeah, there is a deep theology, um, of some people's right to dominance. That is a real problem. Um, it plays out in our gender dynamics. It plays out in our conversation around sexual orientation. It, it, that idea has seeped into every part of Christianity. We need to have a deep conversation about it, because from my perspective, there's only one person and not even a person, there's only one figure who has that, right.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:29:45):

And that's God almighty. Every, all the rest of us are mere mortals. Um, and, um, we do not have the right to treat each other nor the rest of the creation, um, this way. And I think when they talk about white supremacy, it's because if you can't even figure out how to be in right relationship with your own species, you're all species just on slightly different pigmentation of skin color, how are you going to be in right relationship with the trees and the rabbits and the waters? Like if you can't see it in people that share 99% of your DNA, what's your ability to stretch beyond that. Um, and so I do believe, um, that white supremacy is, um, a blinder, but I would say I pull out even more. It's, it's an idea about power and the idea that anybody deserves to have the kind of power. Um, that means others don't even have what they need. And I am ashamed to say far too often, Christian theology has promoted an idea and it doesn't even come from, you know, people wouldn't say we are the Supreme, but they say things like we are chosen. And we, um, are the elect. And those ideas about who is chosen also, the subtext is who is not chosen. So there's some work to be done. There's some work to be done.

Butlerfilms (00:31:31):

And you're, I mean, you're, you're a part of that leadership. And where, where, where does the leadership of African American theologians and church leaders like yourself and others? Um, where's that will there, will, the voices be heard now is, is, is a question I saw a bit where one person was asked that in the seventies and eighties, and they were like, well, we were never asked, were never brought to the table around conversations about climate change or environmental issues. Right.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:32:02):

So where I find the greatest hope is, is what, what I see with young people. Um, I see young people seeing the connection between these issues, what breaks my heart is. Many of those young people are leaving the church. There are definitely young people who are staying within the church and doing good work, but there are many more young people who are so, um, disappointed, um, by the lack of relevance of the church that they're going elsewhere, they're leaving. Um, but I see them seeing the connections between how we treat each other and how we treat the planet and really believing that we have an opportunity in this moment to shift and get it right. I think they have a more clear understanding of the sinfulness of our lifestyle than, um, many traditional church leaders. So, uh, in the Bible, many of the prophets were kicked out of the synagogues.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:33:02):

They weren't allowed in the temple. They were, um, most prophetic standing outside the gate. And I think that that is true. Now, many of our most prophetic voices are not necessarily inside the church. Now as a black leader, I do hear more people calling. And I think what's happened is, um, in light of all that's happened, particularly in the light of the death of George Florida, young people are rising up and speaking truth and naming what's happening. And I see adults shifting their way of thinking. I think the same thing is happening and may happen in greater portion within the church. I think young people are gonna rise up and I'm talking about young white folks that grew up in evangelical spaces calling for something different. Um, so yes, I do think that white leaders are reaching out. I think they will hear me, but what's actually is I think it's their children telling them to listen to me, not necessarily that they just woke up one day and that was the case.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:34:10):

I think it's without young people, without the movement of young people, I'm calling out, leaving in mass numbers. I wish they would stay sorta kinda, but I get it that they're, they're leaving. Um, and that is causing many people to take a second look and be open to hearing some things they hadn't heard before. So in the midst of, um, you know, I live between the worlds of a tr I am a church leader. I have a revenue behind my knee or in front of my name. And I go to these meetings and I'm engaged, but I keep myself always also engaged with young people. Um, because I have to say sometimes they have been a better moral compass. Um, and I think that they, um, will be the ones, um, to push their parents and their grandparents to open up. Um, and for me to actually hear what God is saying to align with the move of Holy of the Holy spirit, that's calling us to be different in this moment and to address some things, um, that have, uh, been around for a long time, but the clock is running out. And I think it's, it's, it's mostly the youth energy. Um, that's calling that out.

Butlerfilms (00:35:31):

You, you talk about you're involved with young people and you're of course in the, from the church, but you're also in involved through politics. And one of the things that you saw that you said was that this environmental justice and climate action, isn't just about the feeding, the GOC. And there's two questions to that one. What did you mean by that? In two, when did environmental justice or climate activism, or even environmentalism become so aligned with the us and them? When did it become an issue of politics and partisan politics and less an issue of, of, of, of stewardship and in, in, in faith, in humanity,

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:36:20):

You know, we have gotten to such a toxic point where we don't even stop to listen to what somebody is saying. Once we know what team they're on, it's like, Oh, she can't listen to you. Cause you're on the wrong team. You could say something, a hot mess. And it's like, Oh, well, you know, what they really meant is where you could say something really valuable, but you're on the wrong team. And I can't even hear anything from it. So that toxic us versus them mentality. It's just, it's dysfunctional. It's an unhealthy, and I don't care what team you're talking about. So for me, um, I care about ecological justice. I care about us being in right relationship with the rest of the planet. I care about us being in right relationship with each other. Um, the last time I checked, my body is made up mostly of water.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:37:06):

So I think I should care about whether that water is clean, cause that could, you know, that could be a little problem for not just for me, but for all of us. Right. And so I don't, I, for me, this issue should actually supersede political party and like all this team stuff, but we've gotten to the point where, you know, if you're from the wrong team and you tell me that you're suffering, I'll say that you making it up. It's like, that is so dysfunctional. So, um, between you and I, I'm not, uh, I'm not deeply committed to either party. I, um, my quest is to understand, um, what is God calling me to, what are we going to do about this crisis that we're in? Cause it feels like the clock is ticking. Um, and while people go over and fight about which political party they're in the planet is about to give us the boot.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:38:04):

So, you know, I think do I, do I live in a blue state? I do. Do I tend to vote in a certain way? Yeah, I do. Um, I'm not gonna pretend like that's not the case, but I think that, um, we have to get to a point where we can sit down with people and like hear them not based on which team they're on. Um, and again, you know, I know I'm saying, you know, a big shout out to young people. I think, um, I see a lot of them mobilizing. Um, what I think is sad, um, is,

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:38:43):

It actually shouldn't be that like there's one party that works better for young people than the other. Right. So, um, both should be trying to vie for, um, the love and support of young people. Um, I do think more young people are leaning democratic and I think that makes it hard for folks, but at the end of the day, we should all be fighting, um, to be in alignment with our, our children. Um, I think they see something, um, that we need, um, to see in this moment. Um, so yeah, I, I'm so tired of the toxicity of our political climate. Um, I do get involved politically. I, I testify at the state house. I, um, hold my leaders accountable. I pay attention to who my leader is because when I called their office about environmental issues or criminal justice issues or anything, cause I want them to know who I am and know that I love you and I will hold you accountable, um, for doing what's right for our community. Um, but I have to tell you that the current political climate, um, is it's tragic, it's just plain trash.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:40:05):

Um, and there are days when I worry that, um, so much energy will be invested in this, uh, toxic space that we will lose track of the bigger picture.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:40:30):

Um, yeah, I mean, why am I hopeful? I mean, I'm hopeful because ever since I was a little girl, I've looked at the world and I've said, I really feel like

Speaker 4 (00:40:40):

We can do better.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:40:42):

And I'm hopeful because in this moment, maybe more than any other moment in my life. I feel like there's millions of people who believe we can do better. Do I have all the answers?

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:40:57):

Absolutely not. I am completely sure that I will make many more mistakes in my life. But, um, one of the things I love about being a pastor of my congregation is that I got a group of people striving,

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:41:15):

Trying to figure out how we're better with each other, how we're better in our city, how we're better in the world, um, at our foundation. And that's not because all of us have had it, easy. People have gone through some real hurt and trauma around race, around gender. Many of us working through our, of, of, you know, spiritual abuse, sexual abuse. I mean, folks in my congregation are not there because everything in their life is perfect, but people are there because they believe something better as possible. And for us, we believe that if we even put a few steps forward, if we try to be even at faithful at a basic level, the God will give us more than what we need, that God will honor our faithfulness, um, and do much more than we could ask or imagine. Um, but I do believe that before you ask God to intervene, you gotta do something, you gotta name your sin. You gotta grit to get together with some folks and say, how are we going to do different?

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:42:26):

But I think when you make those steps, when you show God that you're serious, that you're willing to shift and that you're willing to work, God will show up. And so, um, I am beyond hopeful in this moment because I see so many people unwilling to accept the status quo. So many people trying, will they make mistakes yet? Are we going to get it all right? And six months, no. It took us hundreds of years to get where we are. It's going to take us a little bit of time to get out of it, but it's beautiful to see people together. I mean, even right now, we're taping. I am sitting, um, in New Hampshire on a property that if a group of friends and I together, um, are establishing a farm here and we're all black folks. So this is not a particularly diverse community, but we are building, um, a black farm here.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:43:17):

Um, and um, I love getting my hands on the soil. It's so exciting to me that, um, in a couple of weeks, those cucumbers are going to be ready to be pickled. Um, I, we, a couple of weeks ago, one of our, uh, members of our congregation announced that she's pregnant. That's gonna be the first baby in our congregation. So I I'm so thankful that spirit hasn't given up on us, that new children are coming into this world and plants continue to grow. It's not too late. And, um, I see so many of us committing, committing ourselves, willing to put our bodies on the line, willing to try something new, willing to listen

to folks we had before. So yes. Are there some negative forces? I am not going to pretend like I don't see, um, there's some issues, we've got some issues, but, um, I believe that a small group of people, um, who are willing to sacrifice, who are willing to lean in, who are willing, um, to be doggedly committed, to change can make a difference.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:44:27):

Um, my whole spiritual tradition exists because of one great God. And then a bunch of people, hot mess people cutting off people's ear ears and doing a lot of like messed up stuff. And couldn't always get along with each other, but somehow even, and all the women that they never mentioned, all I know they only mentioned the male disciples, but there was a bunch of women and that's probably why it came together because the women were keeping it moving. But anyway, um, there were a bunch of people, normal people, ordinary people who helped found a movement that's still alive 2000 years later, super imperfect, so much that needs to be looked at, but we still have the chance to change. Um, I am trying to take advantage of that opportunity. I'm doing what I can, and I'm so excited to see many, many new people joining in that effort and trying to figure it out. I think together we'll take a little bit of a step and spirit will meet us more than

Butlerfilms (00:45:29):

I sure hope you're right. You come from a pretty conservative religious background. Right. And you know,

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:45:40):

Well, my, you know, we are we're social justice. My, my, the AME church is very social justice oriented, so yeah. But I, you know, well, so there's a mix actually. Um, uh, the African Methodist Episcopal church has cities and rural communities and is global and other parts of the world. So, yeah.

Butlerfilms (00:46:07):

Yeah. Okay. So my question, my questioning on, on this is when you were growing up, um, and maybe even, I don't know if you still are sort of pushing against the remnants of it today, when it came in, I'm always bringing it back to the issues around climate change. And, um, I'm an action when those conversations were happening, certainly in the conservative white evangelical churches, there were concerted propaganda campaign funded by, you know, it was no secret funder, but by, by the fossil fuel industry to discourage the science, to take literal interpretations of the Bible, like dominion, as you said, also looking also using the fact that being skeptical of science and that it, it was actually hubris on the part of man and to think that we can impact God's great design. Right. So you probably didn't hear a lot of that, but were you aware?

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:47:17):

Yeah, so I, um, so my, um, the tradition of my parents, uh, you know, that I grew up in, and that I am part of now is the African Methodist Episcopal church. Um, and that space has always been to social justice. And I went from middle school to a fairly traditional, um, Christian school, um, which definitely was in the evangelical stream. Um, and I saw people really struggling. Um, there were creationists, I don't think anybody would have admitted, they were believed in evolution. Exactly. Um, I think there were strict creationists, and then there were people who were sort of like, um, like my dad would say, well, you know, one day does not have to mean one day. There is also a scripture that says one day, you

know, a thousand years, this is a day into the Lord. So maybe what it is is it's really more like a thousand years or some, um, order of that.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:48:15):

Um, so yeah, so I have encountered, um, particularly when I was a kid, um, the, uh, you know, a lot of that thinking I remember I was, I grew up in the left behind series, came out and I mean, it was just like this whole idea that the world was gonna end any day now. I mean, I think we were, you know, I don't want to call it scare tactics, but there were, uh, there was a lot of like, you need to make sure that your soul is, is on point because it any day at any time you could be snatched away. Um, and so, yeah, I'm very familiar with that. And I think that, um,

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:48:55):

There's a big challenge. And I think this, this also was a part of my upbringing where we, there was a sense that Christianity was under attack and we had to defend it from, you know, atheists and other people who wanted to like in Christianity. Um, and I remember, um, I went to a class that they sponsored in college, actually my, my freshman year about how we defend our faith. Right. Um, and you know, it's, sometimes I look back on that, you know, I look at, uh, how that way of being also drove many of us, and I'm not the only one away from the church for a period of time. Um, and I've just come to the point where, um, and I felt this, like science was teaching me about some beautiful things that I don't know if I would have learned, no, I don't know.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:49:47):

You, you can't learn about chemical reactions just by reading the Bible. Right. That's just true. So, um, I came to the point where I was like, I am seeing beauty in more than one place, and I don't have to make those things diametrically opposed or at odds with each other. Um, and I think that kind of either, or thinking is problematic in the church, but it's problematic in other spaces. I mean, I've been an activist spaces where it's like, well, you're committed to social justice or you're a religious person. You can't be both. And I'm like, well, guess what, I am both. So there you go. Um, and so I think that, um, in that light, I think I find in the same position, as many, many people of my generation and younger who just got tired of this either, or thinking got tired of the notion that God, I mean, for me, like, why are you limiting God? Why can't you open your mind to the fact that God could move in multiple ways and spaces that understanding can come? I mean, quite frankly, the way I look at it is even the Bible says the very first thing is creation. So why can't God talk to me through the creation as much as God talks to me through this book.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:51:06):

I know that I know this tree. I know that I know this grass. I know that I know the phenomenon of rain is from God, so I'm going to learn about it. Um, and I think this notion that it was either, or, and I've said this also in science spaces, like you can't tell me that because I study physics, I can't believe in God that either or dogmatic thinking, um, in my opinion, limits God, and it limits our ability to see what's happening in the world. And it limits

Butlerfilms (00:51:45):

Us

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:51:46):

Just trying to stamp out those moments when you, you know, what you can't understand

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:51:53):

Those two, I accept that there are places beyond my human understanding, um, that I try to do the best I can to learn to be excellent. And then I'm also okay with my limitations. So yeah, I mean, I think there was a whole political movement to discredit science to say that, to be a Christian, you had to choose one or the other, or to be a good scientist, you had to choose one or the other. Um, but that kind of either, or thinking has never gotten us very far. And so I reject both, um, the push from either side to be, uh, you know, um, close minded and, um, I reject that way of thinking. Um, and I think I am not the only one. I think there's a lot of young people, um, in the same place.

Butlerfilms (00:52:46):

Yeah. Thank God we have you literally now. Yeah. Or would you prefer, I call you Mariama or what would you

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:52:58):

People usually call? I mean, I actually embrace the Reverend because I, I know that I don't look like what people think of when they think of Reverend. So I actually use it more than I would have thought I would,

Butlerfilms (00:53:11):

So it's fine. Okay. Um, so I was looking away slightly when you're talking. Cause I was trying to, like, I was panicking. I'm like, I don't want her to call the, and so I, I think that I've increased it so that it won't just cut off, but if it cuts off, I'll send you a new invite. And I know you have a hard hour, right? Like 10 minutes in 10 minutes. Okay. So there were just, um, because we only have 10 minutes, uh, I was wondering if you could, you've answered most, most, most of the questions. Um, but one thing you, you, I've heard you say before, and it's so important to the narrative of this piece is that you said, if you don't know your history, you're destined to repeat or, you know, Mark Twain, right? Like what, what does he say? Uh, history never repeats itself, but it rhymes. So I was wondering if for us, you would almost just sort of deliver those lines for us because it really, in a way can kick off our, our short documentary on, on about science denial, climate change, religion and politics.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:54:30):

Yeah. So there's, um, you know, people often I get into spaces and they're like, we've got to do something about climate change. Let's talk about a mission. That's where we've gotta go. And I care all about those things. We need to look at all those policies, but for me, one of the starting places has got to be, how did we get ourselves into this mess? We got to look at our history and understand, um, the way that human beings have interacted with the natural world. Um, the arrogance with which, um, we've treated the land and all the other animals, um, that same arrogance has played out and how we behave with each other. Um, and if we don't look at the history of how we've gotten here, the racism that has caused some people to be hurt so much more than others. Um, we don't look at that. Then our solutions will repeat the same behaviors as our past because we will not have integrity dated what got

us to this point. So I, um, think it's so important to study the science and to create solutions that are going to move us forward. But we also have to look at the root causes and the ethos, the culture undergirding, our society that has allowed us to get to the place we are right now. We don't tackle that. We'll just be putting bandaids on top of a pissy and ugly wound.

Butlerfilms (00:56:11):

Thank you. And then we've also, I've also been asking people at the end sort of towards the end, just to look to the camera and identify themselves again. But this time, um, in an, in a more way, um, there's been various answers, but it just, if you just give us a little bit more of a personal sort of identifier for you. Okay. But look at the camera for this one.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:56:38):

Um, I am remarried, I'm a white Hammond and I'm, uh, Ray and Gloria's daughter. Um, Ella's, uh, Sariah's godmother. I love to scuba dive and, um, and knit and grow things. I'm a bit of a Gardner growing into a farmer and I'm the pastor of the most amazing congregation of folks trying together, um, to figure out how we become who God has called us to be in this crazy moment. Um, we're all of us are called to be better than we've ever.

Butlerfilms (00:57:22):

Thank you. And also name your church for us. And, um, and then I'll just ask you one more question and I know you've got, I've got six minutes with you. So

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:57:30):

Yeah. Uh, our church's new roots AME church in Dorchester, uh, and we're in a neighborhood of Boston, but actually in light of COVID, we got folks zooming in from everywhere. So, um, who we are is evolving, but we are this beautiful multiracial, uh, group of folks, literally trying to grow some new roots.

Butlerfilms (00:57:55):

I love the name of it. Now, if you were watching a short documentary on this topic and this subject, and, you know, you've kind of looked at this, this is how we got here, this merge between, you know, the rise of the moral majority and the conversation Steelers around climate change and, and, and, you know, the impact of big oil. Um, what else would you want people to know? Uh, we touched it, we talked about it a little bit, the systemic racism, but I, I think, I think again, I'd just like you to use the remaining minutes. You have talking about, um, what environmental justice really means in light of the conversation that we've been having and the historical context. What does environmental justice mean when it comes to the conversation about climate change and how we should move forward?

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:58:49):

Yeah. So what, what justice looks like in light of this? I mean, I've heard many people use the phrase climate justice, but kind of just slap it on top of things that they, um, were already doing. So the, the frame I use as ecological justice and ecology is the study of relationships between things of systems. Ecology reminds us that, um, you can't understand what's in the river without looking at the Brock without looking at the deer that drinks at the river, without looking at the humans that pump out of the river, that all of those things are in relationship. Um, so the challenge for me is that we've got a problem in our relationships and that that problem is not just with the parts per million of like,

fuels and carbon in the atmosphere.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (00:59:49):

The problem is at a much more fundamental level in terms of how we live even one with another, how we distribute resources. Um, so for me, ecological justice means, um, and it's not necessarily one over first or the other, but in a writing of relationships within the human species, getting to the point where we have enough food. And so everybody's eating cause right now we have enough food, but everybody isn't eating. Um, so we need to shift radically shift our relationships with each other. Then we actually need to have a rewriting of our relationships with the rest of the natural world.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (01:00:40):

And that's when we will have true ecological justice.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (01:00:45):

Unfortunately the things we've done, we are going to see climate impacts. There are Island nations that probably are going to cease to exist. There are coastal communities that are going to be in real trouble. Um, there are places where heat is going to overwhelm us. Ecological justice means not only do we have to stop doing the things that make those worse, but we've got some tough conversations about how we care for one another in this moment. So we can't just be fighting for, you know, Paris climate goals. We need to ask. What about the people who live along the river that got flooded?

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (01:01:36):

We need to ask, what about those coal miners? If we want no more coal, what is our vision for the dignity they find in their community so that they can continue living? What are we doing about those communities with coal Ash was already dumped and the babies were affected and now they can't learn

in school quite right. Climate justice, ecological justice is writing all of these relationships, asking tough questions and taking responsibility for each other. Um, and that's hard work. I think that's lot of why people get caught in climate denialism, because maybe what they see is the hard work we have to do. And they want to walk away from that, but we can't walk away. Some people can't walk away. So none of us should walk away from those questions.

Butlerfilms (01:02:41):

Oh my gosh, I'm going to zoom into your church, such such a pleasure to talk to you. I'm so afraid that we're just going to get cut off. And so if we get cut off, I guess I can just call you right back. But if it's only two people, it doesn't usually cut off. Oh, good. Okay. All right. Good. If you have more than two people. Yeah. All right. We've passed two o'clock so I think we're okay. Um, so I know you have to go, so I should let you go. Um, you can, you can, is there anything else you wanted to add? No, I think I'm,

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (01:03:17):

Oh, I have one little thought. So, um, I think it, I probably should have said it in this last thing, but, um, I think one of the fundamental things we have to start is recognizing we are all in relationship, whether we acknowledge that relationship or not, we are all in relationship. And so the question that I'm trying to struggle with is what does it mean for us to be in right relationship? Every time you turn the heat on, in your house, that fuel is coming from somewhere. And that those emissions are going somewhere. Every time we support or don't support public transportation, we're making decisions about who can get someplace and who also can't get another place. We are already in relationship. We're in relationship with these tiny, like, uh, like little microscopic beings in the ocean. Um, that produce oxygen. We can't see them, but every day our breaths are possible because they're turning carbon dioxide into oxygen.

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond (01:04:28):

We are in relationship all around us. And if we don't start seeing those relationships, um, I don't, I don't see how we begin shifting our frame. I am so thankful to our indigenous communities because they've been saying this for a really long time. Um, and I've learned and, um, shifted because of many great, um, indigenous thinkers in this country and in other countries, but at the foundation of this, we're in relationship, I want to be in right relationship. We haven't usually been that way, but I think that is a fundamental part of what, uh, ecological justice, what, um, we are called to in this moment. Alright. I think that's all I wanted to say.

Butlerfilms (01:05:27):

Beautiful. Thank you.