

## **Informed Perspectives: *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America***

[00:00:01] **Ashley Duffalo** Good afternoon and welcome to Informed Perspectives: *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*. Today's event is titled after and inspired by the new book written by Anthea Butler and published by the University of North Carolina Press just last month.

[00:00:20] **Ashley Duffalo** I'm Ashley Duffalo, program and communications manager of the Religion, Race and Democracy Lab at the University of Virginia. Informed Perspectives is the lab's program series, which brings together journalists, documentarians and humanities scholars into conversation about the entanglements of religion, race and politics. I'd like to thank the Henry Luce Foundation and the American Council of Learned Societies Program in Religion, Journalism and International Affairs for so generously sponsoring the series. And now I'd like to welcome our moderator, Corey D. B. Walker, Wake Forest professor of humanities at Wake Forest University. Thank you again for joining us. Enjoy the event.

[00:01:06] **Corey D. B. Walker** Thank you so much, Ashley, and thank you all for joining us for what promises to be an exciting, stimulating and really thought-provoking conversation this afternoon. I want to begin with the words of our esteemed author who joins us today. In her book, *White Evangelical Racism*, Anthea Butler writes, I have taught and written about American evangelicalism for the past 20 years and questions about the movement have always haunted me. Does being evangelical really mean being white? Does it mean that anyone who embraces evangelical beliefs have to give up parts of their identity? Does it mean that evangelicals always have to vote Republican? To be honest, I have always known the answers, evangelicalism is synonymous with whiteness. It is not only a cultural whiteness, but also a political whiteness. The presupposition of the whiteness of evangelicalism has come to define evangelicalism, and it is the definition that the media, the general public and the politicians agree on.

[00:02:31] **Corey D. B. Walker** I'd like to welcome Anthea Butler, who is associate professor of religious studies and Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, a historian of African-American and American religion. Professor Butler, Professor Butler's research and writing spans African-American religion and history, race, politics and evangelicalism. Among her books includes not only the recently published *White Evangelicalism*, *The Politics of Morality in America*, but also her award-winning-book, *Women in the Church of God in Christ May Making a Sanctified World*. She's, of course, a prominent public intellectual, and her work has been featured on a number of outlets throughout the US and throughout the world. Professor Butler, tell us about this book, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*.

[00:03:28] **Anthea Butler** Thank you, Professor Walker. And I want to thank the center for having me today and the ACLS and Luce Foundation for helping put this together for us. Thank you so much. And thanks to you out there in the audience for taking time out today to listen to our conversation. I wrote *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America* because I wanted certain questions answered for myself. But I think what Professor Walker read was very interesting, because in my time teaching and actually going to an evangelical seminary and being with evangelicals and around them, I had a lot of questions. And one of the questions that came to me first was that why race was often not spoken about in evangelical writings, whether we're talking about histories written by

academics or by people who wrote for popular culture. And I name some of these in my book. And the question was basically, why don't evangelicals deal with race? And why is it secondarily that every time we hear the media talk about evangelicalism, that evangelicalism is really coded as white? We don't think about it as being black evangelicals or Asian-American evangelicals or Latino evangelicals. We always think about evangelicals as white. And so, I wondered about that question and why that came to be. And I believe that my book helps to answer that question. That's because of the racism that has been alongside evangelical movement since the 19th century. There have been many histories written about evangelicalism, whether we're talking about evangelicalism and the work that they've done with abolitionism or temperance or missionary movements or politics or media and popular culture, theology, all of these things and even the way that you refer to evangelicalism sometimes is by the Bebbington quadrilaterals like what do evangelicals believe? But I wanted to talk about something different, and that was race and racism, because that was the thing, it seemed to me that unified evangelicals in their political and social action in the ways that they behaved. And so that was the first thing. And secondarily, I wanted to put this evangelical history alongside a history of politics and political action and why political action got swayed in this moral kind of way. Why does morality mean so much for evangelicals? So, the second part of the title, you know, where I'm dealing with the politics of morality in America, we think about evangelicals as having a certain kind of morality that has influenced politics and politicians. And I think that because of that, what evangelicals have come across to be is to be highly moral people. But there's a disconnect and the disconnect happened for a lot of people. With Donald Trump, the disconnect was how can these people vote in such large numbers for a president who has been, you know, thrice married and divorced, has, you know, cases about molesting women and other kinds of things in front of him. And basically, said to Corinthians while he was on the campaign trail, I didn't really want to make this book about Donald Trump, but I wanted it to answer a longer historical question about why evangelicals would choose such a person, first of all, and secondarily how they saw their moral issues in relationship to the rest of America and the rest of America's racial and religious groups. And I think that the book does a good job of showing you why they are using these moral issues as a shield. They use moral issues to really hide the fact that they want to be politically powerful, that they want certain things out of the government, despite the fact that they believe in limited government and also the ways in which that morality has sometimes backfired on them. Or as I like to say, it's morality for you, but not for me. In other words, the kinds of morality and the moral issues about sexuality and other things where we've seen prominent evangelicals fall into sexual or other kinds of sin. They are easily forgiven because God gives them forgiveness through Jesus Christ, right? We think about this theologically, but for the outsiders who look at this, they look at this as being very hypocritical. When evangelicals continue to talk about moral issues and to use them as a way to be a cudgel in public discourse and conversation. That's the second thing. The third thing is more of an interesting kind of thing about what maybe I didn't say in the book and also about how that plays out. And that is the relationship of evangelicals to other races and how other races within evangelicalism, whether they be African-American, Asians, again, Latinos or other ethnic groups have had to deal with this idea about evangelicalism. Being white is colorblind racism that I talk about. And that when people say to you, I don't see color, I see what Jesus season you, that really actually means that they just see white and that people who are in evangelicalism like I was in and previously are considered to be white if they behave in certain kinds of ways. And if you don't behave in those kinds of ways, or if you don't accede to white evangelical cultural norms, that means that you are not acceptable. And those kind of cultural norms are not just about singing or how you dress or how your department is, but it's also about voting. And so, this becomes a very important part of how evangelicals go on to get people to vote. And I'm

sorry, there's somebody in front of my building who's decided to just honk the horn the whole time, so I don't want anybody to hear it. So maybe they're just punctuating everything I'm saying. But basically, those are the reasons why I did the book. And also, I think that there's a little bit of my personal story in there. But at that personal story is included only in so far as to help evangelicals understand that I understand them.

[00:09:36] **Corey D. B. Walker** And they are truly you provide us with the great rationale, a three-part rationale, why you wrote this book. I mean, really, you're providing us with a quick history that evangelicalism and racism and ideas of white supremacy are intertwined. And it just didn't come up with Donald Trump. But there's a long, extensive history throughout the American American the American experience. There's also this deep collaboration between certain political commitments and certain religious ideas that evangelicalism and politics go hand in hand. And there's a way in which if you're an evangelical, you're expected to vote a certain type of way. You're expected to carry yourself a certain type of way in American public life. And thirdly, the diversity of the evangelicalism belies its colorblind racism, that it's normative whiteness that really challenges those who see themselves within an evangelical political evangelical religious context. But yet here's that religious context saturated with an overbearing white racism.

[00:10:48] **Corey D. B. Walker** One of our colleagues that we're going to have join the conversation now understands intimately that colorblind racism. I want to bring into our conversation Larycia Hawkins. Larycia is a dear friend of ours. She's also a scholar, political science professor and an activist. She teaches and researchers at the University of Virginia, where she's jointly appointed in the Departments of Politics and Religious Studies. She also serves as a faculty fellow at the University's Institute for Advanced Studies and Culture and is a contributor to the Project on Lived Theology. And she co-convenes the Henry Luce Foundation Project Religion and Its Publics.

[00:11:32] **Corey D. B. Walker** And in a Dec. 10, 2015 Facebook post, Professor Hawkins declared her intent to don a hijab and embodied solidarity with Muslim sisters throughout the Christian season of Advent. The Post ignited an international firestorm that initiated conversations on the nature of God and the possibilities for multifaith solidarity at a time of heightened Islamophobia, xenophobia, racism and hate crimes motivated by religious differences at the time of her activism. Professor Hawkins was an associate professor of political science at Wheaton College, a Christian university founded in 1860 by abolitionists. She was the first black woman to be granted tenure in the history of that university and within five days of her Facebook post and after repeatedly affirming her commitment to the college's statement of faith. Professor Hawkins was placed on administrative leave on February 6, 2016, almost two months after following her act of embodied solidarity with Muslim women. She and Wheaton College parted ways. Larycia, thank you for joining us this afternoon to talk to us about your initial responses of reading this powerful book, *White Evangelical Racism*.

[00:13:08] **Larycia Hawkins** Yeah, well, thanks for that introduction and I think one of the things that is is always difficult is that I am often embodying what I teach. I'm teaching a class this semester called The Religion and Politics of Black Lives Matter. It's jointly taught between it's with the Religion, Race and Democracy Lab. So, it's between the politics department and the religious studies departments, the small introductory seminar. And I told my students on the first day, my life is a trigger warning, not because of the events that you just mentioned at Wheaton College, but because of what the United States and the world now sees in the death of George Floyd and in the ongoing criminal trial of Derek Chauvin that we're in the midst of. And I bring up Wheaton to also put a fine point on the

fact that Dr. Butler visited Wheaton my second year Wheaton College in Illinois, my second year there as a professor. And there weren't many people who looked like me. And certainly, in my studies, I did not have many Black female role models, many females, but not many Black female role models. And I recall, and this is getting to her book, I recall how she is an astute scholar. She was there during Black History Month, February of 2009. She was assigned a room for her talk and the room itself was in the oldest building, one of the oldest buildings in use on campus, not the not the beautiful castle building, but a building that we now know was like a lab and so there was asbestos there and I'm making this point, it had to be the crappiest room on campus, and I'm making this point to help people understand the white evangelical imagination. So, one of the things that Dr. Butler does so well in this book is from a Black womanist standpoint. Give an accounting of the white evangelical imagination, she does so I think, by including sociological, historical, religious, political, theoretical threads and strands. But the way the evangelical imagination I'm speaking broadly here is, in fact, quite. It's myopic in terms of its thinking and its imagining, right, so there are inklings of vapor here on an epistemological account. If we read between the lines, there's a nod to sacred secular facts and values. There's a Pentecostal zeal to a decision point in the very last chapter. But I think the central theme for me of the book is an insistence on the reader. The United States, by students accepting the centrality of white supremacy to all American institutions, but primarily to religion, because to our peril, do we forget to link this kind of white American, not white American, white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism and the presumptive moral authority that Dr. Butler talks about? So, I think that one of the things that I want to point out, at least in my short seven minutes, is that she goes beyond merely talking about identity politics. I think she uses that word once, only once. And it may be a quote of someone else. Talks get mired in in academia, at UVA, in this question of whether identity politics itself is is hopelessly doomed to fail in the kind of Hobbesian sense of a war of all against all. So, while white evangelicalism in its modern iteration is moving in some sense is beyond this, this disjuncture between faith and reason, they haven't moved beyond the sacred secular distinction, even though Christ and culture seems to be the hallmark. And we recently had this Benedict option hurled out by a prominent white evangelical male. The real beauty of this book also is thinking about how economics relates. And I think this is one of the things I hope we get to discuss more is this sense that American entrepreneurialism is woven through white evangelicalism, which is Americanism, which is patriotism. To be American is to be white, is to be Christian, at least modally, right. And that it's a winsome white racism that's described here. So, this entrepreneurial kind of awakening that is kind of baked into white evangelicalism is quite limited. It can't envision a world beyond colonialist Christianity. They're not even neocolonialist. It's just straight up colonialist Christianity to this day. Cedric Robinson talks about Black Marxism. And I think that this conversation can't be even entered into alternative economies, an inability to see that the capitalist economy might be the antithesis of God's economy and even radically different than the one envisioned by Adam Smith. Other things I think this book does really well is point out without hitting you over the head with this. And I think this book can have popular appeal not just for my students in my religion and Black Lives Matter class. I can't assign it at this point, but I wish I could. That there are multiple Christianities in the United States, that Christianity is not a Western religion. It does not in its kind of American entrepreneurial iteration. It does not reflect very closely Palestine white evangelicalism. Again, speaking of that form of Christianity. And and and so we find ourselves in the midst right now just to bring in a contemporary kind of political and sociological battle between the woke social justice warriors within white evangelicalism and those who say righteousness is embodied in personal piety, individual salvation, these kind of things. And so, the privatization of American religion begins with white evangelicals. And I think that more could be done with that. And also, this notion of the syncretism that's extant in white evangelicalism. It is the

prosperity gospel. Like Black megachurches, T. D. Jakes, Oral Roberts didn't invent the prosperity gospel. White evangelicals invented that from the beginning. She does a great job historically of bringing in these threads of the lost cause narrative, which is really something that animates those of us who live here in Charlottesville, who have been awake at all in the past five years or so. So, in the United States and I think that a strong and compelling argument can be made, that it's not just a lost cause, a narrative that still animates white evangelical Christianity wherever it exists, whether it's on the West Coast, in the south. I lived in Chicago for 10 years and I came away telling my friends, upon reflection, since I haven't lived in Chicago in several years, the Midwest is Confederate. In fact, America is Confederate. So deeply does white evangelicalism WASP religion penetrate the ethos and mythos of the United States, the lost cause is alive and well, not just in the folks who stormed the capital, not just in the folks who showed up in Charlottesville in the summer of 2016 also highlights the things we learned from Charlottesville that women are central to the ritualistic performance of white supremacist Christianity or slaveholder Christianity, as a colleague down in North Carolina calls it. And I think there are some religious themes that I wish had been gone into more. This notion of questioning redemptive violence, which I don't know whether you meant to say, I hope we can talk about that and the irony of power. I'm not sure how many minutes I have left, but the irony of the centralization of power in a religion whose zeitgeist is the periphery, to give up power, power is paradoxical, power is in death, power is an emptiness, power is in loving your enemy. Power exists in humility. In poverty. In death. And redemption. Like like a phoenix rising out of the ashes, and so the notion again and at Wheaton that Billy Graham was called America's white Jesus in a Rolling Stone piece. Yes. And Billy Graham went to Wheaton College in Chicago. The Midwest is a Confederate place and race matter. And I think this book does a wonderful job of bringing that to the fore, as well as how institutions follow these cultural logics. And that as a political scientist, that's the last thing I'll say, is that these institutions, American institutions, not just religious ones, have followed this cultural logic of white supremacy rooted in white supremacist white Jesus image, Christianities in the United States, but namely evangelicalism and fundamentalism. So, thank you.

[00:24:56] **Corey D. B. Walker** Thank you so much, Professor Hawkins, you truly given us a lot to respond to, and in your expert engagement with Professor Butler's text, you remind us that evangelicalism is very material and in fact, the ways in which we think about the organization and the operation of capitalist political economy, that the idea of being an entrepreneur really maps on to certain ideals and characteristics of American evangelical culture and its embedded norms, and it's embedded white supremacist norms. Most importantly, you remind us in your conversation about the ways in which politics and power map on to white evangelical culture. And it is the idea that America is Confederate. The idea that we have to begin to think through that we have we have to begin to think through our political language, our political norms, the ways in which we try to negotiate these public boundaries. I'm very interested in following up that idea of our public languages and our political morality. In a conversation with the next friend that I like to have, join our conversation, Chuck Matthews. Charles Matthews is the Carolyn M. Barber professor of religious studies at the University of Virginia, specializing in Christian theology and religious ethics. He is the author of *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition* and *A Theology of Public Life*, both published with Cambridge University Press is also published *Understanding Religious Ethics* from Wiley Blackwell and *The Republic of Grace* from Eerdmans, among other edited volumes. He is the senior editor for a four-volume collection of *Comparative Religious Ethics: The Major Works* from Routledge Publishers. He, uh, Charles does a number of things. I had the opportunity to serve with him while he served as editor of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, the flagship journal

in the field of religious studies. And he was the youngest ever appointed editor of that flagship journal. He's also chair of the Committee on the Future of Christian Ethics for the Society of Christian Ethics and Inaugural Director of the Virginia Center for the Study of Religion is currently working on two books, *The Future of Political Theology* and the other book provisionally titled *The Future of Christian Ethics*. Chuck, join us in this conversation and give us your response to Anthea Butler's *White Evangelical Racism* and Larycia's very poignant remarks around its public life, and our public language really around religion.

[00:28:01] **Charles Matthews** Well, thank you for thank you for that introduction, Corey, and I really appreciate you not mentioning the most relevant feature of our experience together, which is that we we lived in a trailer together for four years as part of our professional career here at UVA. But I go far back with Professor Walker and I would be happy to do whatever he asks me to do, whether or not it involves a trailer. But in this case, it's a real honor and an enormously enlightening opportunity for me to engage and discuss these issues and this work with Professor Butler and also with Professors Walker and Hawkins. I will be very quick on this. I have only a couple comments about this wonderful and powerful and I hope genuinely significant book in our ongoing conversations, both about America, American religion, American white, American evangelicalism and race and identity in the United States. More generally, it strikes me that this is a powerful and painful book and it is painful, both personally at moments and structurally in terms of where we are as a country and in some ways, importantly, where this country may be moving in terms of how it affects the world as well. Let me say something very quickly about that. First, I think this book comes out of two facts, which we have spent a lot of time in America chewing over in the past 10 years, but not really figured out what to do with in some important ways. And there are two very simple political facts. First, and most famously, of course, there is the statistic of 81 percent of white evangelicals who supported Donald Trump. And if the data of Ryan Burge is a very well-regarded pollster and the demographics expert is correct, if anything, they only doubled down in the 2020 election. So, there's a powerful move for this one group not on echoed by other groups, but decisive for this one group towards Donald John Trump, who is a relatively anomalous political figure, as any political scientist will tell you. The other fact that's interesting to think about is the enormous and sudden reversal of professed belief in the importance of political personal morality for our political leaders. As anyone who has studied evangelicals, white evangelicals will know consistently white evangelicals have been the people who have argued historically that the personal morality of a political leader is the most is very important to their success and to their support among this community. And that was stable up until and through 2012. There was always a strong sense that morality mattered. Personal morality mattered in the selection of leaders. Suddenly, in 2015 and 16, this reversed. And the latest statistics suggest that the reversal has stayed stable. And now white evangelicals have gone from the most likely to say that the personal morality of elected leaders matters to the least likely group to say that the personal morality of elected leaders matters. That's an astonishing reversal. And to do it so suddenly and so quickly bespeaks a kind of ecclesial and theological and to be frank, spiritual whiplash, which is in its own way a kind of potential damage to this to this community in itself and suggests broader, broader intuitions that many people have had, that much of this professed piety was simply a form of outright hypocrisy. This is important because it seems to me that Professor Butler's book tells us an alternate story of the origins of white evangelicalism than the one that we have historically received often, at least in the mainstream culture. And it's a much more disturbing and profoundly revolutionary story than I think we are yet able to process. It's a story that we've heard bits of before, but this seems to me the first time in a single narrative that we have this whole story being told to us in a coherent and relatively plot frame. And it seems to me that the

story has a great deal of power, not just about white evangelicals, but also about the American polity in general, and potentially, I think Professor Hawkins pointed out, to the dominant forms of Christianity in America and potentially abroad as well. So, there are some powerful issues that this book is going to bring to our conversation that I think need to be discussed. Professor Hawkins mentioned the challenge of the materiality of this form of Christianity, and that's actually one of my questions. But before I get to it, I also want to point out that the other dimension of this Christianity that's being exposed here and in a way, this puts Professor Butler's book in conversation with a longer stream of critics of American religious and public life, in some ways, going back to figures like Jonathan Edwards, David Walker, Frederick Douglass, other critics who have suggested that there are some profound tension between the professed pieties of these communities and the actual lived realities that these communities espouse and underscore. Along with the prosperity gospel, I would say Professor Butler has exposed to us what we might call the propriety gospel. That is the idea that there is a propriety to white silence and that the white silence has in fact allowed certain things to happen that are not allowed to be spoken of in polite company. And by broaching that propriety, by actually saying the things that need to be said, but that cannot in the older ethic be spoken of, at least out loud. Professor Butler's book does us all an enormous service. As a speaking as a theologian, I would actually say it's actually a good theological service, too. But we can talk about that in the in the conversation as well. I will say that I have three questions just to provoke Professor Butler more to say more about this. But I'd like to hear from her about and let me say them right now. The first is about the relationship between the story of whiteness and anti-Black racism that she tells and the not unrelated story of the emergence of a certain patriarchal culture, or not emergence, but the continued reaffirmation of a certain kind of patriarchal culture in white evangelicalism and its attendant ideals of masculinity and femininity, which I think are really important. And I'd like to know what she thinks about how to relate these two dimensions of white evangelical culture is one of the more basic or they equa basic. I mean, I'd like to just have a little more information there. The second is about the curious way in which I think the energy of white evangelicalism around a siege, a conception of a siege mentality has really solidified in recent years in interesting ways and in fact, in some ways extended beyond the white evangelical world to in some ways, infect, the larger base of supporters on the on the right in America, there's a profound asymmetry in the way that people on the right and the left feel. It seems to me I might be wrong about this, but there seems to be a real sense of beleaguerment and besiegement - that's a word - on the right, which is alarming and interesting. And I'd like to know if that is endemic to evangelical culture and how it's related to a larger evangelical worldview. The third question has emerged to me just in our conversations, listening here on the on the thing. And that is, how do you think white evangelicalism has changed in the past 15 or so years with the emergence of new technologies? So not just social media, but the so-called Fox News effect? It seems to me that historically white evangelicals had maybe not in the since the 70s, but before that had a way of living in their own subculture and not necessarily attending every day to a larger American discourse. Now, it seems to me the case that now the subculture is simultaneously more tightly enclosed in a bubble, a self-reinforcing bubble of information and news stories, but also in some ways daily exposed to further triggers and outrages through a very carefully crafted media and social media reality through, say, Fox News and the various social media devices. So, we see stuff like QAnon coming out and stuff like that. What should we think about those things as they have affected white evangelical world? Are they genuinely new factors? Were they simply unfolding of older issues? I think I have a lot more to say, but I think I've I've said more than enough and I'd love to hear whatever Professor Butler would like to say. Thank you.

[00:37:13] **Corey D. B. Walker** Thank you so much, Chuck. And as always, you've given us a lot, and I want to invite Antheil Richard Chuck to join us in this conversation Chuck. That this is the conversation that we're involved in. It's not only one about prosperity picking up on some things from Professor Hawkins, but also propriety. Should we tell these stories in public and what are the implications and the implications? Also remind us that we have this divide, this political divide, where our colleagues on the right of the political spectrum feel themselves besieged, under threat, if you will, for losing something that may go to the deeper issues that Professor Butler raises in this book in terms of the intertwining, the very nature that white supremacy is not additive to evangelical Christianity. It is constitutive in the American context. The last thing that you highlight and this is interesting and we may want to spend some time on this: new media technologies. When we're saturated over the past 30 years or so with the ways in which our algorithms reinforce certain tendencies within the body public, does that reinforcing go to the idea that we retrench in our dominant beliefs? Does it then amplify those feelings of threat? Does it then amplify and improve and legitimate rather those feelings of besiegement—Chuck's words—do they challenge us in some ways of actually moving across political divides? We have a lot on the agenda and of course we have a lot coming in from our audience who are gathered with us before we engage all of that, Anthea, I'm going to be very unjust in this moment. We have a lot put on the agenda by Larycia and Chuck. Give us your thoughts on in response to their response to your book, and then we're going to open it up for a broader conversation.

[00:39:19] **Anthea Butler** Yeah, I just want to thank both Professor Hawkins and Professor Matthews for giving these very thoughtful and judicious responses. I first want to say to Professor Hawkins, thank you for letting me know that Wheaton was trying to kill me. I appreciate that. I just want to say here in public now, since you brought this up, I will also say that on this particular trip, I stayed in one of the houses in Wheaton I had the worst nightmares I ever had in my entire life. And the fact that I still remember it says 2009 will tell you a lot about probably Wheaton. So, I'll leave that right there.

[00:39:52] **Larycia Hawkins** I'm sorry. As I was telling that, like, I should have typed out my intro. My apologies. Oh, no, that's wrong. I mean, it was abated by them, but it still had the warning sign in the building, so. Yeah, absolutely. We survived.

[00:40:09] **Anthea Butler** Yeah, we survived. That's good to know. But yeah. And that is the kind of thing that white evangelicalism does. So, let me try to deal with a couple of the questions here. You mentioned Professor Hawkins, something about a winsome white racism. And I am like, you are completely right, because what this is, is the naiveté of not having to deal with racism then makes you racist. And I think that is a really important point to bring out, because basically this is a kind of thing. Well, we don't see color naïveté. Right. But it's a naïveté that is a wicked naïveté because it knows exactly what it's doing. So that's that's it. You talked about a little briefly about the syncretism of white evangelicalism and the prosperity gospel. What is very interesting about this is that the way that I would term this is that evangelicals, Pentecostals turn evangelicals to prosperity gospel people, and that blended in with their kind of capitalist ideas. And that's why you get Amway and all the rest of the stuff that's really crazy in these high-level marketing things that all these churches still engage in that ends up ripping people's money, money off. I don't know if I would say America's Confederate, I would say that America is still dealing with the Confederacy. And the reason why I say it that way is because there are people here who dislike the Confederacy greatly. But there is a sense in which these monuments and the flag continue to haunt everyone. And you know this very well in Charlottesville, right. Because they continue to come up all the time. We are continually



fighting the Civil War. And that's probably the way that I would say it, and especially with Christians and evangelicals in particular, because they don't think that anybody should have won it besides the South. All right. And so, I want to make that really clear, because I think that's part and parcel of the book. And why I took slavery as the beginning is this is where a lot of the moral ideas come from. I think that we cannot escape the fact that the constructions of the family, the constructions of what the black family is and isn't to them what the constructions of sexuality are all rely and reside in slavery. And that piece that I talk about with Bill Pinnell saying that you want me, you don't want to let me in your living rooms and you don't want me dating your daughter, that is part and parcel of what's going on with white evangelicalism. It's this idea in which we don't want to talk about that. On the issue of redemptive violence. This is a short book by design, but I think we could have dealt with that idea with a lynching in the first chapter of the book about slavery. But we can think about the ways in which evangelicals have responded to Black Lives Matter. And that has been kind of a mixed response. A lot of it has been what you should have listened to the police like Franklin Graham says all the time, if you would just listen to law and order, that would be great. But law and order is also back to slavery again. So, I think we need to understand how these languages and the ways in which they construct them are very important. And I didn't say identity politics because evangelicals have been playing identity politics since the 19th century. Why say identity politics, when they have been the greatest purveyors of identity politics in American history? And so, where they have this conversation about critical race theory right now? Well, guess what? There's a critical white race theory that they are promulgating by not talking about critical race theory. And I think that's really important to say. Let me deal with Charles very quickly, because I also want to make sure we have time for questions. Thank you so much, Charles, for talking about the elephant in the room, which is basically they don't give a damn. And I'm going to say it just like that about any morality that any politician has. If you could pick Trump, you can pick anybody. OK, so Satan decides to run for president in 2024. I am sure if he promises them something that they will probably vote for him. OK, if he just dresses it up and tucks his tail in nicely. OK, so let's see if we can have that happen. And that's number one. I think this whole idea about why personal morality dropped out dovetailed with something else. And and you're going to say this is crazy, but I think it's really true, what did evangelicals have to do in order to get on board for a candidate in 2012 who was Mormon, Mitt Romney? Well, Franklin Graham and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association helped with that. They took off Mormonism as a list of cults. Now, I don't personally think Mormonism is a cult at all, but they certainly thought so until we had a white candidate running against a black president and all of a sudden Mormonism was OK, because at the beginning of that election cycle, Robert Jeffress really hated Mitt Romney. And then all of a sudden, he came around and then that made it all OK. So, there's that also talked about this way in which evangelicals have kind of taken on this whiteness in a certain kind of way to the detriment of their own idealism and the things that they wanted to have here. I would refer to a friend of mine's book that I think is really important, *Dying of Whiteness* by Jonathan Metzl. Evangelicals are willing to die for whiteness, too. And it's not just about health care or guns or anything else. They are willing to die to be white. And that is that is the end of that. Whatever they need to do to stay in power, that dying of whiteness, they will do. And so that leads into this conversation that you're asking about patriarchy and all of that. And I think this is where Kristin Kobes Du Mez' book is really important to see that. But I will say this. The patriarchal part that I'm really trying to discuss is the ways in which this this constituency puts itself together in the 19th century with both slavery and freedom, slavery, because slaveholders can take care of their slaves who obviously can't take care of themselves. I'm joking, but this is a way to think about it and post that is that we need to take care of white women because we have to protect them against these rapists, evil black men, and we need to protect them against

society. And so therefore, we need to protect our families with our lives and with hoods and with guns. And that's what ends up happening. And so, I think that it's really important to understand that this patriarchal notion that they are the ones who are able to run and do everything comes out of this 19th century. That's why you have the pushback against voting. It's why you have the pushback against black legislators who get elected right after reconstruction. And then we go into redemption where all of that is swept away. It is what is happening now in Georgia with the voting because they are afraid that black people really do want to come out to vote. It has made them come against a Christian churches to destroy voting on Sunday so that you don't have to have them voting. OK, and so all of these things are of a piece. These are the kinds of things that they want to do to keep in power. The other question, I think that is really huge in this siege mentality question is this. Evangelicals always see themselves as being persecuted no matter if they have the power or not. They are always the persecuted group. This persecution complex links into their ideas about the end of the world, Jesus coming back, all of this stuff. And you would think for people who have constructed a theology that is around Jesus coming back and them getting out of any kind of bad thing that's going to happen on Earth because they get raptured, you would think that they would feel a little bit safer, but they don't. And so somehow, I think that these fears are about guilt and about the guilt of knowing what they have bought into. And that guilt continues to eat at them. And it manifests itself as a kind of fear, fear of the other, fear of being disempowered, fear of losing this social space and social status and that status of whiteness, that whiteness and Christianity gives to that. And we can talk about that a little bit more. And then this idea about what happens with the media. I think this is hugely, hugely crucial. And I think that what happens is, is that you have a media consortium of evangelicals that starts back in the 1950s. If people have read the book or you're interested in it, I talk about this with Billy Graham and with with others and with how they talk about communism. And I think that what you really need to understand is that the marriage isn't just with the Republican Party, the marriage is with the Republican apparatus of media and how that goes. And so, where you have organizations like Focus on the Family or Family Research Council or American Family Association, the ways in which they raise money and lobby is really, really important. And so, there was a chart on Twitter the other day that talked about how much money is being raised for different things. Evangelicalism, I believe religious freedom was over one hundred million. And I'm just like, that's crazy. But that just tells you how this falls together all in one. But the other part of this is the ecosystem of blogs and Fox News. And all of these things that came together in the late 90s and early 2000s and how people started to appear on Fox News who were religious, so think about Mike Huckabee Show, who just did some really racist stuff. Think about Robert Jeffress all the time. Think about all these people. This is a network now and the network is between evangelical and how they amplify information and the kinds of things they see at their home every day. So, it's not just televangelism. It's the ways in which they exchange information back and forth in this kind of media ecosystem. And Trump was able to really put that into an effect for him in a certain kind of way, especially at the end of the 2020 election cycle. One last point. You can see this in the ways that churches were talking about the insurrection before it happened. They talked about it through a Jericho march. They talked about it through all this kind of stuff in December before January six actually happened. If you pay attention to all of these folks who were followers of Trump, who were evangelicals, they were talking about the insurrection law before the insurrection happened. So, they knew what was coming. They were signaling everybody and they use their media platforms to do so. And I think that's where evangelicals are really complicit and contemptible. And I will say it like that, contemptible in the ways that they have for fomented violence in this nation, not just against individual citizens, but against the government.

[00:50:45] **Corey D. B. Walker** Onto Anthea, thank you. Thank you, Chuck. Thank you, Larycia. This has been a conversation that is really engaged a lot. If you haven't, I want to encourage everyone get your copy, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*. It's a book that really it isn't the the the idea to end the conversation. And the beautiful thing about Anthea's book is it seeks to open up a conversation, a conversation about the very nature of our nation and our identity in light of these very fraught times. I want to sort of open up. We have a number of questions that have come in, but we only have one hour and that's the injustice. Anthea has done us justice with this wonderful book and her gracious comments. But I'm going to do another injustice to Larycia and Chuck. And I'm and this is something that that's coming out of this conversation that I'm concerned about and even a number of our colleagues who joined us in this conversation. We have this robust and this robust canopy of religion in the US. Thinking of Kevin Kruse's *One Nation Under God*, I'm thinking I'm thinking of not only Anthea's book, I'm thinking of Bob Dylan's 1963 song *With God on Our Side*. But at the same time, we have these deep, intractable, not only cultural issues, Professor Hawkins is right, these are very material issues. Have we come to a moment where our religious commitments have outstripped our democratic resources, for building a multiracial democracy, something that has never been done?

[00:52:54] **Anthea Butler** I will let you all answer that, because I wrote the book, yeah.

[00:53:02] **Corey D. B. Walker** Have we reached a moment where our religious commitments are outstripping our democratic resources to build what has never been done, what has never been built deeply equal multiracial democracy?

[00:53:23] **Larycia Hawkins** I mean, I was I want to say that I was not critiquing the earlier Dr. Butler's known use of identity politics, I think it was actually quite masterful because it invites people to engage the book who might otherwise turn it off. She also maybe once used the word white privilege in this intentionality. I think in this book about referring to histories to some of us in academia, it is review, but to most people it is not. And she gets to the crux of the matter, the Tea Party. In 2015, when I wore a hijab, white hate groups increased by 14 percent. This is the ascendance of Donald Trump. The metaphor, the writing was on the wall, and so what she does in this book is show how white evangelical Christianity has been presaging this and the Tea Party, while it is not primarily evangelical, the women are. So, she also talks about white women. Right. And when I talk about America as Confederate, I mean low key Confederate. Right. Most people aren't waving the flag. But if your argument is correct, America's Confederate. America is Confederate, some of the states I grew up in Oklahoma, 1906 was our statehood. You know how it began. With a land run on no man's land, Indian territory, right, and so, I mean, this whole notion, I think also of original America's original sin being slavery. Well, no. It was a genocide against the Native Americans, the decimation of the Native Americans, and so, I think the beauty is like this is also about in the answers. One of the questions in the in the chat, it's about purity. It's still about purity politics. And I also think a beauty is that it's this is answering your question. Its politics masquerading as morality now like and that answers Chuck's question too, like nothing happened to personal morality. White people just know white people and white evangelicals especially think they're the gatekeepers of morality. They get to see who counts, a citizen who is grafted in to use another biblical metaphor and who's not. Who gets adopted. Ethiopians, Haitians, Bulgarians, Chinese, Koreans. I mean, there are waves, but white evangelical adoption says everything about who they believe counts as citizen. And I think that the writing on the wall is not good.

[00:56:26] **Charles Matthews** I think it's a good lament, I think, Corey, I think you really hit the nail on the head by talking about this as an unprecedented project, as a species. To be frank, we have never been very good about accommodating these differences. One of the earliest bits of evidence we have for this is the fact that the only real trace of the other species we came across as we left Africa is both their bones and a little bit of DNA that remains in the DNA of some some people. Right. So that as a species, we seem to have a really hard time with accepting difference. And for us now to be in this kind of weird political moment where effectively it looks like we are being asked to generate a genuinely, radically egalitarian, truly pluralist community, both nationally and in some ways internationally. And we haven't really talked about the international dimensions of this. But I think it's really important to the stakes of this are huge. And so, before anyone thinks about this is a purely American project, this is in some ways really about whether or not we can be the kinds of creatures we have thought we could be. And I think the question is an open question as to how the resources of our past enable and disable us. In some ways, I'm too far invested in my career to think that there's no usefulness to the stuff. But I'm too well-read in this stuff to think that it's an easy answer. I would say that in terms of Christian history, it does strike me. It's very weird for us to be living in this uniquely significant moment in a way that other communities' history, historically, like Christians, have for a long time lived under the canopy of a kind of Constantinian Christendom, where the community of Christian believers set the terms in some ways for how difference would be accommodated. And now not just racially, but theologically, those terms have been completely exploded. And I think it's an exciting and an exhilarating and I think you're right to say a terrifying moment. So, I don't think I have an answer. I just think that the way you're laying out the stakes, it strikes me, is exactly right.

[00:59:01] **Corey D. B. Walker** Thanks so much, Chuck. Thank you, Larycia and Anthea, thank you for your book. I want to give you the last word for today's conversation. What do you have for us as we move out, continue to engage this text and really continue to engage with the twin crises, practice of religion, democracy, and not to chop the planetary crisis of our existence?

[00:59:29] **Anthea Butler** As much as I hate to say this, I'm going to put it this way. If evangelicals don't change, they pose an existential crisis to us all. They have divided the nation politically. They don't want to believe in climate change. They don't want to get vaccines as we've seen in *The New York Times*. They are part and parcel of the reason why we cannot move forward, because they say they have religious beliefs. But this is religious recalcitrance. It is not something that is about belief is not what they believe theologically. It is about a positionality, that they have that they have chosen to have, that is taking us all over the brink. And because they are being selfish and because they don't care, their racism, their sexism, their homophobia, their lack of belief in science, lack of belief and common sense may end up killing us all. And so, I would ask anybody whose evangelical today to get this book, to read it, to share it with your friends and to ask yourself if you want to be a part of this. Is this what Jesus has called you to do, the Jesus you claim to serve? And if it's not, then I ask you to turn away. And that is what this book is all about, reading history so that you will understand what you are complicit in and what you have been a part of.

[01:00:47] **Corey D. B. Walker** Anthea Butler, thank you. Larycia Hawkins, thank you. Charles, Chuck, thank you, my friend. Great always living in the trailer with you. Truly a generative conversation. I want to encourage everyone to pick up the book. Anthea Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*. My name's Corey Walker. I

want to thank you for joining us this afternoon. And we look forward to continuing the conversation.