

## RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 431 TRANSCRIPT

**Tom Morello:** I'm Tom Morello and you're listening to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*.

**Steve Skrovan:** Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host, David Feldman. Hello, David.

**David Feldman:** Hello, Steve.

**Steve Skrovan:** Good to have you here as always. And it's also good to have the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Hi, everybody. This is the three weeks of January 6 hearings by the House Committee. There's going to be a lot of people watching it on TV, starting 8:00 Eastern Standard Time, p.m., 8:00 PM. They're going for the primetime so we can see what the facts are and what happened and what they intended to do on January 6.

**Steve Skrovan:** And that's why, before we get to our featured guest this week, we've invited our resident constitutional scholar, Bruce Fein, to give us his take on those upcoming January 6 committee hearings in primetime. Bruce has an article coming out in the *Hill* about why the committee has not subpoenaed Donald Trump or Mike Pence. Welcome back, Bruce.

**Bruce Fein:** Thank you for inviting me.

**Steve Skrovan:** So to tell us what's going on here.

**Bruce Fein:** Well, a little bit of history here. The United States Supreme Court, for at least a century, has sustained what's called the inherent contempt power of Congress. It means that the Congress can summarily detain or fine a witness who refuses to testify or supply documents in response to a subpoena. And the need for such summary authority is the fact that justice is lead-footed; we know in politics, time is everything. And if you let the judicial process run out, most of the time, the information becomes stale and it's not useful politically. And here we have the January 6 committee perhaps involved in the greatest, most important investigation in the history of the United States, something that dwarfs even Watergate, because we have credible evidence that there was an attempt, open and notorious, to prevent the peaceful transfer of presidential power for the first time in over two centuries. And this wasn't just by false pretenses. This is by use of force and violence, violence that eventuated in several killings and certain numerous criminal prosecutions, most of them successful, and guilty pleas, literally hundreds. And so we need to remember as well, this wasn't violence that erupted because there weren't peaceful avenues of redress. The Trump people had brought over 50 lawsuits, lost all of them. They had the opportunity, and I witnessed them on half a dozen occasions or more, to protest peacefully with signs or whatever in front of the Capitol for whatever reason they wanted. So this clearly was an attempt to basically abandon the rule of law and go back to the law of the jungle, things that we would witness — expect in Red Square, Tiananmen Square. So that's what makes this such, such an important hearing. Two things — one, establishing a foundation for disqualifying candidates in 2024, including Mr. Trump for having participated in an insurrection against the Constitution of the United States after having taken oath to uphold and defend it. And secondly,

it's important to reconsider the Electoral Count Act that tries to prevent any further effort or argument that the vice president has more than a ministerial duty when the state-certified electoral votes are counted.

And what is very mystifying is that the Congress here, the committee has not used this contempt power. They run to court, takes too long, they submit criminal prosecutions to the Justice Department that it wouldn't conclude before the time for disclosing the report, and they haven't even sought to subpoena and obtain the evidence from Mr. Trump and Mr. Pence. And you got to ask, well, why is such an important and central and definitive authority going unused? And all I can conclude is that these members feel, Well, what happens if we lose control of Congress? Then they'll turn the tables on us and try to get our testimony or Biden or something else after he leaves office. They're very timid; they view now discretion the better part of valor, and so they're basically forfeiting or surrendering their authority, really to protect themselves down the road, which is really, to my view, quite contemptible.

**Ralph Nader:** Bruce, let me challenge that. I don't think the Democrats think they're ever going to be in a position where they try to initiate an insurrection to overturn an election. And then so that the same tools will be used against them if they now subpoena Trump and Pence. I mean, it is true. They don't want to go after the Republicans in the White House for initiating war unconstitutionally like the Republicans have, Bush and Cheney in Iraq, because they initiated armed conflict out of the White House too, and they don't want to set a precedent where it can be used against them. But surely, no one on the committee thinks that they're going to be in a position that the Republicans were on January 6, where they took off trying to violently stop an election. There's got to be another reason why they are not subpoenaing Trump and Pence. One reason may be the Watergate Committee didn't subpoena Nixon.

**Bruce Fein:** Well, they may have. Ultimately, the House Judiciary Committee did subpoena Nixon on four occasions and voted an article of impeachment against him without going to court. But I want to go back to your point, which I'm not disputing on as facts. But I think I was inartful in explaining what I think is the mindset of the Democrats. They understand, because Congress doesn't work according to strict precedence and how lawyers at Harvard Law School would reason, that we set the precedent and we're going to actually subpoena a president, a vice president, whether it relates to insurrection or otherwise. Don't worry, the Republicans will not be restrained in saying, "Well, this is an insurrection and so you only did it for insurrection, and therefore, we're going to forego it." That's not how politics works, I don't think. Not in my experience being around 50 years. They will expand and say, Okay, you went after Pence and Trump for any reason. We'll go after Biden. Be it Hunter Biden or Biden, anyway, there'll be something they'll make up. You've got to remember, we're dealing with very unscrupulous people who have no principles whatsoever. So I don't think the Democrats are thinking the Republicans will restrain themselves; they'll only come after us if we go do an insurrection, and we're not going to do that. They understand that that's not a limitation that the Republicans won't honor in the drop of a hat.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, let's look at the precedence here. Nixon defied four subpoenas, but not personally. They weren't going to personally subpoena him. They wanted certain information. Isn't that correct?

**Bruce Fein:** Well, it's true that they wanted the documents, but the documents were tapes that were virtually the same as incriminating information. Those were tapes, documents, where he was speaking directly. It was as though they had him under oath.

**Ralph Nader:** They didn't want to subpoena him to go up before the Watergate Committee, correct?

**Bruce Fein:** Well, they didn't have to go that far. I mean, obviously it's not the first thing you necessarily do.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, that's one of my points. The second point, during the first and second impeachment trials of Trump, they never subpoenaed Trump to show up to the congressional committees. So they're bound by their own refusal to do that during the Watergate investigation and during the two Trump impeachments. So it goes deeper. They just don't want to call up the two main witnesses to the January 6 insurrection – Donald Trump and Pence. That's the real reason, don't you think?

**Bruce Fein:** Well, yes, but I do think that the underlying fear is that well, who knows what's going to happen in the future? We don't want to — if they're all inside of a club, right? They're inside the club of the Mandarin class, the power elite. Okay, we don't want to set a precedent where it ever could come back to haunt us. If it so goes the other way, well, hey, when we're not in power, it's going to come back and bite us. That's, for example, why the filibuster remains. They're like, okay, well, the filibuster is there because people say, we're going to be in the minority at one time and we're going to want it as well. So that's what I think is happening here. It's surely true that what you've described, historically, it shows that other than President Ford coming up and testifying voluntarily about the Nixon pardon, presidents customarily don't come before Congress. But simply because it hasn't been used before doesn't mean that you've lost the authority, especially when we're at a time when this is the most compelling case for calling a former president in the history of the United States. And remember, the situation with Nixon was a situation that occurred when he was still in the White House. Trump is not in the White House anymore. When Nixon left the White House, they were going after him, these grand juries, and he had to get a pardon because they were going to call him as a possible defendant or witness; he would have the right against self-incrimination.

**Ralph Nader:** What about this, let's assume the House Committee under Chairman Bennie Thompson from Mississippi subpoenaed Trump and Pence. What do you think Trump and Pence would do?

**Bruce Fein:** Well, given the context now, they would probably defy it, and then I would believe that they could properly be summarily held in contempt, detained and fined. And that may cause them to try to say that well, they're the victim of a witch hunt. But the evidence that will come forth is listen, if you don't have anything to hide, why don't you testify? What is it, are you a criminal invoking the Fifth Amendment privilege here? After all, they have an opportunity to come up with all the lawyers in the world, they got all the assistants in the world, what do you have to fear? I mean, the customary rule under evidence is the government has a right to every man's evidence. So I think it's going to be a hard argument to make to say, Hey, it's open to you. You got all the time in the world to defend yourself.

**Ralph Nader:** Okay. So let's say Trump and Pence defy the subpoena. Will the House of Representatives, controlled by the Democrats, use its inherent contempt power, cite them for contempt, fine them and, you used the polite phrase, they have the authority to imprison them. Isn't that correct?

**Bruce Fein:** That is correct. They detain them. That is correct. Will, they do that? Well, they could, but an alternate kind of sanction could say, all right, because this is a civil case, a civil investigation, not criminal, that you can draw what's called negative inferences from refusal to testify when if they had exculpatory evidence, they would be the first ones to run up there. And based upon that record developed, Congress could conclude, or certainly accord if the proceeding is brought, in 2024, that Pence or certainly more likely Trump was in fact engaged in insurrection against the United States Constitution on January 6 and he's disqualified from running for office again. So even if they refrain from going with actual detention, which would be a little bit awkward but as far as I'm concerned, we're dealing with someone who has no scruples anyway. That doesn't mean you don't violate due process but the Supreme Court has affirmed this authority forever. And it's like he's got the key to his jail cell. As soon as he's willing to testify, he gets out. But I do think the more likely possibility is that they could use the defiance to establish a case that under Section 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment, he's disqualified from office in 2024 or in any other time period.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, okay, we've got the story here. We'll have you back, Bruce, to comment on the hearings that are going to go for three weeks and many hours in the month of June. And I'm sure you're going to have some cogent comments for our listeners. Thank you very much, Bruce, for coming on.

**Bruce Fein:** Okay. Thanks for inviting me.

**Steve Skrovan:** Thank you, Bruce. Each week on the show, we talk about the big issues – war, inequality, corporate power, fascism, the climate crisis – and it generally seems that religious institutions – churches – tend to be on the wrong side of these issues, at the very least, missing in action. In fact, Christian nationalism has been cited by a number of our guests, including Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson and Chris Hedges, as being the root of the problem, the organized force that brought us two of the most destructive presidents in American history – George W. Bush and Donald Trump – to power in the White House. Are America's churches leading us toward theocracy or will they stand up for the separation of church and state? We hear a lot from various faith groups about social issues – reproductive rights, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, gender definitions, and so-called family values, but where are they on economic issues – poverty, military spending, taxing the wealthy, and the existential threat posed by our continued addiction to fossil fuels? Our guest today will be Reverend Jim Wallis from Georgetown University Center on Faith and Justice. And we'll ask him what organized religion is doing to advocate for positive change on those big issues. As always, we'll check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. But first, Reverend Jim Wallis talks to us about our society's moral and ethical standards. David?

**David Feldman:** Reverend Jim Wallis is a bestselling author, public theologian, and commentator on religion and public life, faith, and politics. Reverend Wallis is the Leader of the Center on Faith and Justice in the Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy, and he is the founder and ambassador of Sojourners, a progressive Christian grassroots movement

that advocates spirituality and social change in America. He is also the author of *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Reverend Jim Wallis.

**Jim Wallis:** Thank you very much. Glad to be here.

**Ralph Nader:** Welcome indeed, Jim. I've expressed a long-time concern that what are called the norms and mores of a society have been seriously eroding. And the forces usually to sustain them, and support them, and elaborate their importance have often come from organized religion. The churches that led the way, among others, through the Civil Rights Movement and the abolition of slavery are case in point. I want to ask you, as you know, politicians today are able to say things and do things that would have terminated their career only 30 years ago. You can just look at what caused Gary Hart to drop from the presidential contest, compared to what Trump said on many occasions, and nothing happened, he just continued to run and get his votes. Why do you think the churches are not in a situation that they used to be years ago? Is it because the press isn't reporting what they're doing or is it because they're compromised? The last conversation I had with the head of the National Council of Churches, which is several years ago, he told me quite candidly that the council is neutralized by the opposition of the evangelical members, the Baptist church in the National Council, so they just agreed to be neutral and not to stand up, for example, against criminal wars of aggression, political corruption, destruction of the social safety net. So is it the lack of media coverage of this or is it the growing timidity or compromising their own convictions by the institutions of the church?

**Jim Wallis:** Well, the problem is not the churches or even evangelicals. The problem is white Christians, white churches, and white evangelicals. Even evangelicals, Black and Hispanic evangelicals are very different than white evangelicals. To put it bluntly, in the phrase "white Christian", the adjective determines the noun. Christians who are more white than Christian, more white than evangelical. There's a crisis in democracy, which is what you've been fighting for for all your years, and we face right now a test of democracy, but also a test of faith. There is white Christian nationalism. White Christian nationalism is the principal obstacle to democracy, the principal threat. Now, I have evangelical leaders call me after the Capitol insurrection, agonizing that some of their white evangelicals were inside. So we're facing a real crisis here. It's a crisis for democracy but it's also a crisis for faith. Where faith comes down on one side of the other in terms of democracy is going to be key to the authenticity of faith, and I would say to whether the next generation ever comes to church.

So basically this is a problem defined by white Christian nationalism; I'll name it as that now, and the gospel. When I was 16, growing up in the churches and I was in Detroit, and they refused to deal with racism, so I literally left my faith because of the failure of the church. But in my years in organizing in the student movement, I came around to finally read Jesus, which I hadn't heard much of in my church. And I found Jesus to be the most — more radical and revolutionary, you might say, than Ho Chi Minh, Karl Marx, and Che Guevara. So I signed on to be a Jesus follower, and I still am after all these years. So the message is the right message, but it's dominated by the culture of right now I call it white Christian nationalism.

**Ralph Nader:** But the media is very biased here. They give huge publicity to outrageous preachers out of Texas, supporting the crimes and moral waywardness of Donald Trump, but they don't report other views. I had a chat once with the ombudsperson for National Public Radio

and she told me she was actually looking into National Public Radio giving a lot of extra time to the evangelical activities compared to what is often called the liberal church or the civil rights advocate part of Protestantism or the National Council of Churches.

**Jim Wallis:** You raise a good point. Daniel Burke, who was the religion anchor reporter for CNN, is now my comms [communications] director at Georgetown University's Center on Faith and Justice. He got tired of writing stories about Jerry Falwell Jr.'s affairs, and so he came over to us. I think there are a number of factors here. One is I have fought my life against religious fundamentalism all these years. But there's also a kind of secular fundamentalism. It is on the left in parts of it, and in parts of the media. Well, they only are interested in the Jerry Falwells and Pat Robertsons and the far right and don't report all the people every single day in our neighborhoods and cities who keep things together, Catholic sisters, for example, the glue in many neighborhoods around the country. Black churches are places where communities are allowed to survive. So there is a lot of work going on in the name of the gospel that I support, but the media doesn't cover that well. The media doesn't know religion very well and it falls into the binary categories of left and right. So I'll never agree to be religious left in contrast to the religious right because we shouldn't fall in those categories. We shouldn't be... I say don't go left, don't go right, go deeper. What does that mean? Deeper into our own faith, our own traditions. I'm at Georgetown now; I'm not a Catholic or a Jesuit, but those values are very core, Catholic social teaching. What they call the common good, what the common good is is what you, Ralph, fought for your whole life, this notion of the public, the common good, what are the ethics of the common good. That's deep in the heart of Catholic social teaching, but as some of my colleagues say, Catholic social teaching is the best-kept secret in the Catholic Church. And so you said evangelicals led the abolitionist movement, Quakers and evangelicals, but that's all forgotten now. So basically we become conformed to the culture, and the media tries to put us in its binary political categories.

**Ralph Nader:** I think the media is even worse than what we've been describing. The Poor People's Campaign, which before COVID, went into one city after another. This was a faith-led activist group that advocated for the alleviation of poverty and other deprivations of tens of millions of people in this country, and one of its leaders is the Reverend Barber from North Carolina. And they would go into one city after another, peaceably marching, having all the permits. No media coverage. They arrived to Washington, no media coverage. So I arranged a meeting with the managing editor of the *Washington Post* to question, why is there no media coverage? And they were very embarrassed. There was no media coverage because there was no violence. There was no throwing things around. It was a quiet, dignified march, and they got rewarded by being excluded from the media. So isn't that part of the problem, Jim?

**Jim Wallis:** William Barber is a dear friend and ally. Yeah, the media likes confrontation and conflict, and so that's true, that's what they always are looking for. And I think though we're going to be facing some real deadlines now up ahead. And I think we're going to be calling for a pulpit test, if you will, pulpit test of whether people are going to speak against the kind of anti-democratic movements that have taken their hold in the churches. I did a MSNBC show last week about this guy, Greg Locke is his name, he's a megachurch pastor in Tennessee, came to the insurrection and he's calling the Democrats demons who should leave his church. In a democracy, you've got to call fellow citizens neighbors even if they're opponents or adversaries. By calling people demons, he's giving a license to kill. And he's actually saying of the

insurrection, “you haven't seen anything yet”. So this kind of preaching has to be called out. And I think we're engaged at this new Georgetown Center, not only with the students. We had a tremendous response from students. Jamie Raskin came a couple of weeks ago. We had Rafael Warnock and Eddie Glaude come who have a tremendous interest in students, whether they're practicing religion or not, for the kind of faith that speaks the truth to power. And that's what we're going to have to do in these days ahead.

I think a critical date is going to be January 20, 2025 at the inauguration of whoever emerges as the president after that election, because the people who say the last election was stolen, although that's not true, are really trying to steal the next through voter suppression, gerrymandering and all the rest. So there is a crisis of democracy I think unlike any time that we've seen. And history is going to record how faith stood. So I hope the media covers not just the Trump white evangelicals who are loud, and are threatening violence, inciting racism, and encouraging fear. Fear leads to hate, and leads to violence. Fundamentalisms in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, their fundamentalisms always are religions of power and control. They use fear, leads to hate, leads to violence. On the other hand, the gospel calls us together in a common good. And I think that's going to be a decisive test of faith as well as democracy in these next few years ahead.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, in the past, faith-led movements for justice and peace used nonviolent open civil disobedience. And that's not happening now. When I interviewed the late Reverend William Sloane Coffin, it was really the last interview he gave. And the war in Iraq was exploding and all the criminal wars of aggression by Bush and Cheney were underway. I asked him, "What would you do?" And he said, "Nonviolent civil disobedience in congressional offices on Capitol Hill." You don't see that anymore. You don't even see it outside. There's a passivity, a lethargy, a sense of resignation, a sense of futility that pervades faith-based movements.

**Jim Wallis:** There really is a difference in the Black churches and white churches here. And a number of us — Bill Coffin was a friend of mine as well, and I've been arrested 25 times. My students always ask me how many times, and leading up to the war in Iraq, we had significant opposition to the war in Iraq from the church side. Even denominations, even the Pope came out against the war in Iraq. First time we had such opposition to a war before it started, and we lost. We lost that battle and lost that debate. So there is a confrontation that has always been made, faith to power, telling the truth to power, that goes back a long way but is still active; it's still going on. Civil disobedience still occurs. I think more is going to occur in these next few years. And we have a battle — there's a god in the Bible in Leviticus called Moloch. Gary Wills talked about this after Sandy Hook. Moloch was a god who demanded the sacrifice of children. Moloch is now our guns. I've got a call this afternoon with faith leaders across the country — Christian, Jewish, Black church, Islamic. All of us, there will be a strong statement made about guns from this group, I will be in Washington next week, and I know in the days ahead, I can just predict there's going to be civil disobedience by people of faith around the issue of guns. So I think the tests for us right now lie ahead. I've been a part of those movements — in fact, one story that never came out in the press because we succeeded, we threatened civil disobedience in every congressional office if Ronald Reagan invaded Nicaragua. We had 80,000 people who signed a pledge of resistance to do that. And it was a significant factor that deterred the invasion of Nicaragua by the Reagan Administration. So that has happened before, it's going to happen again.

**Ralph Nader:** Let's broaden the focus here on corporate power. And throughout history, over 2000 years, every major religion warned its adherents not to give too much power to the merchant class, because the merchant class was singularly focused on money, on profits, and they would run roughshod on far more important humane values in their quest for gold. Now we have the greatest level of corporate supremacy in our entire history. The corporations are strategically planning almost everything that you can call organized society. They're planning our tax system and they're heavy into the elections, they're heavy into distorting public budgets to corporate welfare, they love the military budget and work hard to expand it so it's over half of the entire federal government's discretionary budget and it's unaudited. They have had a pernicious influence on the food, the processed foods, the use of land, the exploitation of the commons, the public lands, the environment. You name it, they're there. They're even raising our children, more and more hours per day while they look at the screens. Now, you have two sons and you've spent 22 years managing Little League. Are you concerned as I am and others about the hijacking of these children, bypassing their parental guidance and control, and exploiting them for six to eight hours a day on the iPhone? And when not looking at the iPhone, they're listening to corporate direct marketing to kids, which once was taboo, selling them violent programs, junk food and drink, which damages their health in a whole variety of documented ways. Do you see any organized religion making that a priority? Because whenever commercialism dominates civic values, that's almost a sure sign of concentrated authoritarian dominated societies and the decay of our humane culture.

**Jim Wallis:** Well, as you know, I'm with you on the power of corporate culture and have always been. I think something that we just put together on the Child Tax Credit, which is the thing that will most impact child poverty, I got a broad coalition there, including the National Association of Evangelicals, Catholic Charities, broad coalition. And we've made a statement that when they're cutting corporate taxes and cutting programs to the poor, that's immoral. So I got these church leaders to speak against corporate tax cuts directly. So I think, in fact, my conversion passage, my text that brought me back to my faith was the Matthew 25 text, Dorothy Day's conversion text too, of the Catholic Worker (Movement?), where Jesus says, "I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was naked, I was sick, I was a stranger, I was sick, I was in prison," and then they said, "Lord, when did we see you hungry, and thirsty, and naked, and a stranger?" The word there is immigrant, "and in prison," and he said, "As you've done to the least of these, you've done to me." It was the most radical thing I ever read, and that brought me to my faith. And I later met Dorothy Day, a mentor for me, and that was her text too.

So to me, that runs against all of the corporate power that you just talked about. So there have always been people of faith standing up to that corporate power, not just nationally, but in places where — if you put a map of all the toxic waste dumps on top of a map of where poor minority families live, it's the exact map. And so those things are coming to awareness, and particularly in the young generation. I've got two boys and I was their Little League baseball coach for 22 seasons, 11 years, and we have these conversations all the time. And they're very conscious of how, in fact, social media keeps their generation captive. And the good news is my students who I get to teach all the time at Georgetown, they are. There is a student movement now that is conscious of that. There are also, as you saw, even the kids killed in Uvalde, some of them were expressed environmentalists at 9 and 10 years old.



So, I am feeling that there's a generational shift going on in the churches. I'm going to call it, to follow Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who stood up to Nazism and who was hung in a concentration camp, I'm going to call it a confessing church. A confessing church confessing Christ over and against the German church, over and against the white Christian nationalist church. And I'm going to call this a remnant church, a confessing remnant church, where a critical minority of white, young believers are joining with Black and Brown church leaders to literally create a new American church. In this new role at Georgetown, I have an academy of faith and justice, and we're having our first week in about two weeks. And they're all seminarians from all kinds of seminaries, young pastors, and the subtitle of it is "Academy of Faith and Justice", subtitle, "Training the Leaders for a New American Church", which we literally need a new American church.

So all those things are the context in which corporate powers, the context in which faith has to be lived. I mean, it's all from the Bible. Timothy says, "The love of money is the root of all evil." That's a pretty radical statement. The love of money, the corporate world, is the root of all evil. And so that's, in fact, the case with our social media. It's the algorithms of profit, which are leading all of this. I tell social media people, you got to understand the algorithms of racism. The way that Zuckerberg and Facebook draw people to themselves, they use algorithms of selfishness, not algorithms of the common good. So there's an ethics issue underneath all of this.

**Ralph Nader:** We're talking with Jim Wallis, author, theologian, civic activist of many decades. Jim, these people have to be called out by name. I think one of the problems why faith-based justice and peace movements don't get enough attention is they don't call people out by name, these corporations. Tim Cook of Apple controls his board of directors. He arranged for a compensation package this year that comes down to \$825 a minute, \$50,000 an hour, 40-hour week, 50 weeks a year. And his workers are making — they just got a raise to \$20, maybe to \$22, they were working for \$17 an hour. Now, as a civic leader, how would you call out, if you wish to call out somebody like Tim Cook of Apple, who is supervising a million surf workers in China, who is miserly as a corporation and as a billionaire, who doesn't spend money to recycle and detoxify the used-up products that he has sold, and he is considered a leading corporate manifestation of modern technology, and is very little criticized. What would you say?

**Jim Wallis:** Well, I actually called out those people once at Davos. They had me come and speak, and he was in the room. They were all in the room. And I said, when the contrast between corporate CEO salaries and average workers went from like 25, 30 to 1, which is still the case in parts of Europe and Japan, to like 500 to 1, I said, theologically, religiously, there is no justification for that, and that's a sin. Corporate salaries on that level are a sin. I said it at Davos. So I think that has to be called out and it has to be called out by name. And I think if the gospel is going to be respected by a new generation of young people; many of them don't practice religion. They're in the category of the "nones," the none of the above; they check that affiliation of their religious identity, "none of the above," I love the "nones" because they're calling out the right stuff. and they respect religion when it calls out the right stuff. So there are classes in these events because until we call out sin — and I did a whole book, you probably know it, called *America's Original Sin*, on in fact, the racialized slavery from the beginning that was a founding feature of this country from the start. And it's all corporate and government policy. My dad came back from World War II on a navy ship in the Pacific and we got an FHA loan for our first house, a GI Bill for his education, and the government made my family, with housing and

education, middle-class. That's what it means, middle-class. My government made us middle-class. None of the Black sailors on his ship, no Black GIs got a GI Bill or an FHA loan. So we ended up in this white neighborhood lived in by GIs, heads of three-bedroom ranch houses, all the same, in a white school and a white church.

So the racialization was deliberate, as was policy and redlining, and Detroit that made sure it happened. So this is all racialized. And so until we say these are religious issues, not just political ones, they're religious issues, gospel issues, we may have missed the point. Now, I've, for the whole 50 years of Sojourners, we tried to make that point, and now, as Rafael Warnock says, "I heard you retired, but I see you've just rewired a church." So I've rewired it saying all those things. The hope that I feel is two things. One, there is a new generation that's rising up. There are particularly a whole new generation of young Black church pastors who are all going to be speaking to my group next week, who are calling out by name and because of the issue of faith, all these questions. And I think a number of institutional leaders, even on the evangelical side, they're agonizing. They don't know what to do because they see what's happening to their people. And so they're going to have a test of conscience, a test of faith. And I've sat with them, talked with them, and they know where I stand. And I think it's a call out time. It's a call out time, calling out the sin, that's what I would call it – America's Original Sin – and calling out what they're doing now to democracy, to the common good.

**Ralph Nader:** Young listeners may not know. In the Fortune 300 in the 1940s, the CEO was paid average 10 to 13 times the wage of the worker. And in 1980, it went up to about 40 times. Now it's between 300 and 500 times, and of course, people like Tim Cook are even higher ratio. So it's very important to show the degrading of these kinds of norms because there is no requirement either way in the last 70 years about CEO pay. It's just that the unions and the auto industry were stronger and they wouldn't allow the heads of General Motors to get away with this kind of banditry and they're now weak. The countervailing forces have been weakened. Consumer and poverty have been weakened vis-à-vis the ascendancy of corporate power, enhanced, of course, by the internet and by all these technological manipulations and controls. You put out, as head of a coalition of Christian leaders in late May, there was a full page ad in POLITICO Magazine to extend the Child Tax Credit, which expired, I believe, at the end of January. It was about, average, \$300 and went to about 60 million children regardless of the political labeling of their parents. But in reading the press coverage, you didn't call out the main reason why it was not extended, which is the Republicans in Congress. Is there a limitation on who you call out when it comes to fingering who the real opponent is in Congress and who refused to extend the Child Tax Credit, which reduced child poverty considerably, as you put out in your press release?

**Jim Wallis:** Well, I have never hesitated to call out the Republicans and right now, the whole stopping of what we were going to do there, which is the CTC, was all done by Republicans time and time again. We've got to call the, and I don't know the press in the ad, we talked about why the Child Tax Credit, when it was in the reconstruction package, reduced child poverty by 46% in that year, and then that dissipated, it expired. And no stories, no conversation, no media coverage of the families, how their poverty rose again because of Republicans blocking the Child Tax Credit. I've called out Manchin. It's not just Republicans. It's Manchin to Democrats. The Democrats could pass the Child Tax Credit just with democratic votes were it not for Joe Manchin. So I've called him out. I'll call him out again. Joe Manchin is responsible for child

poverty in this country, period. And what's happening in West Virginia, white Appalachian kids are suffering because of Joe Manchin, Senator Joe Manchin. I've called him out, I'll call him out again. So we are calling Republicans out. Right now, it is Republicans who are preventing gun safety. Republicans have blood on their hands, let me be blunt. The Republican senators have blood on their hands. They're responsible for the kids killed in Uvalde, responsible for the grandmother shot in Buffalo. We would have gun safety tomorrow, were it not for Republicans. Republicans have blood on their hands. And we've got to say that again and again and again. And so, we've got to call for the right things we believe. And the statement we'll talk about today on this call with faith leaders, we'll say what we're for--the obvious, commonsense, gun safety laws that are necessary to keep our kids from being killed, but we got to say who we're against, who is blocking this, who is responsible for it. So I've done that most of my life and will continue to at Georgetown. We've even got a better platform to do it. And I think there's a new generation rising up who is willing to do that. And unless you say who is responsible for this, you can't just say this is wrong, so I'll call out those Republicans and I'll call out Joe Manchin, in particular. Joe, I'm calling you out.

**Ralph Nader:** And one last suggestion before we let you go, Jim Wallis, and we want you to tell our listeners how they can connect with you as well. Some of us are very concerned about what these corporations are doing that they never dared to do a few decades ago, and that is exploit children. What's the prospect of something major being organized on this? I think you will get a lot of conservative and liberal parents behind this effort because they're losing control of their children?

**Jim Wallis:** Well, it's interesting that many of these corporate executives in Silicon Valley don't let their kids watch the screens.

**Ralph Nader:** Yes, exactly, exactly.

**Jim Wallis:** I'm going to call out Zuckerberg here and Facebook for being responsible for the increasing suicide rates among young teenage girls. That's a fact. The data shows that. They've taken no responsibility for it. We had this conversation last night in my house. I've got two boys; one finished college, and one is a freshman in college. And we have these conversations all the time. In fact, I overheard my older son talk to the 12-year-old brother of my son's fiancée, warning him about social media. So there's a whole conversation that has to take place among young people themselves. I see it happening but, in fact, I said last night in our family conversation, the only way to deal — you can't regulate these big internet corporations. You have to break them up. You have to break them up. So my son's actually working at the DOJ in antitrust before he goes to law school. You've got to break up these corporations. And how is a whole conversation I'd love to have with you sometime.

But these corporations are in fact — when you see kids, a lot of kids sitting in a room together and not even, any of them, talking to each other but just all looking at their phones, how many parents don't know how to have conversations at night with their kids over dinner because they're all looking at their phones. And it all is based on these algorithms I talked about before, which are nothing but profit algorithms. I mean, Facebook is living with the love of money is the root of all evil. Their algorithms are profitable and there wouldn't have been a I'll just say it bluntly there wouldn't have been a January 6 without Facebook. It wouldn't have happened. All that was out there, all the proud boys, all those folks were out there, but Facebook let them get organized.

So this area of corporate control, this sector, which is now out of control, is perhaps the most dangerous sector out there. I would have talked about the military-industrial complex, agreeing with even Dwight Eisenhower back in the day, as you recall. But now I think this whole high-tech, it's all in the phones, life is on the phones, and it's controlled. It's controlled by algorithms. And it's not just about how to get your family together for vacations. Zuckerberg used this apparently to get dates for himself. But this is a profitable enterprise now that's trying to control the population on phones with profit algorithms. And I think there are racial algorithms, too. So, yeah, I don't see anybody taking them on the way they should be taken on. And this could be a role the faith community could play, taking on these internet goliaths in Silicon Valley. And my fear, Ralph, I have a phone here, I have reached people on Twitter, I do all that to get my message out there too. But I think social media could contribute to the downfall of democracy. We now live in parallel universes. You and I remember back in the day when the Watergate hearings were about to begin, we all had the same question. We all were watching the same new shows, the same narrative. The question was, what did the president know, and when did he know it? We all had the same question. We were watching the hearings to see the answer to that question. And the answer to that question, he knew a lot, and he tried to cover it up in the tapes. And Republicans went to him and said, "You have to resign, Nixon." Now, a whole lot of the country won't even watch these things, will say the whole thing is fake news. Anything that's in the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* or on any cable network, they'll say it's fake news. We live in parallel universes where people aren't agreeing on any of the facts, any of the narrative. That scares me more than anything else--people who are only participating in their own websites, in their conspiracies and all of that. And they're not even listening to the facts, Ralph that you have or I have. And whether the nation watches these hearings, and whether they make any difference, is going to be critical to the future of our very democracy.

**Ralph Nader:** We're almost out of time. Steve, David, do you have any last-minute questions for Jim Wallis, or comments?

**Steve Skrovan:** Yes, I do. Reverend Wallis, doesn't organized religion have the same DNA as the modern corporation? They're both top-down authoritarian institutions that tend to preference their own survival and the ability to make money over either their flock or their customers. How do you expect organized religion to fight corporate power when they're so simpatico?

**Jim Wallis:** Well, when I was 16, I gave up faith because of the failings of the church. And I went to university and became involved in the student movements of my time, and I found that after reading all my — like we all were, I was a Marxist one day, anarchist the next day. I was reading all that stuff. And then I came back to Jesus and I got converted to be a disciple of Jesus. So all you say about the institutions is real. Every single renewal, revival movement since Constantine when the Roman Empire took over Christianity and made a state religion, that's what institutionalized it all. Every revival movement since has been breaking from that, breaking from that corporate control and going back to the original message of the gospel. And the first 300 years of Christianity were very radical on economics, on war and peace, on bringing people together across lines of race and gender and class. We were very radical for 300 years and we got taken over by the Roman Empire, literally. And so all the movements that I've been a part of, every revival movement, every charismatic renewal, every Catholic sisters order, we've all been fighting that institutionalization and control over religion to go back to the original message of the original messenger. So that's what I'm still doing after all these years.

In fact, I would say racialized fascism in this country that's growing needs churches to succeed. Racialized fascism needs churches to succeed. Conversely, only the churches could stop it. Conversely, only churches. So I'm on the side of trying to stop it by calling institutionalized, carefully controlled, even corporate-controlled churches back to their faith. It's reclaiming Jesus. That's what I do. So if people want to know more about what we're doing, it's very simple. It's [faithandjustice@georgetown.edu](mailto:faithandjustice@georgetown.edu). You can see when Jamie Raskin is coming or Rafael Warnock. I preached at Rafael Warnock's Ebenezer Baptist Church where he was long before he was a senator. And I love the fact that he's not a former pastor, he says, "I'm a pastor who happens to be a senator." And so the faith of Ebenezer Baptist. I got kicked out of my old white church years ago, as a teenager, over the issue of race, and I got taken in by the Black churches. So the Black churches have always been my spiritual home. They are the most important church in this country, its history. They are the American churches, impact the world more than any other church. They're not perfect. The Black pastors always tell me to not be too easy on them because they get involved in the whole prosperity gospel crap, the American heresy of the prosperity gospel. That's a heresy. That's a sin. That's American, not Bible. But I think that powerful role of a Black church changes personal lives and neighborhoods and communities; that is a holistic message I would say that has impacted the world more than any white church in this country, period.

**Ralph Nader:** So well said, Jim. David?

**David Feldman:** Thank you, Reverend. I want to continue what you were just talking about--messaging. You mentioned earlier the far right pastor, Greg Locke. No shortage of fire and brimstone there. The right cornered the market on sin, preaching against and committing it. Is there any virtue to a religious left that screams to the high heavens that the NRA, health insurance executives, fossil fuel shareholders are all sinners and will burn in hell? Jeremiah Wright comes to mind but he became a political liability for Obama. Would it backfire if we had a religious left that spewed the fire and brimstone of a pastor Greg Locke?

**Jim Wallis:** Well, you'll see I've got a new *Substack* column just out, called God's Politics, and I deal with Greg Locke today in the column. It will be out tomorrow so you'll find me doing that with Greg Locke in tomorrow's *Substack*, *God's Politics* column. Again, I'm going to resist religious left because I don't think we should put ourselves in a binary political economy. The fire, I'll go with. I'm not sure brimstone. But the fire, I'll go with. We need more fiery, passionate preaching. In fact, putting together what Ralph was just now saying, the guns issue has got to be a children's issue. The guns issue must be when Republicans say the slaughter of children or the mass shootings--they said yesterday in a poll--that mass shootings are a necessary price for freedom in a society. That's a sin. So I'm going to put our children over--we talked about being able to shoot prairie dogs yesterday; put my kids over the prairie dogs. But I think Ralph raising this internet power, that's a kid's issue too. And the impact on our children, maybe on guns and the power of Silicon Valley, is I think, Ralph's right, could be a uniting factor for conservatives and liberals. So I want to try to get deeper than the partisan politics. But I've been accused of being a fire-breathing preacher on more than one occasion, and the more of that, the better in these days ahead because what's at stake is everything. Like voting rights. At our opening session with Rafael Warnock and Terry Sewell, we said voting rights is a religious issue. It's about *imago Dei*, all being made in the image of God, Genesis chapter 1 verse 26. It's right there, the

foundation of every human rights movement is that we are all created equally in the image and likeness of God, period. Do we believe that or not?

So that's got to be talked about I think more as an issue of faith than just an issue of politics. So that's what we're trying to do with our senator. We'd love anyone to... the website tells it all but we're just... my two favorite words in my life, faith and justice, when Georgetown offered to put them together, my two favorite words, into a chair in the center, I said, "Oh, yeah, I'll do that." So I'm a happy camper when there's a center and a chair of faith and justice. And that's what I'm going to do, faith and justice.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, our time is up. We've been talking with Jim Wallis. Thank you for so many decades of putting your faith into multiple practice here and around the world, Jim. We look forward to reading more about your views, your coalition building, the growing support you have among young people. Thank you again for your great life's work, Jim. And the best is yet ahead.

**Jim Wallis:** My blessing to be with all of you. Thanks.

**Steve Skrovan:** We've been speaking with Reverend Jim Wallis. We have a link to his work at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). Now let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

**Russell Mokhiber:** From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your *Corporate Crime Reporter* "Morning Minute" for Friday, June 10, 2022. I'm Russell Mokhiber.

FCA US, formerly Chrysler Group, plead guilty last week to one criminal felony count and will pay approximately \$300 million in criminal penalties as a result of the company's conspiracy to defraud US regulators and customers by making false and misleading representations about the design, calibration, and function of the emissions control systems on more than 100,000 Jeep Grand Cherokee and Ram 1500 diesel vehicles. The company purposely calibrated the emissions control system on these vehicles to produce fewer emissions during the federal test procedures than when customers were driving the vehicles.

For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

**Steve Skrovan:** Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and Ralph. And welcome but I'm sorry, we must be going. That's our show. I want to thank our guests again, Jim Wallis and Bruce Fein. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The Wrap Up". A transcript of this show will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website soon after the episode is posted.

**David Feldman:** Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube channel. And for Ralph Nader's weekly column, you can get it free by going to [nader.org](http://nader.org). For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to [corporatecrimereporter.com](http://corporatecrimereporter.com).

**Steve Skrovan:** The American Museum of Tort Law has gone virtual. Go to [tortmuseum.org](http://tortmuseum.org) to explore the exhibits, take a virtual tour, and learn about iconic tort cases from history. And be sure to check out their online gift shop. You'll find books, posters, and Flaming Pinto magnets and mugs for all the tort fans in your life. That's [store.tortmuseum.org](http://store.tortmuseum.org).

**David Feldman:** You should read *Capitol Hill Citizen*. The pilot issue is out. It's only \$5 to cover the shipping. To order your copy, go to [capitolhillcitizen.com](http://capitolhillcitizen.com). The producers of the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky.

**Steve Skrovan:** Our theme music, "Stand Up, Rise Up", was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon. Our associate producer is Hannah Feldman. Our social media manager is Steven Wendt.

**David Feldman:** Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Thank you, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you, everybody. And David was right. We've got hundreds of readers of the *Capitol Hill Citizen* who told us how much they enjoyed it and what a refreshing newspaper covering what isn't covered on Capitol Hill. So go to [capitolhillcitizen.com](http://capitolhillcitizen.com) for your copy.