

white-american-evangelicalism-racism-bff

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SPEAKERS

Megan Goodwin, Krusty the Clown, Simpsons, Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst, @jaiciesmall on TikTok, Detox



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 00:17

This is Keeping it 101, a killjoy's introduction to religion podcast. This season, our work is made possible in part through a generous grant from the New England Humanities Consortium and with additional support from the University of Vermont's Humanities Center. We are grateful to live, teach, and record on the ancestral and unseeded lands of the Abenaki, Wabenaki, and Aucocisco peoples.



Megan Goodwin 00:39

What's up, nerds? Hi, hello, I'm Megan Goodwin, a scholar of American religions, race, and gender.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 00:45

Hi, hello, I'm Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst, a historian of Islam, race and racialization, and South Asia. You nerds know the drill. We're mixing it up this season, pairing quick and dirty introductions to topics we're not experts in, with interviews with folks who are experts in those topics.



Megan Goodwin 01:05

You heard us talk about some of this before. What with Ilyse's obsession with imperialism, and our season-long focus on race and gender last time, and probably almost everything I say all day, every day. But today we are focused (or as focused as I get anyway, shout out to ADHD medication). We are specifically giving you the rundown on the long and sordid history of white supremacy, American politics and evangelicalism in what's now the United States. Honestly, more vocabulary words than history, because we are not the expert, Professor Anthea Butler, who will be joining us next time is the expert. But we'll get her set up.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 01:43

Can I get an amen? It's time for the LESSON PLAN.



Megan Goodwin 01:48

Amen. If you've been listening to the show for a while you know we both covered the relationship between race, religion, and politics a whole really very lot, both in the context of what's now the United States (that was me) and well beyond/everything else, which is what I made Ilyse do because I'm mean, but it turns out that we are actually never done talking about religion and white supremacy because that shit is both tenacious and pernicious. And there are a lot of angles to come at this issue because, well, see above. So, quick review. Okay, so on episodes 103 on 104. We talk about world, major, minor religions as categories that work alongside European Christian imperialism, and white supremacy to authorize material and intellectual colonialism. Ilyse's whole thing about white euro Christian dudes with pens being just as dangerous if not more dangerous than the dudes who show up with guns.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 02:43

Yeah, I did say that. And then later on in Episode 106, we talked about folks who are religio-racialized, like our fictional friend and well-known comedic beat Ahmed Ahmed, who do not get to opt out of the state-sponsored white Christian violence no matter how atheist he claims he is, particularly in that TSA line.



Megan Goodwin 03:05

Yeah, yeah. We also did some of this in Smart Grrl Summer, the Cults episode talked about (and mostly yelled- I yelled) about how US white supremacy consistently categorizes and

policies religio-racial innovation as cults. So looking at organizations like the Moorish Science Temple, the Nation of Islam, Father Divine's Peace Mission, if you are familiar with Judith Weisenfeld's work, you know that I am completely riffing on her amazing "New World A-Coming."



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 03:33

And also in Smart Grrl Summer we talked about in the Religion and Pop Culture episode how "Not Without My Daughter," both the pulp nonfiction and the film constructs Muslim men as a racial and religious threat, both to white American presumed Christian women, and the American body politic which is also assumed to be white and Christian.



Megan Goodwin 03:54

Sure is. God, that book is so trash and the movie is, like, double trash. Ugh. Anyway, all of Season Two is about race and white supremacy, even the episodes that are nominally about gender. So if this is an unfamiliar concept, please pay particular attention to the episode on intersectionality, which we're building on the work of Professor Kimberle Crenshaw to think about the overlapping way lived experiences of oppression inform and amplify one another.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 04:20

But specifically, in that season, Episode 203 is worth your time for a historical shock and awe on race and religion in what's now the United States, because that'll give you more history if you feel like this episode is lacking. That's the history episode. We've already done it. So if you need it, go check it out. That's the one to listen to. And I guess, duh, you should also listen to our conversation with the Dr. Judith Weisenfeld who's groundbreaking and frankly scintillating work on religio-racial formations continues to rock our world. And- and yeah, there you have it.



Megan Goodwin 04:55

Just- it's so well written like I taught this book last semester and I'm teaching it this semester and I just- I- I worry that my students are not aware that history doesn't always read like this. Like, you all just don't know how good you have it. Anyway, everybody read that book. Alright, just do it. Season Three, we are back, back, back, back, back again. You have already heard from Professor Simran Jeet Singh, who's doing amazing work in so many registers; web programs about becoming less racist, public speaking also about

becoming less racist, and also that like, Sikhs exists. He just wrote a gorgeous children's book about race and religion and ableism, all of which help us better understand racism and religious intolerance. And today we are giving you an introduction not just to race and religion in what's now the US because again we did that one already. But the intimate exhausting, violent relationship of racism, white supremacy and American Christianity, just in time for us to hear from the expert, Dr. Anthea Butler on our next episode about her all too timely new book, "White Evangelical Racism."



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 05:58

The 101 ON TODAY, the section where we do Professor work. Okay, after all that preamble and telling you where you can find other information, other episodes to get in on this, today's thesis is: we're giving you the horrifying, straight dope on why white evangelicalism, racism, and how they're BFF AE, AE, AE.



Megan Goodwin 06:26

And ever, and ever, and ever. But first, some key terms, especially because a lot of folks assume that when we say white supremacy, we mean blatant, obvious, 'only white people are actually people' grossness like we see with the Ku Klux Klan or the Proud Boys or, you know, several of the newest members of the US House of Representatives. I have to say, I did not have "Jewish space lasers" on my 2021 religious hate bingo card, which I guess that one's on me. Hey, IRMF, you- you want to get us started?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 07:01

Yeah, but like, here's the thing. Like, if I had a space laser,



Megan Goodwin 07:05

No, I know.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 07:07

I just-



Megan Goodwin 07:08

[singing] if I had a Jewish space laser.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 07:10

I just- okay. It's funny, cuz that's how Jews survive. It's really not. So let's- so let's focus.



Megan Goodwin 07:18

Yeah, okay.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 07:18

We talked a lot last season about how race is a social construct, we made it up. So here's what we need to say about racism.



Detox 07:27

It's our secret word of the day.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 07:31

Race is meaning we make on and about our bodies. But just because we made it up doesn't mean race isn't real or doesn't have important real world effects and consequences. Race is not just a way we've decided we're different from one another, it's a system of social organization, hierarchy and violence, built to justify and maintain members of one racial category above all others. So racism is the valuation of that distinction of race as a system of social organization, hierarchy, and violence.



Megan Goodwin 08:04

Yes. And that brings us to how racism operates, especially, but not exclusively, in the US, which is to say, white supremacy.



Detox 08:14

It's our secret word of the day.



Megan Goodwin 08:17

So yeah, this includes the Proud Boys and the Klan, and that smug blonde fuck that gerrymandered district in North Carolina just sent to the House, and that other smug fuck that gerrymandered district in Georgia just sent to the House. But if we only understand white supremacy in terms of swastikas and burning crosses, we're frankly, not understanding white supremacy. American racism privileges white people, and qualities associated with whiteness, over all other races and expressions of race. Like other forms of oppression, privilege in whiteness doesn't have to be deliberate, or intentional, or even conscious. White supremacy is not about hearts and minds. You don't have to mean it to buy into it, or perpetuate it, or frankly, to benefit from it. Like all forms of oppression, white supremacy, is about math. How many non-white people in what's now the United States have proportional representation in local state, federal government? How many non-white people in what's now US have access to substantive education, clean air and water, safe and affordable housing? But like flip it, how many non-white people are murdered with impunity by the state? White supremacy is cops buying Dylann Roof fucking Burger King after he slaughtered nine black people in their Church home. While cops murder black people are just trying to go about their days. What supremacy is 12% of black Philadelphians getting vaccinated in a city that's almost 50% black. White supremacy is we have zero black women in the Senate right now. I could go on, but I'm going to stop and take a deep breath and try to calm down so we can finish this episode.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 09:51

Yeah, it's really important that we highlight that white supremacy is not just men in sheets and I want to keep underlining that because it's- it's the simple little things like wanting to live in a "good" neighborhood: all that loaded crap behind "good-" there you have it, white supremacy, okay? Because you and I know what "good" is code for, even if you want to make the argument that it's good schools, clean neighborhood, like, nice homes. Yeah, what do you think redlining, and segregation, and all of that made possible? So even in these common ways that we think about moving about our day, it's- it's coated in systems of white supremacy, again, whether you mean it or not, whether you get that you're benefiting from it or not. Whether you get that you're not benefit- benefiting from it or not. You don't have to believe it for it to be facts.



Megan Goodwin 11:00

True story. I also- I think it's important given that like, you and I both went to graduate school in the American South, Ilyse, and I think it is easy for folks who live in the American north as we now do, to assume that this is like a southern problem, and it is not. The most

segregated school district in the country is in New York City. This problem is everywhere. This problem, white supremacy, is mainstream.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 11:25

Yes.



Megan Goodwin 11:27

Okay, last definition for today, evangelical.



Detox 11:30

It's our secret word of the day.



Megan Goodwin 11:33

So technically, I was just gonna- let's just start- start picking fights. It's fine, whatever. Technically, all Christians are evangelical because Christianity is rooted in imperialism. Do not at- just is. Do not at me on this, I am correct. Yes I am! Evangelicalism at its root is the directive to go forth and make everybody Christian. And I'm not even going into like Constantine here. I am, however, and frankly, in direct contradiction to my own Catholic upbringing, going to quote scripture, right, y'all. Mark 28 : 18-19, New Revised Standard Version.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 11:46

You are. Wait time out- what is happening on this podcast right now?



Megan Goodwin 12:06

I know right- I know right?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 12:08

Okay. Okay.



Megan Goodwin 12:09

Look, if they're gonna make me TA for Hebrew Bible, I'mma bust it out.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 12:13

Alright, go for it. Go for it.



Megan Goodwin 12:14

If I have to- if I have to TA for early Christianity, this is what had happened. So Mark 28: 18-19, New Revised Standard Version, because that is the version that Benny assigned. "And Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." Y'all can argue about what kind of empire Jesus and his followers intended or intend to establish, but 'make disciples of all nations' is an imperialist directive. That is the Borg, is what.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 12:46

Yeah, I mean, listen, I- I will talk more about this later, perhaps, but as a non-Christian, I can tell y'all that while y'all split hairs over being like a Methodist, or a Catholic, or a nun or whatever, you're imperialists, let's get out of here, because you all want to convert us at the end of the day. And even if you personally don't want to do that, I ask you, have you been present for a sermon on Good Friday? Because I have, and it ain't cute.



Megan Goodwin 13:18

Oh no. I'm sorry.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 13:19

Yeah.



Megan Goodwin 13:20

I'm sorry that that happened to you.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 13:21

Interfaith work is not, as a Jew, going to a church on Good Friday. Cool. So sit with that. Alright, keep going. Sorry.



Megan Goodwin 13:31

Okay. Okay. So evangelicalism is the directive to spread the word of Jesus and to- to make the whole world Christian, the end. That's imperial. Okay. The other thing that I need you to know about evangelicalism is that there actually isn't just one type of evangelical, the classic survey is Balmer's, "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory," which is available in both print and TV form. And we will link to in the show notes. But the short version is that evangelicals include people of all races, from all over the world, all along the political spectrum.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 14:05

So, okay, wait, why then, Megan, when the news says evangelicals, are they always talking about conservative white supremacists?



Megan Goodwin 14:17

Right, right. Yeah. I mean, the short- the short answer is, is once again, white supremacy, because we (and by "we" here, I mean, both the mainstream media and white Americans) assume that what white people are doing is always the most important stuff going on in the world. But these slightly longer answer requires a little bit of history, which I know history is your thing, but I have dabbled. So if you will permit me.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 14:39

Yeah, go for it. I don't need to know all of the history. That doesn't always have to be my job on this here pod. Hit us with some good historical nonsense.



Megan Goodwin 14:49

Ooh, share the load. Okay. So we have already covered- no? you're not- I- you're-



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 14:52

React to your Lord of the Rings moment?



Megan Goodwin 14:56

That is correct. I was- I was definitely Lord of the Rings bating you- I was like hobbit baiting you- and you just let it play.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 15:00

I know I let it- I let it hang. And then you called me in on like a 'didn't read the social cue moment' I do not want to talk about Lord of the Rings.



Megan Goodwin 15:09

Speaking of white imperialism, anyway.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 15:11

YEAH! Exactly.



Megan Goodwin 15:14

Okay, right. Okay. We already covered the ways that we've literally built race out of European Christian colonialism and imperialism last season. And again, you can go back and check out Episode 203 on that if you want. But there are two more pieces, it's important for y'all to know before we chat with Dr. Butler next time. So thing number one: white supremacy is mainstream, and it is mainstream Christianity. This is a place to remember again, that white supremacy isn't just about burning flags and pointy white hoods. In fact, shout out to friend-of-the-pod Kelly J. Baker and author of "Gospel According to the Klan," we have pretty compelling evidence that while very few Americans were members of the second Klan, the anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic, antisemitic and decidedly anti-black violence of the Klan had extremely widespread approval among so-called "normal" Americans and Christians.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 16:06

Bleugh.



Megan Goodwin 16:07

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Poor Kelly's been yelling about this fully 10 years now.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 16:12

Yeah.



Megan Goodwin 16:13

So let me say this again, slowly and clearly, anti-blackness is everywhere in mainstream Christianity. Regardless of whether individual Christians think that they themselves are racist. I do not care if there isn't a racist bone in your body. Did you vote for a genocidal, outloud, and inprint white supremacist wannabe autocrat to get so-called pro life judges on the bench? Did you call that man the most pro life president in history, while record numbers of black people were slaughtered by agents of the state? While brown asylum seekers were tear gassed, illegally detained and separated from their family members? Because many, many, many Christians did. And that shit is white supremacist.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 16:54

Alright. Take- take a deep breath. This is fire up material.



Megan Goodwin 16:59

Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 16:59

That's the first thing.



Megan Goodwin 17:01

Yes.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 17:03

Mainstream Christianity is white supremacy. Mains- white supremacy is mainstream Christianity. That's the first thing.



Megan Goodwin 17:11

Yes.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 17:11

What's- what's thing number two? I'm almost afraid to ask but- but I also want to know, tell me.



Megan Goodwin 17:17

I will, thing number two, the kind of white evangelical racism Dr. Butler talks about in her book, and on the news, like once a week now, that might actually even be a slow week for her. But this kind of white evangelical racism, obviously has long, deep roots in American history. And we've already been over the fact that religion is politics. And that goes triple for Christianity in what's now the United States. But also, to really get to how white evangelical racism is operating now, you have to know a little bit about the politics of the 1960s through the 1980s. My career is so much more about Reagan than I had anticipated.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 17:53

That is a- It's a stone cold bummer.



Megan Goodwin 17:56

Really. Damn it. Anyway, picture it: 1973, we have passed an Immigration Act almost a decade ago that radically transformed the racial, ethnic, religious, economic landscape of what's now the United States. We passed the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act meaningfully and franchising 1000s of Americans of color, and especially black voters, native voters don't really get fully enfranchised until 1978. That is for another day. Birth control is legal for both married and unmarried couples. Interracial couples can now get married, gay people are insisting that they're people, like, out loud and in public. And now in 1973, abortion is legal. Conservative, white Christians are freaking the fuck out. We don't have time to get into the nitty gritty of how all of these issues coalesce. But I am going to link you to some work by Gil Frank about how the religious political battle about reproductive rights is directly informed by white supremacy. For now, let me just say that we see an unprecedented coalition, a confederacy if you will, of different kinds. Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 18:59

Boo. But also yay, that was really good. Keep going, I'm sorry.



Megan Goodwin 19:04

The boo-yay is where I live.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 19:06

Yeah, I know.



Megan Goodwin 19:08

Okay, so this horrible Rice Krispie treat of different kinds of Protestants, Catholics (some Catholics, not a whole lot, more Catholic-thinking the cath- more Catholic thinking than Catholic people, honestly) the odd Jew, all coalescing into a powerful, cohesive political machine that became the Moral Majority and the New Christian Right. And a white racist evangelical preacher, Jerry Falwell was at the head of that movement. When we talk about the Religious Right now, this is arguably the moment of its birth. This is the moment where a specific set of white conservative, racist, homophobic, misogynist "ethics" (please hear my scare quotes around "ethics") become not just Christian, but American values. And these are the folks that put Reagan, both Bush's, and 45 in the White House. We see their legacy at work not just in presidential campaigns, but also in the violent and explicitly white Christian supremacy attempt to see the Capitol building on the sixth of January 2021. And I spent, frankly, too much of last night watching AOC talk about what it was like to live through that experience as a survivor of sexual assault. So I am going to stop there.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 20:12

Okay. Okay. You did a lot of expository work. So how about I do some of the summation?



Megan Goodwin 20:21

Yes, please. Thank you.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 20:22

First up nerds, racism and white supremacy aren't about your feelings. We have said this across episodes, we've said this many times, I will say this till I'm blue in the face in any and all of my classes, you do not have to feel like those are real for those to be real. You do not have to feel like you participate in them for you to be either benefiting from those

systems or not benefiting from those systems, being done violence to. So these things are not about your feelings. Secondly, Christianity is inherently imperialist. And we can split hairs over how and when and which groups do what when, but at its core, Christianity-



Megan Goodwin 21:09

All nations! Go forth and-! All nations. Sorry.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 21:13

Yes. Yes. It's imperialist. Point, the third, white supremacy is mainstream Christianity. And I'm doing a dramatic deep breath here, because I think we need to sit with that one the hardest.



Megan Goodwin 21:31

Yeah, I think, folks who are both Christian and honestly, even folks who are Christian and dedicated to dismantling white supremacy, dismantling anti-black racism, struggle here. I see that struggle happening in public, and especially on Twitter, where you want to say, "Well, okay, that's not really Christianity." We're gonna come back to that one, but- but yes, the fuck it is, it is also Christianity.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 21:58

Yeah. Yeah. And point the fourth, to sum up, white evangelical racism is and has been a driving political force in what's now the United States since the 1970s. This is not a baby movement anymore. And while it's relatively recent historically, these are whole generations at this point, whole presidencies, whole generations, where white evangelical racism is in the driver's seat in the United States.



Megan Goodwin 22:30

Yes, yes. And again, this isn't to say that white evangelical racism, it hasn't been active in American politics since the beginning of the US because, of course it has, but the coalescing of the specific kind of white supremacist, anti-reproductive justice, political powerhouse, really is traceable to that moment in the 1970s, where we see the New Christian Right, the Moral Majority emerge.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 22:57

It's this particular branch on the family tree, and it's a real strong one.



Megan Goodwin 23:01

Yeah, yeah. Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 23:04

Oof. Well, on that note. The only one who could ever reach me was STORYTIME.



Krusty the Clown 23:24

Hey, kids, it's story time.



Megan Goodwin 23:28

The sweet talking son of a storyteller?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 23:31

Oh, yeah.



Megan Goodwin 23:33

That is-



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 23:34

You will not con me into singing on this podcast. I see what you tried to do. Not all of us have the range.



Megan Goodwin 23:41

It is one of my karaoke go to's, so I will say that.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 23:44

I'm well aware. I do not sing, and I do not sing in public. So good try, but you didn't get to me.



Megan Goodwin 23:51

Fine. Today's storytime is an excerpt from James Baldwin's "Letter From a Region in My Mind" first published in the New Yorker in 1962. And later included in a short essay collection the Fire Next Time. Baldwin was a gay black man who grew up in early 20th century Harlem, who wrote in unflinching eviscerating ways about anti-black racism in what's now the United States. He is without exaggeration, one of the greatest and most important thinkers and writers in the US and elsewhere of all time. In this piece, he writes: "White people hold the power, which means they are superior to blacks (intrinsically, that is: God decreed it so) and the world has innumerable ways of making this difference known and felt and feared... I am called Baldwin because I was either sold by my African tribe or kidnapped out of it into the hands of white Christian named Baldwin, who forced me to kneel at the foot of the cross. I am, then, both visibly and legally the descendant of slaves in a white, Protestant country, and this is what it means to be an American Negro, this is who he is- a kidnapped pagan, who was sold like an animal and treated like one, who was once defined by the American Constitution as 'three-fifths' of a man, and who, according to the Dred Scott decision, had no rights that a white man was bound to respect. And today, a hundred years after his technical emancipation, he remains- with the possible exception of the American Indian- the most despised creature in his country." Okay, first, please pause this podcast, and if you haven't already, go read everything James Baldwin has ever written. We will wait. Okay, we're back. IRMF, talk to me about this piece?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 25:41

Yeah, well, first of all, I'm glad that everyone actually paused to go read Baldwin, there is more than we could do in a lifetime in this pod or off, which isn't to say that he's perfect, but it is to say that he's a freaking genius. And it's the whitest white violence that we don't teach Baldwin to K-12 students or frankly, even evenly in colleges and universities.



Megan Goodwin 26:03

Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 26:04

So I think that the most gripping piece about this Baldwin quote that you gave us is how solid he is in this connection between whiteness and Christianity, without negging his black church, kin or comrades. He just sees this history we've been on for about a year now, where modern imperialism is inextricable from whiteness and Christianity, period. The conquering, the enslavement, the violence, the genocide, all in the name of and under the banner of God. And not just God, though, like- like Jesus specifically. And so I think the takeaway from this segment or this this quotation, this excerpt that you gave us, is: that impulse, that way of reading Christian text or history as affirming of white supremacy, that hasn't gone anywhere. It's alive and well, and frankly, it thrives in the United States. But- but I'll stop there. He said it better than I could.



Megan Goodwin 27:03

Yeah. Yeah. One of the approximately one million things I so appreciate about this piece is the way that Baldwin grapples with the complexity of live religion. Like he grew up in the Church, he preached, he realized that he couldn't be his full self in that community and he left, but he still talks about the space and the music and the spirit of his church with such longing, while also insisting that we recognize the white supremacy at the core of American Christianity. Baldwin also in this piece says that if the concept of God has any validity or use, it can only be to make us larger, freer and more loving. If God cannot do this, then it's time we got rid of him. And I just I think about that sentence all the time.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 27:48

Yeah, I- I love Baldwin, for many reasons, but so much for this line. It's an affirmation of and a demand for radical love while also not losing its teeth. He's still a killjoy here. It's just not- it's not just that God should be better than this, it's that if the concept of God isn't, then to hell with it, do better! So I find that line to be as aspirational as it is just like flat out truth.



Megan Goodwin 28:20

Yeah. Just the best.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 28:29

You've heard from us, now hear about us, It's PRIMARY SOURCES.



Megan Goodwin 28:34

[singing] primary sources!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 28:36

Oy vey. I mean, okay. Primary sources in an episode about white supremacy and Christianity and evangelicalism being BFFAE. Feels like, rough, but I guess- I guess this is where I try to call people in, instead of only calling them out? Question mark. So I'm calling to you, white Christian listeners, because it isn't just about evangelicals, this political bloc, though, like every study, every poll, every common sense glance at everything around us, tells us this particular subset of Protestant American Christianity is of course, particularly virulent in its anti-blackness, antisemitism, anti-Islamic nature. But I guess I don't- I guess I just want to say out loud that I don't feel like reliving the various experiences I've had with white Christians, and not just that virulent, evangelical subset, like loads of well meaning, nice white Christians, being insanely antisemitic. Right, like I just don't always feel like airing that dirty laundry, and reliving that trauma in order for it to be heard, particularly these few weeks after literal Nazis stormed the Capitol of the United States of America wearing shirts that not just glorified, but called for another Holocaust. So I'm just gonna say that today, in this primary sources, that even our dear nerds, like- like I'm not going to give you this laundry list of the Nazis that show up in my inbox at my job, and the times that students have given me Bibles during classes, or the lists I've ended up on as a "jihadi." Because why would we respect Muslims? Or the find Jesus or else, like vaguely threatening and sometimes out loud threatening emails I get regularly. It's- I guess, it's not my job to convince you that this hate is spurred by Christianity right this moment in this section. But I am calling you in for a task. Like go get your people, talk to your wild uncle if he can be talked to or to be honest with you cut that family member the fuck off. Don't be kind to racists, because frankly, de-platforming starts at home.



Megan Goodwin 31:06

Yeah. Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 31:09

That's all I got. It's a little grim. But yeah, sorry. Primary sources aren't always lovely iterations of why my life's violences teach me things. Sometimes it's just anger.



Megan Goodwin 31:21

Yeah, well, yeah, we- we should be angry, right? Yes. Speaking of things that make me angry, my primary source is the fact that every time our 45th president did something horrible and claimed the Christians supported him. Liberal white Christians did a lot of yelling about how that wasn't really Christianity. And I, as you might have imagined, did a lot of yelling back. So I have many threads about this. I- the one that I pulled out for today was me yelling at renowned author Don Winslow for calling 45 a fake Christian.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 31:52

So I'll link to it, it's a classic.



Megan Goodwin 31:54

I just- like- yeah- Like Don Winslow, I have no idea of his personal religious commitments or lack thereof, like, I have read actually quite a lot of his writing. I have no idea whether or not he's Christian, and the fact that he is adjudicating whether or not someone is a fake Christian is interesting to me scholastically, but politically, who the fuck cares? Yeah, he is a real Christian. Because he says he's a Christian. And because he's been claimed by Christians, all that racist bullshit, yes, it really is Christianity. Is it all of Christianity? No, absolutely not. Christianity is also the Reverend William Barber advocating for valuing and saving the lives as the core. Christianity is also absolutely Cesar Chavez, arguing for farmworkers and calling to the Catholic Church for service. All of that is Christianity, but also- also the homicidal white supremacy. That is also Christianity. So claiming that the racist, sexist classist, imperialist parts of Christianity aren't actually Christian, doesn't fix Christianity. It just tries and fails (please hear the failing of it!) to let Christians off the hook for the complex, violent, imperialist, racist history of Christianity. It's gross. Knock it off.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 33:16

Yeah.



Megan Goodwin 33:18

Primary sources.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 33:19

Primary sources, but Goodwin, alright. We're ornery. What does all of this ornery definitional-setting, history-sharing- What does any of this have to do explicitly with our next episode in this dyad featuring Dr. Anthea Butler?



Megan Goodwin 33:39

Explicitly, the professor Anthea Butler has literally written a book on white evangelical racism called "White Evangelical Racism."



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 33:49

A little bit nail on head.



Megan Goodwin 33:51

She does not pull her punches and we deeply appreciate that about her. She has been a clear consistent voice calling for Christians in what's now the US to take responsibility and atone for white Christian supremacy. She was the instigator of, and a primary organizer for the #ScholarStrike this fall. Wow. which feels like 1400 years ago. But Scholar Strike encouraged those of us in higher ed to use our training to strike back against institutionalized racism, and especially anti-black racism in the academy. She served as a consultant to the PBS series "God in America," a lot about evangelicalism. She was the very first guest on Simran Jeet Singh's "Becoming Less Racist" series for Religion News Service. We will link you to that amazing interview. I- every time I think about that interview, I think about your eldest, Ilyse, saying like "Mama, she's a truth teller" and that's-



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 34:42

Yeah! Yeah, yeah.



Megan Goodwin 34:45

She's also who MSNBC, NPR, NBC, The Guardian and basically any news outlet with half a brain cell, calls when some horrible religio-racist bullshit happens and frankly, we thank her for her service.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 34:59

So basically what you're saying is, she's the greatest of all time.



Megan Goodwin 35:01

Yeah, yeah, she definitely is. She also exemplifies, let's call it a scholarly tension that you also embody, Blanche. That thing where you have to be an expert in your specific field of research, but also you have to know about all the stuff everyone assumes is important, while they never bother to learn anything about your area of expertise. Because Dr. Butler, as her CV shows, has had to know everything about every minute little detail, about every boring white Protestant throughout American history, while also being an expert in African American religious history. While, far, far, far too many experts in American religious history seem to be hard pressed to include African American and black religious thought practices, communities, or leaders in their own work.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 35:50

Yeah, yeah. I mean-



Megan Goodwin 35:53

Pivot!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 35:53

We just adore her.



Megan Goodwin 35:55

We do, she just-



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 35:56

She did it for us.



Megan Goodwin 35:57

Yeah, like, in like- 700 words, maybe- it's whatever. Stay tuned. She's amazing. Pivot! Because this has been tense, I will also say, that Dr. Butler wrote a piece I love about (you

have to say "it wuh-ter" ice. It's not water ice, wuh-ter ice). It's Italian ice to you non-Philadelphians. Specifically, it's about the water ice place around the corner from my sister's apartment, in Philly. And in this piece, she somehow manages to capture regional food ways and language patterns. She critiques the commodification of those food ways and language patterns. And also makes me want to visit my troublesome Irish family members, which like how? That's like-



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 36:33

Greatest of all time. So what that means for us, nerds, is that next time we're gonna chat with Dr. Butler about all of this white evangelical racism soup. But we're glad that now you have the primer before she shows up to school us.



Megan Goodwin 36:56

Yes. But don't pick up your stuff yet, nerds. You've got HOMEWORK.



Simpsons 37:02

Homework, what homework?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 37:03

Remember, you can find everything we're assigning here and a whole lot more in the show notes for this episode. Links, citations, non-paywalled options for stuff you need a university login to get to, and occasionally silly pictures of us. All that, and transcripts, because accessibility isn't just good pedagogy. It's mandatory.



Megan Goodwin 37:22

Yes. Okay, I did so much talking today. But- but you know, I have more- I always have more. So I'm going to recommend Khyati Joshi's, "White Christian Privilege," does what it says on the tin. I also think you should look at Kelly J. Baker's "Gospel According to the Klan," we've recommended that a bunch of times, but also she's got a short essay called "Nice Decent Folks," where she really helped me think through my assumptions that like, 'Oh, these people are nice to me, so they must not also be racist,' which is just not true. And that like, "oh, but they're nice to me" is a lot of how white supremacy continues to flourish. There's a solid piece on the conversation about how Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell talked about conspiracies against God's chosen and the way that those

conspiracies are finding resonance today. I will say that this published in October, so a couple months before the violent assault on our nation's capitol. I promised you Gillian Frank's Jezebel op-ed about the white supremacist thinking and roots of anti-reproductive justice organization. Dr. Butler herself has an interview on the conversation about why white evangelicals support Trump. And just to flip the script a little bit I'm also going to link you to PRI's "The World" series. Some work by Matthew Bell, a UVM religion alum if I remember correctly,



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 38:59

Oh, yeah, you do.



Megan Goodwin 39:01

Mmhmm. Who worked with Sacred Rights, the the program on public scholarship on religion that I direct, about the diversity of global evangelicalism, so you can get a sense of how truly complex and rich lived evangelicalism is beyond the way that American media tends to talk about evangelicalism.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 39:24

Cool, you took so many of what I thought I might have said. So it also highlights some of the things I think might be less known for our nerds. But I also want to just highlight that because this is the episode that precedes the Anthea Butler interview episode. I will put quite a lot of her relevant work in this show notes and in the next episode's show notes, so I'm not going to name all those here, but they'll be there. So here are some lesser known things that I think might be worth reading. Guest of the pod, friend of the pod Simran Jeet Singh has a news article piece called "Evangelism and Religious Supremacy" that gets at all of these issues, but from the perspective of him as a Sikh. The Holocaust Museum has a big old timeline of Christian violence against Jews and spoilers, it's a lot and it's often, but in case you were feeling like we're not that bad, we live in a Judeo-Christian world. And also go read this list of atrocities.



Megan Goodwin 40:24

Yeah, the numbers are not on your side there.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 40:26

No, not even a little. I'm throwing in an Edward Said lecture because Orientalism, or the idea that somehow the West which = Christianity versus the East, which = everything not Christianity. Guess what! That's tied up in Christian supremacy also. So I'll throw in that interview to the late Edward Said. And Baldwin in particular, I know that you cited from the Fire Next Time, but I have- he has this particular great and super challenging piece about black anti-semitism that I think about often it's from 1960s. So the title is "Negros Are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White" and I'm asking you out loud, do not spaz at the title both for the word negros and because claiming that all black folk are antisemitic- This is not what the article is about. It's actually a really thoughtful reflection, and a challenging reflection on how hates are imbricated and how antisemitism and anti-blackness is internalized by Jews and black folk themselves.



Megan Goodwin 41:30

Can I- can I-



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 41:31

With respon- Yeah.



Megan Goodwin 41:33

Can I make one more Baldwin recommendation, because I forgot.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 41:36

Sure.



Megan Goodwin 41:36

It's not- it's not- it's not actually about religion, explicitly, but I think about it all the time. He's got an essay called "Whiteness and Other Lies," where he talks about how people are taught to think they are white. And I think about that sentence approximately once a day. So...




Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 41:51

Yeah, so along with that extra Baldwin, I think if you're not into- if you don't- if you want to read the Baldwin piece on black anti-semitism, and you don't know how to ground it, philosopher Jane Gordon actually has a really good reflection on that piece that I recommend. It's called why should- "What Should Blacks Think When Jews Choose Whiteness?" problematizing how Jews position themselves as not white or white, or siding with white Christian supremacy is- it's complicated and good and smart and depressing because living in racist societies should depress the fuck out of us.

 Megan Goodwin 42:30


Yeah. Yeah, that sounds really interesting. I haven't read that. I'm gonna- I'm gonna put that on my list. That's my homework. Thanks, lady. Join us next time for our Applied Learning conversation with Dr. Anthea Butler, who's going to talk to us about white evangelical racism, which is also the title of her brand new book, we will hook you up with a link to order it, hopefully from your local bookstore or maybe a bookshop, just not Amazon, unless you have to. I don't know it's complicated times and there's no ethical consumption under capitalism. Just do your best.

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 42:59

It's okay. Don't short out. You could always order from UNC press. They usually have a discount every so often. Shout out to our always awesome research assistant, Katherine Brennan, whose transcription work makes this pod accessible and therefore awesome in its own right. Do you need more religion nerdery? You know where to find us. Twitter. The answer is Twitter. Also Instagram if you feel like hitting us up there, but mostly Twitter.

 Megan Goodwin 43:24

You're better about the Instagrams than I do and that I am. You can find Megan, that's me, on twitter @mpgPhD and Ilyse @profirmf or the show @keepingit_101. Find the website at keepingit101.com, drop us a rating or review in your podcatcher of choice and with that...

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 43:44

Peace out, nerds!

 Megan Goodwin 43:47

And do your homework, it's on the syllabus.



@jaiciesmall on TikTok 44:08

"Before the 1970's your church did not care about abortion and in fact believed that life begins at breath. And while I do not think that a bunch of Jesus worshipers should have a fucking thing to say about healthcare when it's not their own bodies, at least that position was consistent with your scripture. But the minute y'all couldn't segregate a fucking school you needed another issue to keep maintaining your political clout" (speaker featured in TikTok is @Awusernameisno1 on Twitter)