

Speaker 1: 0:00

And also

Speaker 2: 0:03

One more thing. All right. Welcome to hyphenated life. I'm Andrew Daugherty and I'm David L'Hommedieu. And on today's episode, we are talking with dr. Bill Leonard and dr. Jonathan Walton, both from wake forest university school of divinity on the topic of the Bible, race and faith amid COVID-19 pandemic in America. And to be fair, you're talking with them as I sit out on the sidelines for this one, because of your relationship with them, which is significant. And mine is none at this point. And I'm looking forward to hearing, hearing the conversation and being able to just sit back and listen as our audience. Well, thank you, David. I think we are really fortunate to have, it's sort of like double the pleasure with both of these gentlemen on today and double the possibility for what civil rights icon, John Lewis calls a good, good trouble. And these are two gentlemen who have made good trouble throughout their lives and their careers. And we are really lucky to have them both on today. Um, I know bill Leonard because he was the Dean at wake forest university school of divinity when I was in graduate school there. So, he was the founding Dean and he was the one he's the reason I went to wake forest because I went to a luncheon one day while I was there. And he told this great story about Frederick Beachner and his call to ministry. And it was like Fred Beachner went to see his blind aunt in long Island. And he goes to her house. He sits down at the end of the table and she says, Freddie, I hear you're entering the ministry. Was this your own idea? Or were you poorly? And, and then in one of his books, he talks about that moment. He said, I had no idea how to answer her in that moment, but looking back, I would say it was not my idea at all. It wasn't anyone else's idea. It was rather a lump in the throat and itching in the feet, a burning in the blood at the sound of rain, a sickening in the heart at the side of misery, never remembered the words of Jesus. Come to me. Those of you who are heavy burdened with heavy hearts and I will give you rest. And so that was kind of his call, his narrative or call to ministry was that. And so bill told that story the first time I was ever at wake forest and I was just like, I have to come to school here. So that was that. And he has become a mentor and friend, and that was the ancient history of the divinity school, but that's how I know bill. And then Jonathan was at Harvard. I met him at Harvard through Baptist news global, and we did a convocation there with , um, Baptist news global. And the whole theme was conversations that matter. So we actually talked about race relations, LGBTQ rights, and immigration. So all these pastors from around the country gathered there and he spoke to our group. And that was a couple of years ago, I suppose. Uh, and then he since went to wake forest, my Alma mater. So all that came together and Jonathan and bill have known each other for a while and been friends for a long time. So today in the Bible race and faith and mid COVID-19 pandemic in America, why, why did we get to that as a topic for, for our guests today? It seems like one of the things that has gone missing in the national conversation right now is where is the Bible in all of this? Because the Bible is being held up by politicians right now as a symbol that goes on interpreted. And so I think it's really important at this time right now, where we have, what many call the pandemic

upon the pandemic, which is the racial pandemic on top of the global pandemic of Corona virus. Where is the Bible and how does that provide an anchor and roots to say something significant and unique in this cultural and global moment? So we have the Bible and race and faith amidst the pandemic upon the pandemic. And what does that mean? And what does that look like to not just use the Bible as a prop, but to actually open it up and see what it has to say about racial subjugation and equity in America and around the world right now, that's what part of what we'll be talking about on today's episode,

Speaker 3: 4:36

[inaudible]

Speaker 2: 4:36

Welcome to hyphenated life. We invite you to join us on this journey to explore the connection of the sacred and the secular that inspires us to become more fully alive.

Speaker 3: 4:57

[inaudible]

Speaker 2: 4:57

Well, welcome to hyphenated life. We're delighted to be joined today by dr. Bill Leonard. He is the founding Dean and professor of divinity Emeritus at the wake forest university school of divinity. Dr. Leonard's research focuses on church history with particular attention to American religion, Baptist studies and Appalachian religion. He is the author or editor of some 25 books, and he is one of the most foremost church historians of our time. Dr. Leonard writes a twice monthly column for Baptist news global in which I also have the luxury of writing for as well. He is an ordained Baptist minister, a member of first Baptist church, Highland Avenue, American Baptist churches USA in Winston Salem, North Carolina. We're delighted to have bill today and also joining us is Jonathan Walton. He is the Dean of the school of divinity at wake forest university, the presidential chair of religion and society, and the Dean of chapel. He was named to be Dean at wake forest university school of divinity in 2019 prior to joining wake forest. He was the Plummer professor of Christian morals and the PUC minister in the Memorial church of Harvard university. Dean Walton is a social ethicist who scholarship focuses on evangelical Christianity and its relationship to mass media and political culture. He's an outspoken advocate for social justice and civil rights. And his work has been featured in such publications as the New York times, CNN time magazine and the BBC dr. Leonard and dr. Walton. It is my total privilege and pleasure to welcome you to hyphenated life. Thank you for joining us. Thank you for that. And thanks very much. So we're going to take a step into some of these larger matters that relate to the Bible race and faith, certainly amid COVID-19 pandemic and America and Bill and Jonathan . One of the, the national partnerships that we have is with BJC often known as historically as Baptist joint committee for religious Liberty. And we've had a series this past summer around Christian nationalism. And so I was just kind of curious when we think about Christian nationalism, that is to say a political ideology that

merges American and Christian identities , uh , in some sense that that is to say, to be a real American, you have to be , uh, more specifically white and evangelicals. Uh, this is something we have wrestled with as a congregation, but when we think about how that is so deeply embedded in the national consciousness, I kind of think about how is it that a middle Eastern dark-skinned rabbi from a refugee family. When we think about Jesus has been so depicted commonly as white Jesus, it's almost like a, in some sense of national mascot for American political interests. I would sort of curious for both of you to take a minute, to say a word about Christian nationalism, many that call it white Christian net nationalism, and how this depiction of a white Jesus in terms of American political interests came to be. And what you see as the consequences being today as a result of it,

Speaker 4: 8:17

That we're talking about a genealogy of white supremacy that we can trace back to the very project of enlightenment. When we talk about what it means to be an autonomous, rational, moral subject, these very definitions and understandings of autonomy and freedom are developing at the exact same time that an ideology of white supremacy and enslavement of Africa is rising to the fore. And so therefore freedom is the opposite of enslavement freedom and whiteness, the opposite of blackness people of color, and it's that sort of genealogy and history, right? That helped produce what we now know as this American project. And so therefore theologically, the kind of sacrality that whiteness has taken over time, right? And whether it's whiteness, whether it's maleness, whether it's varying Protestantism, it's the elevation of these values to being on par with God. And we begin to extract Jesus from his own historical and cultural context. He becomes decent mattify. He becomes a slave owner, the good ship Jesus, one of the great slave ships, Jesus becomes simply a projection of what we value and our varying hierarchy of authority. And so therefore what we see and what we're witnessing today, I mean, it's just a byproduct of what was launched four or 500 years ago.

Speaker 5: 10:31

And as the culture develops, particularly , uh, not only in slavery time, but after the civil war , uh , Christians began to use the Bible and link a biblical texts with particular doctrines relative to white supremacy , uh, and, and the Paul line text , but also , uh, uh, Avery Bible texts such as the Mark of Cain and the curse of ham were all utilized to place , uh, people of color or Africans and African Americans, particularly , uh, in secondary roles as less , uh, lesser figures in what was often called the order of creation. And that white supremacy was at the pinnacle of this order of creation as set forth by God and, and preachers use those texts, particularly in the South to undergird this idea of white supremacy , uh, not only in slavery time, but then having lost the civil war southerners turned to the whole lost cause movement and went back to those texts , uh, not to support slavery, but to support , uh , white supremacy , uh, and, and , uh, a great many famous preachers, Thomas Dixon , white forest university graduate writes to the Klansman and the leopard spots as a way of affirming white supremacy in the post reconstruction South , uh, perpetuating this, this loss caused so that , uh, and, and I'll , uh, really

move from something Jonathan said to say that what we learned from that is , uh , this is one way in which very specifically , uh, one can think they're right about the Bible, but be wrong about the gospel. And even in, in the 20th century , uh, one of the directors of the Southern Baptist foreign mission board, a man named of all things, Dr. Love I'm not making this up developed a missionary plan in which Southern Baptist would first send missionaries to white Europe because the white race was the most suited one chosen by God who evangelize the quote , darker racist . This was a whole plan in the 1920s and thirties that was put forth by the Southern Baptist convention undergirding again, white supremacy. So again and again, these texts from the Bible were used to link the divine will with white supremacy .

Speaker 2: 13:25

Thank you. And when we, when we think about sort of the popular image , uh, earlier this past summer with , uh, president Trump , standing in front of St. John's Episcopal church, holding up the Bible , uh, and , uh, too many , uh, pastors and progresses of our ilk , looking at that and saying, you're using the Bible as a prop, a church is a backdrop holding up a Bible that you don't read in front of a church. You don't attend that has been in some ways sort of interpreted as almost a cover for white supremacy in terms of holding up the Bible and it being kind of an emblematic of this Christian nationalism that we're living and breathing through right now. And so , uh, when you think about as, as sort of a segue to actually opening the Bible and reading the narratives, subversive narratives and scriptures, when you think about the Bible providing for a kind of spiritual root system for , uh , the dismantling of white supremacy, I'm curious about what specific narratives and stories bubble to the top for both of you, when you think about what needs to be really underscored from a biblical frame, not just a cultural or even a social theoretical frame, but in a biblical frame in bill . I think you mentioned this just a little bit, it's one thing to know the Bible and another thing you'd be right about the Bible and wrong about the gospel. So when you think about these biblical narratives, what do you see when we think about caring about racism as a genuinely gospel issue, what narratives really bubble to the top for both of you in terms of being a subversive narrative to this kind of dominant narrative of white Christian nationalism?

Speaker 4: 15:21

Well, first of all, let me just say that in terms of holding, using the Bible as a justification and prop for violence and exploitation is nothing new. I mean, when we talk about violent evangelism, right? I mean, that is there was a history when we, again, it's, whether we are thinking of the conquistadores and Spanish conquest and, and the eradication of native populations in this country done under the auspices of the Bible. When we're talking about the pillaging of West Africa and the North Atlantic slave trade done under the authority and symbol of the Bible, whether we're talking about segregation and its expansion after the, the dismantling of that one moment where we had a multiracial democracy known as reconstruction in the late 19th century, that was done with the sum of the Bible. And so therefore the move that we saw most recently by Donald Trump in front of the Episcopal

church, holding up the Bible while smoke and smoke and tear gas is still in the air. Wow. Uh, nonviolent protestors had been violently cleared out for him to hold up that Bible, Donald Trump was extending a long tradition of this sort of violent abuse, misuse, and exploitation of a symbol that many of us hold a sacred

Speaker 5: 17:14

In terms of text. I go again and again, to Jesus , a sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth , uh , which really is often , uh , deemed his, his , uh, his trial sermon, his beginning sermon he's back home in Nazareth , uh, preaching to the people , uh , like in many of our growing up places have known us the longest, but may understand us the least. And he reads the text. The spirit of the Lord is upon me as a nodded me to preach good news or to bring release for captives recovery of sight blind, who declared the year of the Lord's favor, the acceptable year of the bull and then he puts down the text and they all say, yay, we're so glad you're here. It's wonderful to have the homeboy preaching. And then he begins to preach. And he preaches about race in that first sermon. He says there were all these widows in Israel, but the prophet went to the widow of naan who was not within Israel. He says there were all these lepers and the prophet went not to the lepers in Israel about to name and the Syrian. And so his first sermon is a universal sermon. It reaches out beyond the tribe in which he has participated, even though that is the chosen trot. He extends God's grace. And then, and this is how we know that congregation in the synagogue was Protel Baptists because they became so angry at his sermon that they wanted to throw him off the cliff. That's how I know that's a, that's a Protel Baptist congregation when, when you can start out and they love you, and then you preach the gospel and they're ready to not just throw you out to throw you off the cliff.

Speaker 2: 19:16

You gotta preach the Bible and not the gospel bill. Right.

Speaker 5: 19:19

I guess so, yeah. And, and that to me has always been a sign of that, that openness beyond the tribe .

Speaker 2: 19:31

Hmm . Well, as we kind of think about what we have been seeing since , uh, George Floyd's killing , um, there seems to be in some sense, depending on who you talk to, I suppose, this sort of multiracial, multiethnic, almost capitalization of a movement. And as a pastor, the biggest question, the pastor of a predominantly white church, the biggest question I've gotten in recent months is what can we do? What can we do? What can we do as almost a mantra this, this call to action. Um, and I'm just sort of curious, what would you think about the right and , um, proper role of white allies and what seems to be, not just a moment, but an emerging movement , uh , because historically white folks who look like me , uh, have had a tendency to come in and kind of commandeer or , uh, colonize about how things ought to work. And we have a sense that we don't need to be on the sidelines. We don't need to be silent, but I'm curious to

hear from both of you to reflect a little bit about how you frame and see what is the right calibration of white engagement

Speaker 4: 20:49

And white involvement in this sort of George Floyd, America, where we're looking at, what we hope is not just a moment, but what can really have traction as a movement to quote my former, the late great Congressman John Lewis. When you see something, say something, when you see something that is wrong, when you see something that is evil, when you see something that is unjust, say something, there's this assumption. When I hear my white brothers and sisters say that, well, what can we do when they ask the question? What can we do? There're two assumptions that are work. Number one, there's this assumption that all people of color know what to do. No, it's often we're asking the same questions of ourselves. What can we do? How do we, how do we seek to dismantle these varying levels of structures of injustice when we're all just trying to live right love, right? Raise our children, keep food on the table. It's not the families of color, wake up every day with an armor and a shield saying I'm going out to fight dismantle injustice and racism today. And I've got all the weaponry and tools. No, but It's just a matter of when you see something, say something and taking a stand as imperfect as that stand, maybe. And the second assumption tends to be one of all of a sudden now whites are becoming more enlightened to a cause and we've got, and now, okay, now we've got to figure this out. Well, that's not true either, because guess what? White brothers and sisters have always been involved in varying multiracial alliances toward the cause of justice. Whether we're talking about the abolitionists movement with talking about the period of Rico destruction, we're talking about dismantling segregation in cities like Montgomery and Atlanta. That's how we have a Viola Louisa though. That's how we have a brother James Reeb, right? That's how we have a brother, Jonathan Daniels harvest for the calls. I don't think any of them, if you were to talk to them, they didn't know what they were doing. They hadn't read white fragility, what? They just saw something. And so, they decided to say something, and they got involved, right, as imperfect as their involvement and what might've been. And so that, that is just get involved, figure it out. Let's build the plane while we're in the air, but because guess what, we can't afford to fail, and we can't afford to fall. I've my teacher this very week about this issue has been a young pastor. And I hope I can

Speaker 5: 23:46

Say his name correctly, John onward. Checo, who's at cornerstone church in Atlanta and

Speaker 1: 0:00

Hello, Andrew. Hey David, how's it going? It's good. It's just you and me today. Yeah. We're going to try something on this episode of hyphenated life. Andrew and I are going to lean into a subject that is near and dear to both of our hearts and , uh, and have a special hyphenated life angle for this subject matter. And that subject matter is

Speaker 2: 0:24

Sports. Yes. Sports go Cubs.

Speaker 1: 0:28

Oh , fly the dates. Yeah, go buffs. Who else do we like?

Speaker 3: 0:34

Uh, Broncos of course. Yeah. Bronco. I'm going to say that this is very controversial. Go Cowboys. Oh boy.

Speaker 1: 0:44

Jerry Jones down there in big D Dak Prescott. We love you to the big, the big contract . Well , exactly. I think you got some , um , volunteer in you, right? I do

Speaker 3: 0:58

University of Tennessee Peyton Manning. Do you remember Peyton Manning ? Yeah . Watched him at the university of Tennessee. I would drive my 1983 black Subaru up from Crossville to Knoxville. Whoa , and watched Peyton Manning play college football for my last two years of high school. Wow. And then a year after Peyton Manning became the Broncos quarterback. I , I moved to Denver.

Speaker 1: 1:26

Wow . Their lives are intertwined, really all like this.

Speaker 3: 1:30

If only he would recognize that

Speaker 1: 1:32

For our visual medium here, I'm interlocking my fingers and an interlocking , uh , kind of way that represents Andrew and Peyton .

Speaker 3: 1:42

Yeah. So David and I love sports and I'm not sure we loved politics, but there's an inevitability about , uh, these two subjects and David here loves the Dan Lebatard show.

Speaker 1: 1:58

Right. And , uh , and

Speaker 3: 2:01

I think we do joke on this, uh, in this conversation, right. About you quote, the Dan Lebatard show as much as I quote the Bible. Right? Theologically speaking, theologically speaking.

Speaker 1: 2:14

Yeah. I mean, we, we, uh, it's, it's something that's in our, in our faces and, and the thought occurred to us that on hyphenated life, we're always exploring, um, topics at the intersection of faith, politics, theology music

Speaker 2: 2:32

Part in sports. We're going to throw sports in there now because sports

Speaker 1: 2:37

Just facing a sort of similar conundrum to what we're, what we generally are perusing around in the world of spirituality that, you know, there, there actually, isn't a difference here. You want to make this false dichotomy, a false binary of you have sports in one bucket and politics in the other. And, uh, and, uh, you know, as, as we are living our lives, it's so abundantly clear that you can't do that because of these things are deeply intertwined in, there is a very much a, a, a spiritual conversation to be had about what's happening around the resistance to sports and politics, and to the impetus for these players to be having their sports filled with politics. And again, it's not, it's not politics. It's it's that politics has taken over, uh, social justice and, and things like that. Um, they they've become intertwined in a way that's kind of strange as far as labeling, but,

Speaker 3: 3:32

And then as we'll talk about today, the major heads of professional sports, not just franchises, but leagues football, league, NBA, major league baseball. I mean, we're in a, we're in a mode in a time now where if you want to make a statement, if you want to make a social statement, which a lot of sports leaders are these days, you hit people where it hurts and that's in the wallet. And so a lot of what kind of drove, uh, the episode that we're, we're going to be, uh, talking about today and the conversation today, uh, is that major league baseball pulled the all-star game out of Atlanta and brought it to Denver. Right? And so when you think about all the things that connect with that racism, uh, police brutality, voting rights, uh, you look at those things, you look at the Georgia voting laws that, uh, Brian Kemp, the governor of Georgia, just, um, just pass there, uh, what is going on, what is going on there? And, uh, so we'll be talking about some of that today and how sports and politics, uh, connect during these very heady days in 2021,

Speaker 1: 4:48

Like it or not. We got our sports and we got our politics and they live in the same .

Speaker 4: 4:54

We talked about buckets later. [inaudible]

Speaker 3: 5:04

Welcome to hyphenated life. We invite you to join us on this journey to explore the connection of the sacred and the secular that inspires us to become more fully alive.

Speaker 4: 5:33

[inaudible]

Speaker 3: 5:34

So Atlanta, they took the major league baseball all-star game out of Atlanta, moved it to Denver. Yes. And they did that because of a new Georgia voting law dubbed. And I want to, I want to make sure everybody knows the name of this, the election integrity act of 2021. And what that does is, and as we've talked about with Christian nationalism is a cover for white supremacy. It's a cover for the things that are misleading misinformation about what governor Brian Kemp and the state of Georgia, uh, has, uh, has really misled people about what that is. He thinks that that act, you know, expands voting rights, that it expands, you know, access for minorities. What does that, what does that law actually do? Yeah. Right.

Speaker 1: 6:39

I mean, right. Yeah. It's, it's gaslighting,

Speaker 3: 6:45

It's gaslighting. That's, that's what that is. And we probably need to take some time to unpack that. Right. But major league baseball pulls out of the city of Atlanta, out of the state of Georgia. And they do this because of what, why would they do that? Because they know that it impacts economically, uh, the city of Atlanta, the state of Georgia, they do the same thing for Superbowls and NBA all-star games. I mean, it's a huge economic impact. So when major league baseball says, we're pulling out of Atlanta and bring in the, bring in the show to Denver, thank you. By the way.

Speaker 1: 7:27

Yeah. My city that'd be a couple of home runs there.

Speaker 3: 7:31

Uh, it, it is a major economic impact and what better way to make a social statement than to, um, then to hit people where it hurts and that's in the, in the local economics and the wallets, right? Yeah.

Speaker 1: 7:48

It's like a form of sponsorship, the same way you see, you know, when an individual goes off the rails , uh , their sponsors pull the plug and say, we're no , like, that's , that's not a good look for us. We're not going to put our money there. Um, and you know, you also have complaints around that in the same way that you have complaints around black athletes, having something to say about black people getting killed by police officers in the streets , um, there's this sort of disconnect of , uh, humanity and what people are watching on their TV. They see it, they see it as a commodity made for them, for them to consume. And that's the beginning and end of it, the business of professional sports is an entertainment business, but there are real people playing those sports, just like they're real people like playing music on recordings that you listened to that , uh, you know, look back to the sixties. I mean, the music of the sixties into the seventies and the impact that it had on our, the fabric of our society in America. I mean, it changed the course of our country. Yeah . Um, and that's the same thing. There's no difference between that. And , uh, and , uh, you know, the people behind the logo on the NBA , uh , for example , um, but yeah, so major league baseball. Yeah . They said, no, thank you. And they, they moved as similar to two years ago. I believe it was the NBA left Charlotte, North Carolina, that's where their all star game was supposed to be. And , uh, Charlotte passed some discriminatory legislature, discriminated against transgender people. Right . And , um, the NBA said, we're not going to support a state that's that's , uh , you know, going in the wrong direction. Yeah, yeah,

Speaker 3: 9:44

Yeah. I was just thinking, you know , uh, CNN did a , uh , a great little report. It sort of summarizes what this Georgia law is about, which I'm a baseball fan. I'm a lifelong Chicago Cubs, Ryne Sandberg hall of fame. Second baseman , uh, was my hero growing up. And , uh, you know, I remember my father driving , uh, driving me from Crossville, Tennessee to Chicago, Illinois for my, for my first Chicago Cubs baseball game. And it was a D so we saw three games in two days. It was the Montreal expos. That's when the expos were still in existence. Um, what century was that exactly? Uh , I'm sure the century was 1993. Uh,

Speaker 1: 10:34

It's a great year, by the way. In 1993, a lot of great albums came out that year. Oh, really? Well , that'll be another podcast. Okay .

Speaker 3: 10:41

Yeah, that , that was an amazing, yeah, amazing experience. I loved Harry Carey was my, you know, Harry Carey and who is a sidekick for WGN, Steve stone, Steve stone, Hey , he's a sidekick . So that was my, yeah. That was my church kind of growing up baseball was my church. Um, but yeah, but you know, political wokeness these days, right. I mean, connected to sports , um, was just not even in the realm of consciousness at that, at that time. Right. I mean,

it wasn't like any major league baseball commissioner or, you know, the Roger Goodell of the time for the NFL final fours, any of that w that wasn't sports and politics, and maybe I'm forgetting something because I was, you know , 15, but wasn't really connected through all of that. And now, now it is, I mean, we live in a different era about all of that. And , um, so yeah, yeah, it was, it was not , um, I connected sports and politics when I was 15 and a Chicago Cubs fan.

Speaker 1: 11:57

Yeah . I mean , I think one of the big differences between 1993 and 2021 in

Speaker 3: 12:03

How, we've ,

Speaker 1: 12:04

How we sort of metabolize the connection between sports and politics is Twitter, Instagram , Facebook , social media, it's cameras on our phones, which is the same thing that's bringing to light, you know , uh, because in 1993, was that, what year was the Rodney King ,

Speaker 3: 12:24

Um , beating? It was that 1993. It was 1991. Okay.

Speaker 1: 12:30

Around there. And that was someone filming with a , you know, a camcorder , I guess, from across the street, like a balcony or something. But now everyone has that in their pocket and can pull it out. And with the swipe of your thumb, you're recording, whatever's in front of you. And then with the click of a couple buttons, it's on the internet for the world to see.

Speaker 3: 12:52

Yeah. And, and that, that has been going on, even when cameras weren't on, right. When you look at traffic stops , um, and you look at , uh, black men being stopped. I mean, you love the Dan [inaudible] show David. Right. Who's that exactly. Um, and you know, recently they were talking about, after everything happened with Dante, right. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, and sports, I mean, the Timberwolves, the twins and the hockey team, I'm not a hockey fan,

Speaker 1: 13:30

The Minnesota, is it the wild,

Speaker 3: 13:35

Oh man,

Speaker 1: 13:35

Are there any listeners from Minnesota

Speaker 3: 13:38

And out there, but they shut everything down. Right. They, they canceled their game, canceled their games in a sort of protest about that. And it's just a D you know, again, it's a different era when we think about sports and not just politics, it's not like politics because we're trying to get somebody elected it's politics in the best sense of the word politics, which means for the good of the city. Right. So what are we doing for the good of the city? And, and, you know, when major sports franchises get involved in this conversation, it, it changes, it, it makes it, uh, even more aware. I remember, um, uh, the day after the NBA decided to shut down the rest of the season because of COVID right.

Speaker 1: 14:37

Got COVID on the Utah jazz and yeah. And

Speaker 3: 14:40

Stopped. And then the world stopped

Speaker 1: 14:44

Elites in our country. Yeah. It was a

Speaker 3: 14:45

Wednesday. It was like, I forget the exact date. It was in March, 2020. It was a, it was the same day that Tom Hanks and his wife, Rita Wilson had announced that they had contracted COVID in Australia

Speaker 1: 15:00

At the time on a movie set in Australia. So the very

Speaker 3: 15:02

Day after, right. NBA shuts, the NBA season shuts down and Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson come out with, with their diagnosis. And it was like, if we had heard nothing before that we, if we, if we didn't listen to scientists before that we were listening to celebrities and to the NBA. Right. And, and that changed everything. And even here in Boulder, talking to colleagues on church row here in downtown Boulder, we went from, well, maybe we won't have communion on Sunday to we're suspending all in-person gatherings in the church for the foreseeable future. And it's been what, 13 months. Um, so that's huge. So when major sports franchises leagues make these sorts of decisions, it does raise social awareness about those things in ways that

scientists and clergy and, you know, politicians don't, they don't reach that kind of , uh , level of impact.

Speaker 1: 16:16

Yeah. Influence. Yeah. Yeah. In a way, there, there is a sort of moral impetus and moral calling for these people who have an audience that's far reaching and gives them a lot of influence to say things. Uh, that's also, they , they need to educate themselves because it can go, it can go, can you go wrong many, many different ways. Um, but I think, you know, historically speaking about sports specifically, you, you have , uh , a fairly storied history of sports figures , um, becoming influencers and, you know , uh , people who expose a whole new audience to two things. I , you know, you go going back , um, Muhammad Ali, I think of , um, who, you know, his protest of the Vietnam war costs him the prime of his career, arguably one of the greatest athletes to ever play a sport in the world, you know, this boxer. Um, and, and, you know, you have , uh, the influence of people like , uh, uh, Hank, Aaron , and , um, you know, Jim Brown , um, of, of the Cleveland Browns, right? Yeah, yeah. Um, they, they spoke up when they saw, when they needed to. Right. Yeah . And they helped form this, this identity of you do matter for a whole generation of black people in our country. Um, and , and this is kind of funny, like two white guys sitting here talking about

Speaker 3: 18:04

Yeah . Let's acknowledge that. Yeah . For all you listening to this. Yes. We are two white guys talking about this. Yeah.

Speaker 1: 18:12

But at the same time, you know, our platform is not what LeBron James is , platform is, but we do have a podcast. And, and so we like to take our flashlight, even if it's smaller than, you know, the spotlight of , uh , of , uh , um, you know, LeBron, James is probably the most famous athlete in the world, but , uh, outside of Ryan Sandberg. Right , right,

Speaker 3: 18:36

Right . I still have his poster, Chicago Cubs. Yeah, that's right. I still have his rookie cards ,

Speaker 1: 18:42

But , um, you know, there is a history there in, in the big difference now is we have people kind of yelling at the athlete saying you don't need to comment on issues. The , and th the thing is sports and politics, right. That's always what they say. Uh, but in reality, it's not the sports and politics it's really happening. It's , uh, athletes commenting on issues in society, specifically racism and systemic racism. And those are very different things. Uh, I , you know, racism and social justice or injustice have been a part of the political sphere conversation from the beginning, but now there's like an equal sign there. Right. Um, gay rights, black rights, Hispanic

rights, immigrant rights , uh, equals politics and keep that out of my sports. Right. Um, we're talking about the Dan Lebatard show, who is a sports journalists in Miami, Florida, first-generation of Cuban immigrants. Um, he's one of my favorite people that I listened to. He he's a brilliant mind, a great speaker. He's thoughtful. He's considered the woke sports radio guy. Um, he has, he has recently teamed up with writer, comedian producer, extraordinary Adam McKay , uh, in , and they've done some stuff here in a satirical way. Um , but the sports and politics thing, they created this character named Shane Buchalado , he's a sports franchise .

Speaker 3: 20:28

Talk about [inaudible] ,

Speaker 1: 20:31

Co-host Harry, the horse, and they only talk sports, all sports all the time, no politics , uh, you know, in this , uh , they created this character of trying to function during the pandemic. And, you know, Dan Lebatard says, well, how do you, how do you keep it all sports when there are no sports? You know? And he's like, well, we'll just go back and we'll , uh, we'll check out how Kyler Murray, you know, how's that out route looking, is it easy? Is that ball spinning off the hand there? Or, you know, how's his shoulders , it loose, and it's a satirical take on this sort of, you know, I don't want to become insulting or name calling , but it's like this fairly bozo mentality of no politics in my sports. Like, first of all, there are, like I was saying before, there are people playing these sports that isn't entertainment, but they are real people. And just like you, whoever is saying that , uh , they have real lives and they feel things when the world happens around them. And , um, the last I checked, and this is, you know , something that you hear screamed from the right about free speech, why you're canceling us, you're shutting us up. That's a culture, right? Yeah. Uh , that's canceled culture, telling a black person they're not allowed to talk about black people getting killed in the street. That's, that's horrible. Right. That's horrendous. And , um, so this idea that sports and politics have no place together, really. There's no realm while there where they shouldn't be. They shouldn't be compelled to be together. That's the story like, that's what,

Speaker 3: 22:09

So I know you love the Dan Lebatard show, but you know, it , it , it is there, there is this irony when w w we're in the George Floyd, America at this point and everything that we've been through over the last 12, 13 months with, we've talked about this somewhat in sermons with pine street church and on, on this podcast is the pandemic upon the pandemic, the health pandemic and the racial pet Deming . And that hit a fever pitch right. In the summer with George Floyd in Minnesota. Right. And , uh, now what's going on with the trial , uh, there w 10 miles from where Dante Wright was shot, right . Killed by a police officer who didn't know the difference between a taser and a gun come on. Right. Um, but when, when we look at all of that

, um, I was thinking about , uh , Colin Kaepernick, right? The San Francisco 49ers quarterback who took a knee and what three or four is , is, how long has that been now

Speaker 1: 23:20

A while ago? I think it was four or five years. Years ago. Yeah . He was patient zero of this whole sort of keep our keeper politics

Speaker 3: 23:27

Out of my sports. Right, exactly. So, and, you know, I don't know if Colin Kaepernick wants to play football again. I mean, I don't know. I mean, there's all sorts of narratives about him trying out for certain teams and certain teams backing off of Kaepernick because of his, you know, political Snus or whatever. Um, he, it was a great quarterback. I mean, he went to , uh, at least the NFC championship game, maybe the super bowl, super bowl, the hardball brothers were coaching against that's exactly right. And, but when you w when you look at the irony of a Colin Kaepernick, and you look at the irony of what happened to summer with George Floyd, a cop took an , a white cop, took a knee, right on George Floyd's neck, Colin Kaepernick took a knee in a SIM, a powerful symbolic statement, not to disrespect. It's not about, not about the flag, right? It's about the power of dissent in a democracy. And that story, that narrative Colin Kaepernick's, you know, mythology now becomes something different. It becomes, why did he take a knee in the first place? And Roger Goodell finally came out the commissioner of the NFL national football league finally came out to acknowledge that what Colin Kaepernick did in that time was, was poignant and powerful, and that they did not get it right. And so it's easy to get lost in this political , um, you know, matrix of how you define, you know, what it means for a Colin Kaepernick to take a knee in, in faithful descent . And then we get a George Floyd moment where a white cop takes a knee. I mean, we sometimes forget that kind of powerful distinction or, or, or difference about, you know, Kaepernick takes a knee and he's just, he's done, he's done in the NFL. Right. You know, whether it's blacklisted and then white cop takes a knee, and we have all sorts of justifications about that. Right. So here we are, 2021. And, and these matters and issues are so entwined . They're so connected and it's different today. And for the end for somebody making, what , what, what is Roger Goodell made per year? Like , uh , I think it's around a billion dollars or something. Yeah . It's a lot for him to come out and acknowledge that. I mean, that's been a three or four year, Hey, the clue ferry finally lands. Right . You know,

Speaker 5: 26:38

There's a lot of stuff around a lot of this that's,

Speaker 3: 26:42

You know, how reactionary

Speaker 1: 26:44

Was that for Roger Goodell? How, how could he say anything else really in that moment? Um, and certainly there's no bad time, no wrong time to do the right thing. Right. Uh, but there's , uh , there was a lot of time where he was, they were, he, the NFL, the owners were doing the wrong thing. Um, you know, yeah . And , and it's there a bit business and they're doing it in response to their bottom line. That's all they care about. You know, there , that could be a whole other podcast , uh , how much, you know , uh , money influences people in their actions, in their decisions , uh, money versus integrity or in what Colin Kaepernick did was not, it was not a show boating , you know, it was not , uh , done to disrespect the military to disrespect the flag. In fact, he , uh, I met with, he sought out and met with a green Beret who , uh, who was actually, he played in the NFL for a little while. And he met with him and said, Hey, I, I , I want to do this, but I don't want to disrespect , uh , people who serve in our military, what I want to take this opportunity though, to shine some light on this systemic problem in our country and the green Berets one who told him to kneel for the national Anthem. And so he did, and he's gone, you know, never, never to play again. And , uh, and , and yeah , it's just, the narrative was completely, co-opted not necessarily co-opted. I mean, it, to first there , uh , uh, a viewpoint of it, you know, to say, I don't like him doing that because he's disrespecting the military. Right. You're not listening to him if that's, if that's what you come out the other side with, you're not paying attention. Right . And that's, you know, that's your problem, right. Um, any kind of cursory glance, it's almost unbelievable that people can't see this, but , um, you know, there is an issue in our country with , um, law enforcement, you know, and black people, and this person who had a platform and Boyd did that platform, you know, get amplified. Um, they're , you know, maybe next to LeBron, James, is there an athlete who has more notoriety in our country than Colin Kaepernick? And he, he was a good football player, but he wasn't LeBron James right . Of football. And that, you know, you could get any non-sports fan off the street and say, do you know Colin Kaepernick? And I bet you, I guarantee you, they would say yes. Um, so he brought attention to it. Um, and here we are, you know, like you said, he took a knee to bring attention to it. And , uh, we're in this, as we're recording this where they're doing closing arguments for the police officer's trial in when his need that he took killed a black man.

Speaker 3: 30:02

Right. And in here's where sports and politics intersect in such a big way. I mean, for Colin Kaepernick to do that several years ago, take a knee during the national Anthem was an act of faithful civil disobedience. Right. And it's hard to , to not connect the politics of that, because guess what happened that very same week? I mean, when this San Francisco 49 or super bowl, you know, super bowl quarterback took a knee. What happened that week? President Donald Trump said, wouldn't, you love to see one of these NFL owners when somebody disrespects our flag to say, get that son of a off the field right now he's fired. Uh, sorry. But as soon as that happens, sports and politics are intricately intertwined. And that's what happened with Kaepernick, right? He , you know, he was not only doing something that was an act of , of

faithful civil disobedience. He got called out by the president of the United States that very same week. Right. And, and therefore, you know, you can speculate all day long about, you know, does this guy want to really play football? Is he wanted to be , you know , be the quarterback, but that started something that started something that became bigger than Kaepernick . It became , uh , more symbolic of what goes on in these, in these moments when sports and politics collide.

Speaker 1: 31:58

Yeah . We had a , uh , podcasts earlier. I was , I think in season one with George Mason , um, and we talked, and it was a new conversations for the dinner table, right. This idea that you don't talk about religion or politics at the dinner table. Um, and our lack of ability to talk about these things has seen that gap widen in the interim, in the in-between when the NFL started their 20, 21 or 20, 20, 21 season , uh , back in September, the very first game of the season was the Kansas city chiefs. I don't even remember who they were playing. Um, but it was in Kansas city cause they were the previous super bowl winner. And that's where the first game of the next season always is. Sorry, Broncos fans might be a few more years on that one, but , um,

Speaker 6: 32:54

They had

Speaker 1: 32:55

A whole off season. I watched a whole summer of protest to try and figure out what to do, how to say something meaningful, powerful non-offensive. And they decided to send every player, every coach from both teams lineup across the entire field, in link arms in unity. That was the message we are United. We are United together, the response heckling booing and throwing things on the field.

Speaker 6: 33:30

What the hell

Speaker 1: 33:31

Happened between, you know , uh, Colin Kaepernick at the advice of a green Baret, trying to make a meaningful statement with his platform by taking a knee during a national Anthem, which by the way,

Speaker 6: 33:45

Has not always been

Speaker 1: 33:46

A thing you want to say, keep your politics out of my sports. Why are we singing the national Anthem at every single major sporting event? Um, you know, why are military planes flying over, you know, it's already there. So, um, you know, that, that, that our, and we're sort of harping on that. That's sort of a low level, you know, sports doesn't need politics kind of angle. But, um, it, the point here is that all of these things are interconnected in a way that can't be disconnected. And so what we need to do is sit down and peacefully, thoughtfully talk through these things together, right? I mean, um, how, how is it that linking arms in unity gets heckled booed and things thrown at it? What happened to America? What happened there? Um, that's, it's just, uh, it's, it's sad to think, and I'm not sure where it goes from here. Um, you know, I, you saw over the course of the season, things progress, you know, there were so messages in the end zone. Like there there's enough tolerance out there, um, in, in that still making enough money that the NFL is kind of going along. Um, NBA is a bit more aggressive. They have messages on their jerseys. Um, but you know, you have interesting things like, because these things are for-profit organizations, right. Um, that's what I was talking about. There there's a bottom line of money, but there's also a bottom line of ethics and morality. And, and sometimes you have to sacrifice the old Holy dollar in the name of doing the right thing. Um, and, and I think that the polarization of the two sides of it's just every single thing is in one of two buckets, right. Or left. Right. And, um, if something gets put in one bucket, how do you get it out of that bucket? Um, how do you get saying that police brutality is a bad thing out of a bucket that is labeling it as something that you can't agree with? It, if you identify as a Republican, as a conservative, how is, how do we get to that point? You know, and that's where I think these conversations need to happen. Not on Facebook, you know, not shouting things on Twitter, I'm not watching network cable, but between each other. Yeah. Um, and, and that's, that's where we're at with this. And, you know, things that are in our faces all day, every day are, you know, sports and entertainment. And these people behind them are speaking up. And I, for 1:00 AM glad they're speaking,

Speaker 3: 36:41

I am too. And, and, and, and thinking about high profile people in sports, speaking up, you look at Greg, uh, Greg Popovich, the head coach of the San Antonio spurs who got attention recently, um, when he became, um, really angry and very vocal. And, uh, I think the USA today had a, a spotlight on, on that story, like for five and a half minutes, he was increasingly angry and, and, and animated about what was going on in Minnesota, uh, with the, with the Dante rights situation. And, you know, he said, it just makes you sick to your stomach. How many times does this have to happen? And, and Popovich says, as sick to our stomachs, that we might feel that individual is dead, Dante right. Is dead. And his family's grieving and his friends are grieving. And we just keep moving on as if nothing is happening. You know, it's that the, how long, Oh, Lord, how long the Psalmist, you know, when we were in the wake of the, the mass shooting here in Boulder King Soopers, uh, it's like, what's it going to take, what's going to take for gun reform in this country. What's gonna take for, uh, for, for men of color, for

black men in this country, that when they're pulled over, whether it's a expired tag, licensed tag, or, you know , um, a lie, a brake light out in their car to not fear that, that this is the end of their life. Like I could be killed right now. I've been pulled over in my life. I've never feared that that was going to be end of, end of my life. And, and when you look at what is going on in this country right now for a Gregg Popovich, for instance, in sports or Goodell to come out, you look at these intersection points and you go, there's a cobweb effect going on in this country right now, because when's this going to end. And, and, and for us to be having this conversation today after Dante, right , uh, being killed a few weeks ago, it's just another moment of going, how freaking long, Oh God, how long and what are we going to do about it? So I think there's power. Um , and there's a leveraging of power that, that can happen when a Gregg Popovich or , uh , Roger Goodell, or, you know , uh , uh , Colin Kaepernick. Who's making a very profound social statement to say, this is wrong. And, and this sort of , uh , oppression

Speaker 7: 39:50

Is it . We have to speak out about it. [inaudible] amazing. Grace, how sweet, the sound that saved [inaudible] hyphenated life. It's a production of pine street church in Boulder, Colorado hosted by David [inaudible] and Andrew Doherty produced by Phil Norman, executive producer, Alexi Molden , special, thanks to today's guest, the Leo Hill trust of Boulder, Colorado, and pine street church. If today's episode has inspired, you reach out to us at hyphenated life on our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages. You can also find us@hyphenatedlife.org. If you were looking for a spiritual community, we'd love to join you on that journey. Go to pine street, church.net to find out more [inaudible] first big.