

# Center for American Progress



## **FAITH AND PROGRESSIVE POLICY: A NATIONAL CONVERSATION**

**“BUDGETS AND MORALS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO  
‘LOVE THY NEIGHBOR’?”**

**OPENING REMARKS:  
THE HONORABLE PETER C. GROFF,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
COLORADO STATE SENATE**

**MODERATOR:**

**MELODY BARNES,  
SENIOR FELLOW,  
CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS**

**MONDAY, JANUARY 10<sup>TH</sup>, 2005**

**Transcript provided by  
DC Transcription & Media Repurposing**

**SPEAKERS:**

**RABBI DEBORAH BRONSTEIN,  
HAR HASHEM, BOULDER, CO**

**REVEREND GIL CALDWELL,  
UNITED METHODIST MINISTER (RETIRED)**

**DONNA RED WING,  
NATIONAL FIELD ADVISOR,  
THE INTERFAITH ALLIANCE**

**BILL VANDENBERG,  
CO-DIRECTOR AND PROGRAM DIRECTOR,  
COLORADO PROGRESSIVE COALITION**

**JIM WALLIS,  
FOUNDER, SOJOURNERS;  
CONVENER, CALL TO RENEWAL**

**FATHER DENNIS WOERTER,  
PASTOR, ST. DOMINIC CATHOLIC PARISH, DENVER**

MELODY BARNES: Well, good afternoon everyone. You all look fabulous. It is wonderful to be here in Denver, Colorado. Particularly, I understand yesterday there was a blizzard and today we've got 60 degrees and sunshine, so thank you for providing that for us.

My name is Melody Barnes. I'm a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress in Washington, and welcome to our program: "Budgets and Morals: What Does It Mean to 'Love Thy Neighbor'?" Those of us from the Center for American Progress are thrilled to be here with our Colorado partners, the Colorado Progressive Coalition, the Bell Policy Center, and progressnow.org. And given today's topic, it seems truly fitting that we are here at St. Cajetan's on this Auraria Campus of the University of Colorado at Denver. I think as many of you probably already know, St. Cajetan's was one of Denver's first houses of worship for Spanish-speaking Catholics and today it plays a really critical role in the community and campus life.

For the Center of American Progress, this is the first in a series of national conversations about religion, values, and the issues that affect all of our lives. In recent months, the country has focused on a highly polarized debate about religion. I'm sure that's no surprise to you. One could believe that conservative equals religious, and that progressives are uncomfortable with the issue of religion or the practice of religion. And if TV and radio were our only guides, you might believe that religion only focuses on a very narrow set of issues, but we all know far better than that. It's much more complex than that. The progressive community is diverse and has a proud history that includes prophetic religious leaders walking hand in hand with progressive men and women to change our society for the better.

Many of us are often in our houses of worship, and that experience, coupled with our study of sacred texts, helps define our religious life, our work, and our relationships. And still others of us may not be religious believers, but we consult a deeply-held moral compass to determine right and wrong, good and bad. We are a country of complex people with varied experiences and it is important to draw upon that diversity, including our faith experience, when discussing who we are and what we wish to be as a country.

Today we want to explore some of the important issues before our nation and before all of you as Coloradans. We've brought together an amazing panel to discuss "Budgets and Morals: What Does It Mean to 'Love Thy Neighbor'?" We will discuss the budget as a moral document that affects our communities, our neighbors, and our families. Woven through the conversation will be the values and beliefs we bring to this issue. What moral responsibility do we have to one another and how do our policies reflect those responsibilities?

Before our conversation begins, I'm proud to introduce Senator Peter Groff, who will share his thoughts on this issue with all of us. As you know, Senator Groff is the

President Pro Tem of the Colorado State Senate. He was raised in Denver; a product of Denver Public Schools and a graduate of the University of Denver College of Law. A former member of the Colorado House of Representatives, today Senator Groff represents the city and county of Denver. He is the author of landmark criminal justice and child safety legislation, and the recipient of numerous honors and awards. Though I don't know Senator Groff personally – we just met about four minutes ago – my guess is that in addition to his service to Denver and Colorado, he is most proud and appreciative of his family, his wife, the Reverend Regina Groff, who is the pastor of the Historic Campbell Chapel AME Church, and his children, Malachi and Mariah. So thank you for being here today, Senator Groff, and please welcome him. (Applause.)

HONORABLE PETER GROFF: Melody, thank you very much for that very gracious welcome. I'm glad I paid you the \$4, because you said it just as I wrote it out. Okay. Let me first apologize for being late. Those of you who are from Denver know that we are in the midst of trying to figure out our fiscal crisis, and I was paying very close attention to the debate in the House. Our Speaker Romanoff our fix before the body, and I let time get away from me a little bit.

But let me welcome the Center of American Progress here to Denver and to this great campus that represents really what is best about Colorado and the diversity that we have in this city and in this state, and it's good to have you here doing this. And let me say hi to a couple of friends on the panel: Bill Vandenberg, who we've worked very closely together in outlawing racial profiling a couple of years ago; and Reverend Caldwell, who is one of the great warriors in our community; and Jim Wallis, who I don't know personally. We met a long time ago, and he'll never remember that, in Mayor Webb's office when I worked for him, and the soul of politics really continues to be a guiding light for me in my service.

I am pleased that a progressive group is looking at the role of faith in public policy. As a Christian who happens to be an elected official, faith undergirds my service. And as an African-American, I certainly understand the history that faith has played in our transition in this country. It is a base that goes back to 1787 when African-Americans were pulled off their knees during prayer at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, which is about five blocks north of Independence Hall. After they were pulled up during prayer, because Negroes weren't supposed to pray at that particular altar, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones led a march that I call the first civil rights march out of that building into a site south of Independence Hall to set up the African Methodist Episcopal Church. And it is that journey of faith and freedom that moves me today in my public service.

Also, not only for my public service, but from a personal standpoint, as you heard my wife is a pastor of an AME church. I am the grandson – great-grandson of two African Methodist Episcopal ministers. My grandmother and mother are active in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and so faith plays a very important role for me as I look to make the best of my service for the least among us.

That journey of faith and freedom, I think, continues today and should venture out into our communities where people of faith I think should play a huge role in the issues that face the bulk of America. It says in Isaiah 58:12 that “You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of pathways to dwell in.” Not that George Bush should be called, not that Peter Groff should be called, but “You shall be called.” And progressives who have the best in mind for all of us should be called to restore those pathways and those breaches in our community because the breaches in our community are clear. There is a crushing inequity that exists in this country between the haves and the have-nots. That equity when you look at any single quality of life measure, whether it’s education, whether it’s health care, whether it’s economic viability, there is a tremendous gap that exists in our country. And that breach needs to be repaired, and it needs to be repaired by progressives who understand that America cannot only move forward with just a handful of us, but America must move forward with all of us. And we need to use our faith and our values to do that because people of faith cannot in good conscience ignore the breaches that exist in our community.

The policies offered to repair those breaches and restore those pathways ought to be built upon progressive morals and values, and we ought to broaden that discussion of morals and values from a progressive standpoint because better schools is a progressive moral and value statement. Lower health care premiums, better access to health care is a progressive stance and a progressive moral and value statement. Expanding and disbursing wealth in this country among the poor is a progressive stance and statement and a moral value statement, and it’s something that we as progressives continue to try and advance.

As we negotiate the fix to the Taxpayer’s Bill of Rights, or TBR as we call it, and as we in a couple of weeks will begin to debate the budget, that fix and that budget that we pass at the end of this month ought to be a value statement. It ought to be a moral statement. It ought to say what we care about and how much we care about it. It’s not just about putting dollars in education, putting a few more dollars in roads. It’s about the statement – the value statement of our state and where we should go in the future.

You know, it says in Matthew 25:40, I believe, “What you do for the least of these ... you do for me.” Having served in the Colorado General Assembly for the past four years – I’m in my fifth year – quite often we have people who are fighting for the least among us, whether it’s the bill that Speaker Romanoff is carrying today, whether it was the bill that I collaborated with my friend Bill Vandenberg at the end of this table four years ago, there are people who are fighting for the least among us. And those are value statements and those are morals based on faith that we should not be afraid to talk about as progressives. And when we pass that budget, I hope that we will be able to say, this is a values statement about where Colorado is, but more importantly about where Colorado should go.

In closing, let me just hope that this progressive movement will understand the value of faith, and the fact that we as progressives are offering morals and values to a country that maybe needs some new direction in that discussion, that we will join in the

journey of faith and freedom to embrace our values, and fight for those who cannot fight for themselves, that we will stand in the gap for those who cannot stand for themselves, that we will talk for those who cannot talk for themselves. But faith alone isn't enough, because it says in James that "Faith without works is dead."

The work of all of you in this building and all of the folks on this panel will move us to a better place – will move us to a better place where we embrace everyone, regardless of race, creed or color, sexual orientation, the money that one might have in their pocket, because we're fighting for those who of no other chance but by birth may be different from the majority among us. But they need someone to stand in the gap for them, a progressive idea, a progressive ideology that says we have the right values and morals to move this state and this country to a better place. Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

MS. BARNES: Thank you so much, Senator Groff, and thank you again for being here. I know how incredibly busy you must be right now.

At this point, I want to introduce the members of our panel and tell you what we're going to do today. We're going to spend a little bit of time after the introductions having a conversation among the panelists. And what we're hoping to do, it's not kind of your standard everybody makes a five to seven-minute presentation, and then there's some Q and A, but actually engage in a conversation around the issue and the issues that we're here to talk about, and then open up that conversation to you. So think about the kinds of questions that you may want to ask, and two of my colleagues from the Center of American Progress will be out there with mikes and we'll have an opportunity to involve you as well.

So the first person I'd like to introduce is Jim Wallace. Jim is a speaker, author and activist. He's editor of *Sojourner's* magazine, and was a founder of *Sojourner's*, an international organization of Christians for Justice and Peace. Jim is also a convener of Call to Renewal, a national federation of churches, denominations, and faith-based organizations working to overcome poverty since 1995. Jim's recent book *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong, and the Left Doesn't Get It*, is a *New York Times* bestseller. And for those who don't know, although I don't – you probably would have had to be like under your bed not to know, Jim is going to be doing a book signing tonight at the Tattered Cover at 7:30. And in my conversations with Jim, he tells me that his – these events have been like revivals. And I grew up in the south, so I know what that means, so gather your friends and your neighbors and please join Jim tonight at the Tattered Cover.

And next, we have Donna Red Wing. Donna serves as the national field advisor to the Interfaith Alliance in Washington, D.C. She was also the Democratic candidate for Colorado House District 25 in 2004. And during that journey, she learned a great deal from the men, women, and children of Colorado. Donna has also served with the national Dean for America campaign as liaison to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and

transgender communities, and was the policy director at the Gill Foundation until April 2003.

Next to Donna, we have Reverend Gil Caldwell, who's an incredibly important member of the Colorado religious community. He was the pastor of the Park Hill United Methodist Church in Denver, and prior to that calling served churches in four other states. He's a member of the adjunct faculty at Boston University School of Theology, New York Theological Seminary, and Iliff School of Theology. Reverend Caldwell is one of the founders of Black Methodists for Church Renewal, and the United Methodists of Color For a Fully Inclusive Church. He was the recipient of the 2004 Ball Award given by the Methodist Federation for Social Action.

And next to him we have Rabbi Deborah Ruth Bronstein. She has been the rabbi of the congregation Har Hashem in Boulder, Colorado, since 1994. She has served on the Boards of the Rocky Mountain Rabbinical Council and the Midwest Association of Reformed Rabbis. As part of her calling, Rabbi Bronstein works to improve the lives of those who are homeless and chronically mentally ill. She also works for more diversity in our public schools.

Next to Rabbi Bronstein we have Father Dennis Woerter. And I know in our program or in our invitation earlier, we had indicated that Father Chilson would be here. He's actually officiating at a funeral today for one of his congregants, but we're really pleased that Father Woerter could join us on such short notice, and he was highly recommended by Father Chilson, so we're proud that he's here with us. Father Dennis was ordained in 1997 and since 2000 have been the pastor of St. Dominic Catholic Parish in north Denver. While serving his inner-city parish, Father Dennis has given considerable time and energy to social justice work. He's a member of the board of directors of Metro Organizations for People, which is a part of PECO (ph), a national network of community organizations. Since 1999, Father Dennis has been a promoter of social justice for the Dominican Province of St. Albert the Great, and Midwest regional representative for the Promoters of Social Justice for the Dominican Order of North America.

And finally, last but not least, we have Bill Vandenberg, who serves as co-director and program director for the Colorado Progressive Coalition, and who was one of its founders in 1996. Bill is an experienced coalition builder and field organizer. He has worked with the Public Citizens Global Trade Watch Land and Waterfront of the Rockies, the League of Women Voters of Colorado, and Colorado Unity. He's also a community associate for the University of Colorado at Denver's Latina/Latino Research and Policy Center.

Please welcome the members of our panel. (Applause.)

So to get the – is this one on? Can you hear me? Okay. So to get today's conversation started, I'm sure many of you know individuals up here, but probably not everyone knows everyone, so what I'd like to ask the members of our panel is the

following question. Each of you comes to this journey and this conversation in a slightly different way. Some of you lead congregations; others of you are policy experts and organizers; others of you in addition to all of those things have also served at some of the nation's top academic – in some of the nation's top academic settings. And even though not everyone is religious clergy, all of you consider values and in many cases religious beliefs an important part of your work. Would you very briefly tell us why you're compelled to do social justice work, and the role that faith plays in your work? And I'll open the question to the panel.

Don't all jump at the mike at the same time. (Laughter.)

REVEREND GIL CALDWELL: Well, may I go first, then?

MS. BARNES: Absolutely.

REVEREND CALDWELL: I think I'm the oldest person here. Is that seniority? I frequently within my own denomination, United Methodist Church, because of some – what some people suggest are radical stands that I take as particularly as an ally advocate of gay rights and gay persons, I find myself saying in my church that I do these things not because I seek to be politically correct, but rather theologically correct, and I think that's probably appropriate here, that I am driven by my sense of the Creator and by my theology.

I think it's important for me to begin, because one of the critiques that's made of religious progressives is that we do not use Scripture, and so strangely enough I'm going to mention two bits of Scripture as I begin in response to the question. First, from the Hebrew Bible, Psalm 146. And I simply as I looked at that again, it begins – the section that I'm using – “Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals in whom there is no help. When their breath departs, they return to the earth. On that very day, their plans perish.” I hadn't really picked up that bit of Scripture, but I like those words from the Hebrew Bible.

And then from my own Christian Scriptures, clearly which I think sets the tone for this day, out of Matthew 22, “Teacher, which commandments in the law is the greatest?” and then we know them, particularly the Christian tradition, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment; and the second is like unto it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” And it seems to me, if this were a preaching experience, that would be the text for what we are about this afternoon.

I'm driven, because I cannot simply think in terms of my faith as being individualistic, but the gospel that I attempt to proclaim has not only personal dimensions, but it has social dimensions, and therefore, that's why I'm excited about being here this afternoon.

DONNA RED WING: May I go next? My values and religious beliefs have always formed and framed my work: work against the wars in Vietnam and Iraq, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, my work as an advocate for physically and sexually abused children. It all comes out of that place that really is about putting faith in action. It is in my work for equality, however, my work in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender movements, that who I was – who I was as a person and as a child of God was questioned. In the early days, words like “abomination,” “aberration” were used to describe me and they have morphed in these conservative, compassionate times into the kinder language of “love the sinner, hate the sin.”

Just last month, the Traditional Values Coalition published a 48-page report called The Citizens Briefing Paper on the Homosexual Agenda. I didn't get that memo. They say that they will expose the true objectives of the movement to undermine marriage and to recruit children into the homosexual movement. And, of course, there's still Focus on the Family; their recent indictment of Sponge Bob Square Pants as a homosexual cartoon sponge. And again, Focus on the Family through their national Love Wins Out conferences where they promote their belief that who I am is both preventable and treatable.

I've been compelled to talk about family values and religious belief in the face of a radical religious right agenda that says that I am “the other.” I will not cede religion or values or my faith to those who despise me. I know that God loves me just the way she made me, and I will continue to put my faith into action. (Applause.)

BILL VANDENBERG: Well, Donna is a very tough act to follow, and I was already nervous enough not having a reverend or a rabbi in front of my name, so just bear with me. And also, I am prone to getting emotional on subjects like this, but today if I'm especially sniffly or weepy it's because I'm on over-the-counter medication for a flu, but perhaps also moved by what we're going to be discussed.

I'm compelled to do social justice work because of how I was raised and by a wide variety of life experiences and people that I've encountered in my life that have inspired me and influenced me. And a number of these influences are that I grew up in a single-parent family in rural Maine with a very strong, humanistic mom. I'm the oldest of four kids, and this is – you know, I do sometimes get emotional talking about this, but we experienced both Welfare and food stamps firsthand.

And growing up in rural Maine I also had a very acute consciousness of the disparities – the intense disparities of wealth, the difference between the summer community of Kennebunkport where our president and his family summer. They're there for a couple of months of the year, and then the rest of the year the rest of us that take care of properties like that – just that disparity of wealth is something that I carry with me in my work and as a motivating factor to do the type of work that I do through the Colorado Progressive Coalition.

I attended church as a child in the United Church of Christ, which is, as many of you know, a progressive Christian denomination, and I was fortunate enough and despite my economic situation, I have educational privilege in that I attended a Jesuit university called Boston College. They're going to do well in the NCAA tournament, I hope. (Laughter.) And my education at Boston College grounded me and made me more committed to use my educational privilege for a greater purpose than material wealth.

Through my experiences at Boston College, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to go to Haiti to do some service work and some volunteer work. And the combination of factors in Haiti of seeing intense material poverty, and then the tremendous warmth of people was an overpowering experience that I carry with me to this day.

Through my experiences there and at Boston College, I'm also inspired by principles of liberation theology. And when I was in Haiti, it was right after Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected, but before he took office, so it was a very profound time in the life of that country. And of course, many of us know what has happened since in Haiti and with President Aristide.

Another experience that makes this a very complex subject for me to discuss, and faith and politics, is that a very close friend of mine from college, a woman named Shannon Lowney was murdered at a Planned Parenthood clinic where she worked as a receptionist about ten years ago by an anti-abortion extremist who was acting from his perspective out of his faith. I carry that experience with me as well.

And as a person that grew up with a strong mom and an incredible family and a grandfather whom I love dearly, but who passed just recently – my grandfather had some very destructive beliefs on race and was – had racist beliefs and was anti-Semitic as well. So as a white guy, if you didn't figure it out already, and as an organizer and an activist, I'm committed to using my unearned white privilege in ways to dismantle systems of oppression and discrimination, and I identify aggressively and actively as a white guy, an anti-racist, and an ally to efforts to dismantle racism and discrimination.

So in short, I can't not do social change work. It's not just a part of me; it is me. And I'm really thankful to be able to work in this area, to be paid not a lot, of course, but to work with tremendous colleagues and a lot of you in this audience as we work to transform our state and our nation and our world to more reflect our vision of what society we would like to live in. (Applause.)

FATHER DENNIS WOERTER: Why do I do social justice? You know, it's – I've only been in the game, as it were, fairly recently. As was said in the introduction, I was ordained a priest about eight years ago, and it was only in the seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, where I was – I became actively involved in issues pertaining to criminal justice and the death penalty purely by accident. As I was – my bachelor's degree is in journalism, and I just happened to be asked to edit the newsletter for criminal justice ministry for the Archdiocese of St. Louis. And then, you know, I needed to know more

so then that – you know, that exploring becoming a jail and prison chaplain made me more aware of the injustices of that system, specifically in Missouri, and then also around the country as well.

So – and then that, you know – that resulted in a lot more study. And I think what really drives my ministry as a priest and a pastor is a few things. And there's a – in 1972, a bishop's document called Justice in the World where there is one line that stands out, which I think helps define what I do. You know, preaching – you know, working for justice and the preaching of the Gospel is inseparable. You can't do one without doing the other. I'm a preacher of the Gospel, of the Scripture, and really I can't not do justice work. I cannot – I can't not do it because I feel that's my call as a religious – as a Christian, as somebody who is called to serve God's people.

Related to that, you know, my own interests, you know, Catholic social teaching, which really is – we say in this line of work that it's the church's best kept secret. People don't know about it. I remember the first talk I gave about it – I gave on it and it talks about human rights and dignity, equality, all this stuff, and then somebody raised their hand afterwards and said, “Well, that's wonderful. We just want to know what the church says.” (Laughter.) Well, I just spent an hour and a half talking about it, you know.

And, you know, in my day-to-day interaction with the people I serve, my congregation is about 65 percent Mexican. Many of those are first-generation immigrants, and it's the day-to-day issues that they deal with that they bring me into then, and I can't ignore it. You know, do they – they come to us with their paychecks and say, well, do they pay for heat or do they buy food, you know. So this is something that is just so integral to ministry that it just can't – that it cannot be avoided.

And on my ordination prayer card I had the quote from Micah, “Act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God.” And you know, it's – you know, preaching the Gospel is equal to working for justice. And again, the responsibility we have for each other as was alluded to before is to not – you know, to include everybody and to not let people feel like they're the other. And I think that's my overall goal, you know, love one another that all may be one and that all may be welcomed, and not be seen as the other. That's constitutive, that's integral to my preaching of the Gospel. (Applause.)

**RABBI DEBORAH BRONSTEIN:** As I'm listening to everybody, I had so many thoughts. That's the problem with going later. Anxiety is the reason of waiting, and then having a lot of thoughts is the problem of going later. I'm thinking that one of the blessings I had was I grew up in a family where I understood that being Jewish meant keeping the Sabbath and marching with Martin Luther King, and that that was what good Jews did, and because that was part of my family upbringing. And then when I was older, I really unfortunately had a rather long break with my family, and I didn't realize it was kind of a vacation in a very impoverished part of Chicago, but I worked at a hospital for a brief while where kids really were sick or died of poverty-related illnesses very

unnecessarily. And it was a good experience in my life till I was ready to go back to school.

I think that the reason that I'm engaged in social activism is that Judaism programs certain texts into the liturgical year, such as the text that Senator Groff mentioned at the beginning that on the fast day of Yom Kippur we read Isaiah 58 who said, "Is this the fast that I have chosen?" No, it's not. You're required to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and repair the breach. And that on Passover, which is coming up soon, we read the words, *Aramio vad a vee* (ph); my ancestors were fugitive Aramians – wandering Aramians, which meant a kind of social class that was – nobody wanted to be with a wandering Aramian. Kind of people on the edges – well, wandering Jews, for one; people who the Immigration Department didn't want to come into the United States.

I always – you know, for me, that was very, you know, a group that you could relate to, because – Jews can relate to that group because anyone who has immigrants in their family history can relate to that group, and I could certainly relate to that group. As an adult, *Aramio vad a vee*, my – the fugitive Aramian or the wandering person who's on the edges looks to me like kids who are in shelters who go to school and don't want anyone to know, or people who are chronically mentally ill who are much more comfortable in libraries than in most synagogues or churches, or – well, you know who I mean: people who are homeless, people who are in suffering, who everybody turns away from. And so that text is a text that motivates me.

One might think that the Bible is all about what sexuality not to be, but the only commandment that's stated in different words over 30 times in the Hebrew Bible is you shall not oppress the stranger, because you know the heart of the stranger having been slaves or having been strangers yourself in the land of Egypt. And so anyone who's on the outs, who is marginalized, who gets stepped on because nobody thinks that anyone will care, is of relevance to people of religious conviction. They're part of my family, your family, God's family, and that's what moves me. (Applause.)

MS. BARNES: I was just saying to Jim before he responds. I want to add a little bit more to the conversation, because as I mentioned in the introduction, Jim's book has been on the *New York Times* bestseller list for several weeks now, and as he's crisscrossed – absolutely. (Applause.)

And as he's crisscrossed the country, there have been literally hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people who have come to hear him speak. I think in the literary world you are a rock star in that regard. (Laughter.) And I want to ask you, as you ponder the first question also, why do you think people are showing up in droves to hear you speak and to hear about your work that has gone on for decades with regard to improving the lives of the poor, and what does that mean to Coloradans in the context of what's going on here? Why should they care about what's in your book?

MR. JIM WALLIS: Well, first of all, I'm really glad for the rich diversity on this panel, and let me add a bit to it. I'm a 19<sup>th</sup> Century evangelical who was born in the wrong century, because in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century evangelical Christians helped to lead the battle against slavery, for women's suffrage – did you hear that, Jerry Falwell? – for women's suffrage, and for child labor law reform. And Charles Finney was the evangelist of his day. And he invented the altar call, actually. Do you know why? Because he wanted to get the names and addresses of his converts to sign them up for the anti-slavery campaign. That's true. That's why.

So we're having these town meetings across the country. They're disguised as book signings. (Laughter.) They're town meetings. We're getting at night 1,000, 2,000 people; in the middle of a day 300 or 400 people at bookstores, and they're revivals. And I have some good news to report. Having been to the East; having been to the Midwest, like Holland, Michigan, and Dayton, Ohio, and Chicago; having been to Texas, Waco and Austin; and the West Coast, I've got some good news to report. The monologue of the religious right is now over and a dialogue has finally begun. (Applause.)

And I've been doing a lot of listening as well as talking, but a lot of listening. And here's why I think this is happening. People see faith and values being talked about in an election, in the media, and now in the White House, and they say to themselves, that's not my faith. Those aren't my values. When do I get to voice my faith and my values? This is not really about a book. It's about people who want their voice to be heard, too. They want their faith to be part of the conversation, too. So we're having these wonderful sort of moral-discourse-on-politics conversations.

And who's coming? Well, evangelicals who don't feel represented by James Dobson, and there are millions of them (applause); Catholics who don't feel spoken for by a handful of bishops who tell them there is only one issue on which they can vote as Catholics – (applause) – and disregard all of the rest of Catholic social teaching; mainline Protestants who feel often disrespected by this whole conversation and not even welcomed into it; black church folk who feel like why is this such a white conversation, because it is. When they say evangelicals, they mean white evangelicals. They don't mean the black churches. Hispanic and Asian Christians, lots of Rabbis are coming out.

Rabbi, lots of your colleagues are coming with their congregations. Muslims are coming, and a lot of young people – a lot of young people who are – they call themselves spiritual, but not religious. And every time some young person says, "I'm an agnostic. Thank you for making me feel welcome tonight, because I feel spiritually inspired tonight, but I'm not religious, but I care about moral values," and what I'm saying is religion doesn't have a monopoly on morality, but we need a whole new conversation, a whole new moral compass about our public life; a conversation we all need and that we're all needed for.

The best thing is the young people. I mean, I was on the Jon Stewart Daily Show one night and had a lot of fun. I'll talk about that tonight more at the Tattered Cover, but the emails from young people after that show, things like this, "I lost my faith because of

Falwell or Bush or pedophile priests and cover up bishops or television evangelists or the hate talk – Donna – the hate talk I hear from religious people. I didn't know that you could be a Christian and care about poverty. I didn't know you could care about the environment. I didn't know you'd care about the war. I didn't know that. But now maybe I think there's a chance for me to find my way back to faith," so kids are coming to the tables at the book signed. "I'm a student." I said, "Yeah, where?" "High school." "Yeah. What year?" "Freshman." Not even there with mom and dad. There with his friends. And I thought that was cool until last week there were 14-year-olds, 13-year-olds. Last week, a 12-year-old kid. And last night, I signed a book for an 11-year-old girl. I said, "Why – what did you get out of" – I stopped the whole line, because I wanted to talk to her. "What did you get out of tonight?" "I think that we're just going to have to change the world." (Applause.)

"There just are too many things that just aren't right." And I said, "And who do you think is going to do that?" She says, "I suppose people just like me." You know, so I'm having a great time. It's become a national town meeting conversation; a dialogue really has begun. Everybody's welcome. Everybody's needed. And it's opening up one – one young kid in Boston says, "I'm gay. Thanks for making me feel welcome tonight. But you know what? It's easier to come out as gay in Boston than to come out as religious in the Democratic Party." (Laughter.) So this having a new conversation politically as well, so – (applause).

MS. BARNES: Father Dennis, Rabbi Bronstein and Donna, your work – everyone's work here does this, but I want to start with you – your work really touches the lives of people in lots of different ways, the work you do with your congregations, the work you do as you've, you know, crossed District 25 during your campaign, Donna.

And from what I've read and, you know, I've been doing my reading on Colorado before coming here, you don't come to someone's house without knowing whose house you're going to, it seems like there are people here who are hurting and that they are looking for change. And a lot of that revolves around economic issues. And I want to get a sense from you as you talk to people, as you work with people in your congregation, your parish, people you've met, what are they talking about? In what ways are they suffering or are they hurting and what do they want done in response?

FATHER WOERTER: I guess my name was mentioned first, so I go first, right? You go first, you don't have time to think about a response. I think there are a couple of things that I see. And I also think it's important to say that the population of Denver is growing more and more immigrant, as it were. You know, people are either coming from – you know, I'm seeing – from Mexico, you know, in my line of work and others may have other experiences, but one other thing I think is education and the – not so much the opportunities for education, but the quality of education.

My church is right across the street from Denver North High School, which has the highest pregnancy rate, the highest dropout rate and, you know, they've had principals – you know, I think every year, you know, since I've been – a new leadership

there. And many of the kids I've found they can, you know, speak English, but they can't necessarily read it, especially those who have come here from Mexico. So I think quality of education, educational opportunities, the quality of the schools, and the opportunities to better themselves through that education, and also to – access to health care. I think we all know – I just saw the doctor this morning. It's not cheap. And I think, you know, people – and especially immigrants, they're afraid. They're afraid about paperwork. They're afraid to have their – to have their name in any record or anything. They're afraid. And that goes over into also, you know, the whole thing about housing and poverty and jobs. As I said earlier, do they pay the heat or do they buy food, do they pay the mortgage or whatever?

So I think one of the challenges or one of the things that needs to be done is to make it easier for people to receive the services that they need, to make it easier for our children to be educated, to make it easier to get good health care, to make it easier to get a job that allows, you know, a family to live in the way they should, to make it easier for people to get housing. (Applause.)

**RABBI BRONSTEIN:** So I would say I guess I'm a little disturbed by what I would have to say, but it seems very logical to me. I think that members of the groups that I work with are most concerned about what affects them personally the most, and so what affects them personally the most are questions about healthcare, access to healthcare, problems with insurance, problems with Medicaid, Medicare, fears about their ability to get healthcare being cut, so that's one thing.

I think parents are worried about their kids' schooling. I think people who are involved in activism in the community, adults, are mostly involved with agencies in the community, and they're concerned about the way grants from the government, financial help from the government has been radically cut, and how to – how they can make up for it through various kinds of volunteer work or collections, rather than work with a budget, because everybody feels so overwhelmed by how to do that.

I would say teenagers, another big constituency, are alarmed about the expressed hatred that they often feel at school. And I'm myself shocked by the rawness of it that seems worse every year. And whatever the policies are in school, there's an inability to contain it, apparently. And then the – a number of people who are chronically mentally ill and homeless or barely housed drop by the synagogue, and I would say the most – easiest way to express what I hear is "My teeth hurt," and what that means is to this person that because nothing radical has happened to his teeth, he hasn't had anyone look at his teeth in 15 years. So something bad could be happening to his teeth. I have my teeth looked at twice a year, and – because the dentist calls me if I don't come. And there's only enough money for him not really to get an apartment, but to get a garage space in Boulder, if he's lucky, and \$5 a day and his medication. And then if something bad happens, he can go to the emergency room, but there's nothing for teeth. And that's pretty typical. So that's – so I would say that's what people are concerned about.

MS. RED WING: I had been working on the Howard Dean campaign. I was in Iowa when he made the famous speech, and I stayed with him through Wisconsin. There are some people in the room who were there with me. And I did this crazy thing. I decided to run for the Colorado House District 25. This is a district – only 29 percent of the registered voters are actually Democrats, not a race I could win, but we did some amazing things in this 100-mile strip that was my district. We did listening tours where we sat and listened to people in places they congregated: coffee shops, restaurants, and even the Buck Snort Saloon.

We did service projects so that whatever happened in our campaign, the world would be a better place, because we did politics. It was a grass roots campaign, and we listened to people. And last night I went over some of the pieces that these folks said impacted them. We took a survey in the middle of the campaign and we collected transcripts of the conversations we had with people. The top three issues were health care was number one, the environments was two – and that includes water issues – and three was a responsible budget. I just want to share a few stats with you, and these are the things that people told me and I looked up to make sure it was right.

Under TBR, and I'm sure other folks are going to talk about that later, we've lost 90,000 jobs in the last three years. We ranked 49<sup>th</sup> for job growth. Nineteen thousand Coloradans foreclosed on their homes or businesses in 2003. Some of them were in Evergreen. Fifty-five thousand Coloradans filed for bankruptcy in the last three years. In 2000 we ranked first in the nation for economic momentum and by 2003 under the governor's watch, we have dropped to 40<sup>th</sup>. One in six Coloradans do not have healthcare coverage, one in six; 169,000 children in our state do not have adequate healthcare coverage. We're 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation for child immunizations. We became the first state in the nation to completely defund its Arts Council, and we're ranked 48<sup>th</sup> for high school dropouts. The great state of Colorado, 10 percent of our families live below the poverty line. And let me remind you what the poverty line is: that's \$18,850 per year for a family of four. Ten percent of our families live below that. Faith in Action, I think, is a responsible budget and one that takes care of the most vulnerable among us.

I'd like to take one – just one minute and tell you my favorite story from my campaign. I was invited to talk to a group called The Curmudgeons. These are men 70 and older who get together every week over coffee to talk about the world, and they called me and said, "We're mostly Republicans, a couple of independents, a handful of Democrats and even more Republicans. Would you come and talk to us at 7:00 a.m.?" And I said, "Sure." And I met them. We met at a bookstore, had a lovely cup of coffee, and I decided, well, you know, I need to talk about my campaign, my issues, and I had my little stump speech. And about two minutes into it, one of the fellows said, "Donna, it's great, but could you please talk about the L word?" And I thought, okay, here it is. Let's just get it over with. So I said, "Well, fellows, I am a lesbian. I don't know if that's an issue for you, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." And they said, "Wait a minute. We don't care that you're a lesbian. Could you talk about being a liberal?" (Laughter.)

REVEREND CALDWELL: Even in our book of discipline as we look at the social principles, clearly the United Methodist Church identifies that. I wanted – it was interesting that Donna has identified me as a member of the panel who is a curmudgeon – you used curmudgeon, is that what I – I see. I see.

MS. RED WING: I want to be a curmudgeon.

REVEREND CALDWELL: But those of us 70 and over – I want to just say something. Let me ask out there. Were any of you in Selma 40 years ago? Were there any persons out there in that Selma to Montgomery march? This is the – I think the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and I see – I see at least one or two hands. One of the things I want to sort of put on the table is that as one looks back at the civil rights movement or the freedom movement, that was clearly a time when I think the progressive spirit was realized. And I must mention, of course, Selma because I lost one of my dear friends at Selma. Some of you know the name of the Unitarian Universalist minister, James Reeb (ph). Jim Reeb and I got to know each other in Boston, and we were on the same plane from Boston down to Selma.

But I simply mention – I mention that kind of history, because since I've been in Denver, I found myself developing a new definition of the acronym DIA. Rather than Denver International Airport, for me in this community and other communities, the D stands for denial, that so many of us are in denial about our history and about so many other things. The I stands for invisibility. We make so many of the problems invisible. And the A is amnesia. And I sense that, even among progressives, so I just wanted to simply say that, whether they are in the church or not.

But, you know, the question talked about Colorado, and since I've only been in Colorado since 1997, but I think when I arrived or maybe later, I heard the word "TBR." I didn't know whether that was a kind of an animal or a family or something of that sort. But again, in my preparation I discovered strangely enough that a theologian whose name is Paul Tillich – anybody know the name Paul Tillich? In retirement I'm reading some of the theologians I could not understand in seminary. But even though Paul Tillich wrote his book *Love, Power and Justice* in 1954, it seems to me he wrote some words that relate to TBR and a lot of other kinds of things, but this is what he said: "Laws which were adequate in the past that are still in force, although they are inadequate in the present."

And I guess I think one of the challenges that we have in terms of simply moving forward is that we do not know how to undo that that we have done. There's a hymn in the church that has the words, "New occasions teach new duties; time makes ancient good uncouth." My major difference with my brothers and sisters on the right is that there is a feeling that time is frozen, that simply using Scriptures in a literalistic way that the answers are there. But my own faith is that of evolution that in a sense I at 71 am glad that my Creator is not finished with me yet, and therefore I'm discovering new kinds of things.

And so I would suggest that it is important as progressives, religiously or not, to find ways to help people understand that the world is changing and that let's get excited about the changes, let's be proactive, rather than reactive against change. And I have the feeling – I came to Colorado from Harlem thinking that I was coming to a very liberal state. Lo and behold, as I got here, I discovered that there are pockets of progressive spirit, but we have miles to go, as Frost said, before we sleep and we're at that today, and I'm so pleased. (Applause.)

MR. WALLIS: I think we have an enormous opportunity to build some common ground that we haven't seen for a long time. When you asked, Melody, what sort of motivated us, I thought of a story. Thirty years ago I was at seminary. I started when I was just six. And at an evangelical seminary outside of Chicago, a group of us who were just starting did this study that we've talked about since. We took an old Bible and a pair of scissors and cut out of the Bible every single reference to the poor, wealth, poverty, rich, poor. There were thousands of verses in the Bible on this topic.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, it is the second most prominent theme. The first is idolatry and the two are often connected. In the New Testament – in the Christian Scriptures, it's one of every 16 verses is about the poor. In the Synoptic Gospels, one of the first three – one of every ten. In the Gospel of Luke one of every seven verses. I didn't name my son after Luke Skywalker, you know. And so my friend who took the scissors, he got to Amos, "Let the justice roll down like waters." Just cut it out. Got to Isaiah 58, which we've heard, cut it out. The prophets were decimated. They were destroyed. Nothing left.

You know, Mary's wonderful Magnificat, her song of praise, is poor – you know, poor woman in an occupied country and oppressed race who prophesied the meaning of this one she carried in her womb, "He's put down the mighty from their thrones, exalted those of low degree, filled the hungry with good things, sent the rich empty away." This is not the testimony of a social service provider. This is a social revolutionary.

When we were done, that Bible wouldn't hold together in my hands. It was falling apart. It was in tatters. It was a Bible full of holes. I would take it out to preach, hold it high above congregations, and I would say, "Brothers and Sisters, this is our American Bible. It's full of holes. And all we've taken out, ignored, paid no attention to. Let's all just get out our scissors and begin to cut. Let's be honest here." What's at stake here – particularly for those of us that claim the word evangelical what's at stake here is not social action, politics. What's at stake here is the integrity of the Word of God, you know, in our lives, in our congregations, in our neighborhoods, our nation, and our world.

Thirty years later now, I see a whole bunch of people who don't agree on lots of other things coming together around this issue – this issue of economic justice. We can build campaigns that will pull together people across all kinds of spectrums. Called Renewal, our table has the National Association of Evangelicals and the National Council of Churches at the same table. That's like – you know, that's like the Crips and the

Bloods, you know. I often like to have a Mennonite on hand to sit between them to make sure nothing happens, you know. We can build something here.

The line that just gets people up on their feet at every book event is budgets are moral documents. They reveal the priorities and values of the family, a church, a nation. And we've got to do a value – a moral interrogation of this budget. This can bring people together like nothing we've ever seen for a long time, particularly a whole new generation of faith-inspired young people. They're evangelical, Catholic, Jewish. They're across the map, but this is the issue that is bringing them together. So we have a chance here to build a movement and build campaigns that can not only say what we're against, but also what we're for. And you know what? We can win on this issue. (Applause.)

MS. BARNES: I'm going to ask one last question and then open it up to you, and I hope that you all have questions as well. And I want to pose this one to Bill. We've been talking about movement building. We've been talking about faith and action working together, and certainly you are a movement builder par excellence, and you know all about coalitions. And the question has two pieces to it. One, are you finding that coalitions in Colorado are including people of faith? And if that's true, what about the question of separation of church and state? I mean, how are people responding to that? I mean, I think that that's an issue that's always simmering just below the surface in the progressive big tent.

MR. VANDENBERG: Thank you. And there are a few people here that we should thank as well that helped to make this event possible. I know Maeghan Collins and Linda Shoemaker with the Brett Family Foundation did a lot of work to make this happen, as well as Adrian Miller all the way back from the Bell Policy Center. I want to recognize those folks for all their work on this. And I'll try to be brief, because I know we really want to hear from you, because there's such a richness in having a dialogue.

Our organization, the Colorado Progressive Coalition, focuses on systemic change, not surface or Band-Aid approaches to solving problems. Of course, there are immediate needs that we need to organize around: making prescription drugs more affordable, stopping police racial profiling, looking at TBR and reforming it significantly. But we look at the longer-term structures in our society and we look at ways to change them.

We have members around the state that come from a wide variety of faith traditions or are not coming from a perspective of a faith tradition. We work with labor unions and people of color, community organizations and leaders, women's groups and immigrants. And I was just jotting down the different faith communities with whom we've done some intentional work with particular issues, and it's a pretty long list. It goes from reform Judaism to UUs, and UCCs, and ELCA's, and UMCs, and Catholics, and Buddhists, and Muslims, and Baptists, and Church of God in Christ folks, and Mennonites and Quakers, and many others, and nonbelievers as well. And it's an intentional part of our work.

And to answer one part of this question, I don't see enough of this. I'm not surprised to hear Father Dennis or Rabbi Bronstein or Reverend Caldwell talk about the importance of faith and politics, but I don't hear that from our sisters and brothers who do progressive organizing advocacy work. I know we've been guilty of this on occasion, our organization too, where inclusion of religious leaders has been kind of a late add-on to our efforts. Oh, it would be great to have a priest or a rabbi, a minister at a news conference, and by that point it's really too late in developing an intentional campaign to address key issues. But when I look around I see very few organizations that take this on in an intentional way. I mean, I think it's very important for us as progressives who believe that faith has a role in our work to recognize that the separation of church and state does not equal the separation of faith and politics. They're two very different things. (Applause.)

So if I look at the different campaigns in which we work and – you know, it's great to meet Father Dennis for the first time, because two years ago, we had a phenomenal intern. Her dad worked for Salud Family Health Centers up in Adams County, and one of our major campaigns is to look at issues of healthcare access, affordability, and cultural competency. And this intern was phenomenal, self-motivated. We have a chaotic office, very crowded and lots of stuff going on, and she jumped into the campaign and contacted Father Dennis at St. Dominic's Church here in Denver just up the road and said that we're doing a survey of immigrants in the community on what they perceive about the American healthcare system: how accessible is it, how affordable is it, what role does documentation or the lack thereof play in accessing health care, and then looking at the distinctions in care provided from the clinics that are more culturally competent and then the general health care system itself.

And we are soon to release the results of this report. We've collected close to 1,000 surveys from immigrant-serving congregations, migrant workers centers, and housing facilities – from the African-American community as well. It will be the first time that Colorado has had a report on healthcare disparities and the faith community has been essential in this effort in providing a conduit for us to reach people and help people to use their congregation, their presence in church, at mass, to express their beliefs about how our society can change.

I mean, there's some things that I noticed, Melody, when I talked with other organizations and when I look in general at American political trends. I mean, one of the ways that we've been able to be successful in some of our work – we're still too darn small, and we still are swimming upstream in a great way in the political demographics of our state, but we do agree to disagree on occasion. And some issues – and I think with the 2006 ballot approaching, we will have a very nasty anti-gay marriage initiative in the Colorado ballot in 2006. We will also have a very nasty anti-immigrant ballot initiative like what Arizona passed in 2004 on the ballot at the same time. And while people may have theological differences of opinions on these issues, as people that are committed to justice, we need to work proactively to link the campaigns and say, we're not going to allow this type of hate to once again rear its head in our state on the ballot. (Applause.)

And just a couple last things. You know, I told you a little bit about my background, and what I didn't tell you is I grew up in a trailer park in Maine. And I have real issues with liberal elitism and could talk for hours about that. Some of this liberal elitism is manifested in the way that progressive-minded folks think about and talk about people of faith. And when I look at the fact that – I don't think progressives just discovered faith and religion since, you know, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, the day after the election. I think it is an arguable case that the Democratic Party and the institution of the party may have just discovered religion and faith. And I'm told that the Democratic National Committee is now in the final stages of approving a faith caucus, similar to People of Color, and LGBT, and other community caucuses.

But I think that we have to be very vigilant when we are talking with our friends, with our colleagues, with other folks who identify as liberals or progressives to not come off as elitists; to not treat people who are very firm in their convictions – not treat them as ignorant. They're equally committed to their perspectives as we are. We need to find ways to open up dialogue, and I'm excited to hear Jim's impressions.

And last but not least on TBR. As Senator Groff mentioned, House Bill 1194, the primary vehicle to reform TBR is being heard in the State House today on the house floor, I believe. And it's really incumbent on all of us. And let me do a little call in response. How many of us in this room feel that TBR needs to be reformed? Okay. Well, this is a friendly audience. (Laughter.) Well, have I got something for you. Donna mentioned this issue as well. There's so many of us that believe this needs to be reformed, but it's going to be an uphill battle. There's latent opposition to anything that looks like tax reform, anything that looks like it might benefit those who are the least among us, and I have a colleague who I'm going to point out in the front row here. His name is John Kafalas, who also ran for House of Representatives this year in a Republican leaning district, and came very close. And John has developed a campaign called The Ten Thousand Voices for TBR Reform and Tax Fairness.

There are postcards somewhere in this room, maybe on the back table, maybe in John's bag, but I would encourage – they're on the back table there – I would encourage all of you to grab a postcard, grab a stack of them, fill it out, because what we're doing is building a base of people committed to spotlighting the human impacts of our state's budget cuts on healthcare, on human services, on our higher education system. We need to make a change, and this could be the year to do so.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. BARNES: Great, thank you, Bill. And I would say that for those of us who are not from Colorado but here, we are very focused on what happens here with regard to TBR as well. Also on the back table, along with other really wonderful materials, is a *Wall Street Journal* editorial that calls TBR the gold standard, and makes the point that TBR should spread across the country, and perhaps even there should be a national TBR, so this – the fight that you're having here is very, very important.

Now I'd like to open this time up for questions from you. And I've got a couple of people with microphones, and we'll just work our way across, and start with this gentleman in the grey jacket and the blue-and-white checked shirt. Here.

Q: There are several –

MS. BARNES: Actually, if you would wait for the microphone, and also if you'd just tell us who you are, that would be terrific.

Q: Gordon Game (ph) from Boulder. There are several books that are spoken of as the Word of God in Scripture: the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Koran, the Torah, and many others. And there's a new book by Sam Harris, *The End of Faith*, in which he points out that there are rather specific statements in these books that indicate in support of slavery, of being against homo – being homophobic, being against homosexuals, against women's rights, against – I mean, that are sexist and racist and so forth.

And my question is, how do people deal with those parts of the Scripture – I mean, it's both in the New and the Old Testament. There are provisions that indicate that there are – that a person can stone their – kill their children for talking back and – or stone adulterers and things of this sort. As faith-based people – Sam Harris seems to think that it's not a particularly good moral document; that we can do better than that in terms of using human-centered ethics for arriving at policies, and that seems to be what progressives do. Why can't we just simply make our choices based on how other people are affected by the choices we make, rather than putting so much emphasis on Scripture?

REVEREND CALDWELL: Can I –

MS. BARNES: Sure.

REVEREND CALDWELL: Well, I think one of the things that I have over the years have done with Scripture is to allow total Scripture to interpret individual bits of Scripture. That is to say, when I talk about Scripture, I'm talking about the total sweep of Scripture and, therefore, to simply pick out exclusive passages I think does great disservice to Scripture. So I think – and I would suggest that progressives in religion or not in religion ought to become acquainted with the name Marcus Borg or Bishop Spong, for they have brought a kind of interpretation to Scripture that gets at your very concerns. Those of us in religion, I think, will not shelve our Scriptures simply because at points they come up lacking, but rather we, in fact, deepen them and acting out of our faith believe that they can for us still be an important kind of launching pad.

Much is happening in terms of Scripture interpretation. I sometimes think that the progressive secular community is unaware of what's going on on the religious left – or within the religious left, so whether you are religious or not, let some of us talk to you about Bible. We might even get some converts.

MR. WALLIS: There's – you know, Scripture has to be interpreted as a whole, as Gil was saying, how Jesus deepens and takes further all of us, but I want to say – I want to speak to something that I find all the time, which is an intolerance on the left towards religion.

I remember a time at Harvard. I was there for a year. And the Harvard sort of liberal left intelligentsia – many of my friends meet once a month and have a politics conversation in someone's living room, so I got invited to speak and I talked about – you know, was invited to join them for the year and it was very nice. Second time I talked about faith and politics. I gave a fairly reasonable talk. And a very smart guy who you would know – I won't name his name. Good friend of mine. Raised his hand and he said, "Now, Jim, what about the Inquisition?" I said, "Well, I was against it at the time. I'm still opposed to it." Now, how about we don't keep raising the Inquisition and I won't raise Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge every time you talk about national health insurance. You know, I mean, let's have a serious conversation here.

Yeah, we who are religious should always say, religion has been oppressive, divisive, hierarchal, patriarchal, and violent. It has been and done all those things. The worst things done to people in the world have been done in the name of God. It must break God's heart. The slave owners give the slaves the Scriptures to turn their eyes toward heaven, and not their plight on the earth, but in that book the slaves found Moses and Jesus, who became the foundation for their liberation struggle.

Religion is also catalytic, transformational, liberating, motivational and mobilizing. Every major social movement in this country has been driven and fueled in part by religion and by faith. So I have spent my life being critical of bad religion. That's what *Sojourners* does, right? The best answer to bad religion is not secularism. It's better religion. (Applause.)

MS. RED WING: Can I – at the Interfaith Alliance, we talk about faith. We believe that our diverse faith heritage is one of our greatest assets, but that faith heritage includes the humanist movement, agnostics, atheists, pagans, Wiccans, along with our Baptists, Presbyterian, Muslim, and Jewish friends. And so some of us when we talk about faith, talk not about religion, but about a belief system. And so I think that when we look at budgets as moral documents, we need to include our friends who may not be part of a religious movement.

MS. BARNES: The woman here in the mauve and black sweater.

Q: My question is, I get frustrated with the idea of the me-ism that seems to be happening, that we need to turn to a we-ism. How do you do that? How do make that conversation happen?

MR. WALLIS: As a Protestant, I will lift up Catholic social teaching and ask whatever became of the common good? The common good is a wonderful idea that

weaves together personal responsibility and social responsibility. We should be talking about both all the time. It's their intersection which, in fact, makes up the common good. So it's amazing some of the right-wing people on the right, they're against the teaching of evolution, they say. But when it comes to social policy, they're all social Darwinists – the same people. Their social policy is a survival of the fittest. It's – Social Security, we're better off by ourselves than we are together. We've got to not just critique these policies, but talk about the underpinnings and why they're contrary to our best values, one of them being this notion of the common good.

MR. VANDENBERG: I think that it's a question that we can answer in very broad ways, but I'm going to be very specific about Social Security as an issue. This is or this could be the straw that breaks the camel's back with President Bush. I – that is encouraging. (Applause.)

And the shameless way that the administration is pitting young versus old by – I mean, shameless again talking about African-American mortality rates and not addressing the causes of premature mortality, but using that to get support from the black community for Social Security. It's horrible. It's mean-spirited. It's the worst type of politics. But Americans are rejecting this, and if we look at where polls are, and you can ask a question in a poll and get a desired response, we can debate how polls are taken – but if we look at where the mind of Americans are on this, we believe that a social compact, whatever's left of it – it's a tattered flag at this point – we believe that it is essential and we are rejecting this politics of divisiveness on this one issue. This is an inter-generational issue and if we can defeat the President and the Administration on this issue, then that weakens his ability – their ability to impact the broader terrible agenda that they're attempting to implement.

REVEREND CALDWELL (?): I wanted to quickly share this, because many of you know the name, Representative Terrence Carroll, who is also a clergyman in the Legislature. He – I talked to him about this panel, and I want to just read a sentence that he said in terms of budget and values. And I quote, “The budget more than anything else” – and remember, he is one of the legislators in the State House – “The budget more than anything else we do in the legislative process is most reflective of our moral values and priorities. I say this because how and where we choose to appropriate public monies has a direct correlation to our public policy goals. The Legislature can always make grandiose claims about our moral values, but unless they are funded, it is nothing more than empty rhetoric,” end of quote. That's Terrence Carroll. Some of you might have seen the spread about him in the Sunday *Denver Post*.

I guess, in terms of the whole question of “we,” though, I've been concerned about the inability of the progressive community to identify with black agenda; with, in fact, the Congressional Black Caucus. It seems to me that there are those who feel that nothing universal can come out of the black experience that speaks beyond that. And I would simply suggest – and a marvelous example is around voting. The Congressional Black Caucus has continually raised questions about the need for election reform. In 2000 they stood on their feet challenging what happened in Florida. There was not a

senator who would join them. This year, they did the same about Ohio, and this time, praise God, Senator Boxer stood with them. (Applause.)

And what she said was that “I wish that I had done that in 2000.” Those of us in the African-American community are sometimes concerned that we are invisible; that persons think that somehow what we are about does not have universal value. And I would suggest that if persons learned more about the agenda of the Congressional Black Caucus, the budget that they present each year, a freedom budget, that, in fact, it is progressive and so many progressives unaware of it. (Applause.)

MS. BARNES: I have – I can only take two more quick questions so that Jim can do a book signing. For those of you who don’t get a chance to have your book signed here today, don’t forget, 7:30, Tattered Cover.

The gentleman with the sunglasses has had his hand up for awhile.

Q: Hello? Oh. My name is Bob Lippmann (sp). I’m from Lakewood. Just real briefly, I’m in the middle of reading Mr. Wallis’s book. I was ready for that 35 years ago. Thank you. It’s very refreshing.

My question is, it – at what point is there any type of danger from legislating consensus morality? I just – I have watched for very many years different interest groups try to criminalize abortion, trying to criminalize gay marriage, trying to criminalize many things. If we’re approaching the budget as a moral document, which I agree with, but what point when we try to legislate our own consensus morality, do we get into danger? Is there some type of a line there?

MR. : And I think looking at a budget as a moral or a values statement, I certainly think that a budget is a sign of, you know, what a city’s, a state’s, you know, country’s priorities are. And I think certainly morality or morals or values can drive that. And I’m not sure if I’m really answering your question, but I think certainly values and morals, you know, drive what we do, and drive, really, what our priorities are. And with a budget being a priority – you know, a statement of priorities, certainly, I think, you know, values and morals can drive that while staying away from, you know, what can be the danger of legislating morality or seeing in that way.

Is that clear at all? Probably not, right?

Q: (Inaudible) separation of church and state at the start, but specifically, I think (inaudible) have started out with (inaudible) people (inaudible). So I agree you have to have some kind of a moral (inaudible). So at what point does that become something we should not be legislating, because everybody can – has a consensus that that is morally right. Where it’s forcing that among other people – I mean, is there some line there or should we allowed to do that?

MR. WALLIS: I think we have to distinguish between – you used religion and morality interchangeably. I think we don't want a public square where religiosity becomes a factor. We're voting for somebody because of their – how many Bible verses they memorized or how often they go to church or they pray. When you get to the public square you don't say, "I'm religious, so I get to win," or "God spoke to me and I've got the fix on Social Security."

But most Americans, I think, do want a values-driven politics. I think the progressive side needs to not marginalize the values debate but embrace it. Whoever wins the debate about values will shape the future of American politics. Most Americans want a moral compass for their political life, so it means – and King did it best. I mean, the Bible in one hand, Constitution in the other. He wasn't afraid to name his own tradition, but it wasn't just for Baptists. I mean, every – you know, Abraham Joshua Heschel came down from Boston, and people who had no religious faith were there, agnostic or whatever, because a moral conversation is one that invites all of us to the table, and no one gets left out because of their religious conviction. It is a universal conversation and I think it's one that really allows us to say what kind of values does the budget have and does it square with our values or not: who benefits, who suffers, who bears the brunt of fiscal responsibility and deficit, production, all the rest.

I think the country is hungry for a moral conversation, but not a sectarian religious one, so we have to distinguish between the two. I can say what motivates me. My faith compels me to be involved because of Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and Jesus, but in the public square, religion must be disciplined by democracy, by a pluralistic, diverse society where we operate democratically. And I can't say I'm religious so I win or I'm moral so I win. I've got to persuade my fellow citizens that what I am for is the best thing for the common good. So King says, "My vision is the beloved community, but I want to argue for a civil rights act in 1964, a voting rights act in '65 that is in the best interests of all of us, all of us and the common good," and he has to win the argument, and he did, and we have to do the same thing. (Applause.)

MR. : May I make one (inaudible)? I think – and I'm hopeful – and this is my last comment – is that we are in the process in Colorado and elsewhere of defining what it is to be progressive. This morning I was listening to Mike Rosen as I occasionally do. Mike Rosen feels, as does Rush Limbaugh, that they have a clear definition of what a liberal is. I would suggest, let's let them wrestle with their understandings of liberal because we've gone beyond that. And, therefore, I would suggest that we are about a progressive agenda. We are progressive, we are prophetic, and let's go ahead and let's forget them. (Applause.)

MS. BARNES: Thank you. And I know I said two questions, but I'm being told that I have to close now, so I'm sorry about that. And – but appreciative of your enthusiasm, of your being here, and participating in this conversation with us. So thank you very much for being here. Thank you so much to our wonderful panel. (Applause.)

(END)