

Episode 164: "Wrath: America Enraged" with Peter Wood

- Announcer: Welcome to The Bill Walton Show, featuring conversations with leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, and thinkers. Fresh perspectives on money, culture, politics, and human flourishing. Interesting people. Interesting things.
- Bill Walton: Welcome to The Bill Walton Show. I'm Bill Walton. Well, [00:00:30] when you come across a book with the title, Wrath: America Enraged, you get very curious about what's in it, what's it about, and what's the cause of the wrath. So very quickly I saw if we couldn't get the author on the show.
- Peter Wood is the author, is president of the National Association of Scholars. And in addition to Wrath, he also wrote recently 1620: A Critical Response to the 1619 Project, which we've talked [00:01:00] a lot about on this show. He's a former professor of anthropology, which is a profession I think that would come in very handy in modern America. And he was a college provost and he also has written several other books about American culture, including Diversity: Invention of a Concept, and A Bee in the Mouth: Anger in America Now.
- Peter, delighted to have you with us, with me.
- Peter Wood: Thank you for having me.
- Bill Walton: So, a provocative title. [00:01:30] What inclined you to write this book?
- Peter Wood: Well, I think the main thing was the 2020 election and its aftermath, including the Capital Hill riot on January 6th. As you mentioned, I had written a book some years ago about anger in America, Bee in the Mouth. And that book to some extent was a forecast that if [00:02:00] we didn't do something to get control of the excess of vituperation and anger and acting out in American life, our politics was going to be badly influenced by it.
- So as with most such prophecies, nobody really paid much attention to it. And then I thought, "Well, maybe this is the time to revisit the issue." The first [00:02:30] book published in 2006 combined a analysis of how we had gotten to where we were with a plea, I guess, that this isn't a particularly good way to lead our lives. I would rather see a kind of temperateness in our public expression and in our personal relations to be more prevailing.
- But by the time we got [00:03:00] to the 2020 election and its aftermath, I too had been infected to some degree by this new anger as I call it, in that I think that some of the response from the deplorable classes Hillary called them was justified, that the anger, get that, the mischief that took place in 2020 and [00:03:30] the recategorization after the fact of the riot on Capitol hill as an

insurrection, struck me as a deliberate effort to marginalize dissent in this country. So that's where the book came from.

Bill Walton: You framed it as a binary, which I agree. You talk about the left and the right. I don't know if those are the right words to describe the division, but you believe [00:04:00] that anger has been mounting on both sides.

Peter Wood: Yes.

Bill Walton: And that you chose the word wrath because that's the most extreme form. And you also argue that it's gotten worse in the last three or four decades. What's the source of your thinking there?

Peter Wood: Well, as you mentioned in the introduction, I'm an anthropologist, and what I've been really doing with this subject is a combination of anthropology and history, of there [00:04:30] by the testament of plenty of people but easily documented was a strong ethic in America up until the years after World War II that counseled people to engage in emotional self-control, that ability to get angry but maybe learn how to turn it off or turn it down or channel it in a productive direction. And that [00:05:00] goes way, way back. George Washington, for example, was known to be a man of really volatile temper. He could let loose, but he also was well-known at his time as someone who practiced this steely self-control.

Our image, these days of Washington as this sort of stiffly dignified, almost mannequin like person was not how his contemporaries saw him. They saw him as a man who [00:05:30] was ready to fly off the handle at a moment's notice, but who had somehow disciplined himself not to do it. And he had that self-command, which gave him the ability to command others.

Anger is nothing new in human nature. It's been around forever. It's part of not only our species, but other species. You can rile up a dog or a cat easily enough. The question is not whether we weren't angry before, but how we [00:06:00] channeled it? What kind of cultural frame did we put around it? And that began to change. As I said, after World War II, the hero type of Gary Cooper who could maintain his cool under extreme pressure gave way to, think, of Allen Ginsberg, his famous poem is Howl. And this ...

Bill Walton: Do I have to think of Allen Ginsberg? I guess I do.

Peter Wood: Just for a [00:06:30] moment.

Bill Walton: Talk about performative art. Yeah, he was quite a character. Howl.

Peter Wood: But your sort of cultural benchmarks can point to a book that everybody in my age was reading growing up was *Catcher in the Rye*, Salinger's book, a teenage boy, Holden Caulfield, gets kicked out of prep school and wanders around New

York for a couple of days, denouncing just about everybody he meets as phony. It turns out in the last chapter of the [00:07:00] book we learned that Caulfield is talking to his shrink, and this whole book has been his confession.

Well, he's an angry young man, but what we get out of it is two things that were emerging at that time. One was this, the discovery of psychoanalysis, which is teaching you that repressing your anger is going to come back as neurosis. So it's just not mentally healthy to bottle up your anger the way [00:07:30] many generations of Americans have been taught to do.

Bill Walton: Yeah. And that it's not your fault. It's your mother's.

Peter Wood: Yeah. And the other-

Bill Walton: Well, that's the theme I wanted to ask you about. You raised *Catcher in the Rye*. A friend of ours, Diana West has written a book, *Death of the Grown-Up*. And it seems to me like there's a path here where with *Catcher in the Rye* and then the '60s generation, the baby boom, do your own [00:08:00] thing, express yourself, don't trust anyone over 30, the grown-ups were shoved aside and the grown-ups were the forbearing ones, the ones that restrained their anger and their emotions. And in return, we got an anything go and whatever emotion you have, let it loose. Is that roughly the way you see it?

Peter Wood: That's roughly where I'm going with it. I mean, I think West has it right. But I do think that the emotional [00:08:30] patterns people get are really established pretty early on in childhood. Parents teach children how to behave or not to behave. And what happened with the infusion of anger is this liberating force, and at least for the elites in the early 1950s, it took a couple of generations for that to become normal, for parents to tell their children, " [00:09:00] It's okay. Just let it all out." The adults just didn't disappear all at once. It took more than a couple Yippy style riots in the 1960s to erase this.

But if you repeat the pattern generation after generation, you eventually get to the point where emotional expressiveness triumphs over everything. Now, when we say emotional expressiveness or expressiveness, well, I say it anyway, [00:09:30] you could think, "Okay, it's great. We can express our love for one another more freely." Well, maybe. But the emotion that is really licensed to come flying out is anger. That's the one that was being really restrained before. And now it takes on sort of social utility, the protest movements starting in the '50s, again, found that anger was a way to [00:10:00] empower yourself and others. You can get them excited and get a crowd moving. So anger begins to be not something just that people do towards each other, but can be framed as a way of pursuing social justice.

Bill Walton: Well, isn't there a double standard though? I mean, we saw it two summers ago with the riots after the murder of ... whatever it was called, the murder of George Floyd or ... [00:10:30] and ...

Peter Wood: I prefer to say his death in police custody.

Bill Walton: I'd think death, and that's where I am on it. I don't want to fall into the media word. But the left is celebrating those riots as an expression of justified rage against the system. We witnessed burning after burning after burning of city after city after city. And that was okay. That was just an expression of justified [00:11:00] emotion.

And yet you take it, look at what happened with how the January 6th, the march on the Capitol Hill was characterized, as an insurrection, as ... where they're saying is the worst thing since the Civil War. I mean, the way they've characterized that is way out of tune with what actually happened there. Double standard operating. How do you see that playing out? I mean, at what point do the people on the right say, "Look, we get to do the [00:11:30] same thing"?

Peter Wood: Well, I hope people on the right decide not to do the same thing, but the ... unraveling this, I think is something that really starts to take form in the early days of George W. Bush administration. That's when the angry left finds its voice in social media and we begin to get this cycle of [00:12:00] rage all the time.

Now that's long enough to go that probably a lot of people listening to us talk don't have a very vivid memory of it, but I've been saturated in this stuff now for a while. There was a moment when Jonathan Chait, a well-known political pundit wrote in the pages of New Republic, a formerly very respectable kind of political publication began [00:12:30] an article I hate George W. Bush. There, I said it. And he gets a tremendous relief that he can rip off the mask and express his vitriolic hatred of the president.

That's somebody who's sort of on the high end of the spectrum discovering the liberating force of expressive anger. The anger that I think becomes a political force for [00:13:00] the left, we're going to be binary about it, is of this, a lifestyle of almost constant rage renewed maybe every morning by going to the internet and seeing what your fellows on the Daily Kos or something are griping about that day.

So a lifestyle comes into it. It's not simply that I'm enraged that the Supreme Court handed the presidency to Bush [00:13:30] and not to Gore, but rather it's, I can be irritated all the time, and that becomes then part of my character.

Now I set that up as a contrast to the anger on the right, because while people on the right are equally human and can get peeved about things, they seldom turned it into a lifestyle. It was not the ruling passion of people's lives. [00:14:00] Conservatives tend to see politics as just one part of life, and they've got other things going on, their family, their jobs, or church, their clubs, that sort of thing. And it made it difficult for conservatives to take it terribly seriously that the other side was just simmering with rage all the time.

Well, we saw that change with the 2016 election in which the left responded [00:14:30] to Trump's victory there with this outpouring of quite astonishing expressive rage. There was the, I think, fairly called riot on Inauguration Day with the women coming to town and wearing their pussy hats or whatever they were called. But there was also setting fire to police vehicles and a [00:15:00] general mayhem that accompanied that. The rage that started then was fueled by the accusations that Trump had colluded with Vladimir Putin and we were onto these four years of continuous hectoring backed by the FBI and other law enforcement authorities that made people on the right feel that their election was being delegitimized by [00:15:30] the mainstream press right in front of them. So a sense-

Bill Walton: It was. It certainly was. The refusal to accept Trump as president was absolute. This is The Bill Walton Show. I'm talking with Peter Wood, brilliant scholar about his book Wrath, and about how anger seems to have consumed America on both sides of the argument.

One of the points you make in the book, Peter, is the role that media's played in this and that I think [00:16:00] the progression that you're talking about over decades is that the media went from the business of trying to create informed citizens. And I think your term, or maybe you're quoting somebody else is it's become in the business of creating enraged citizens, and anger sells. And anger sells on cable, it sells on the print newspaper, it sells online. And it seems like that's been captured as a very effective way to build ratings and ad [00:16:30] dollars.

Peter Wood: Well, I think anger is, for one thing, it's entertaining. It's a spectacle. When you see other people angry, you tend to pay attention to it. But it's also thoroughly a tool that gets people up out of their seats and willing to do something, whether it's to riot in Kenosha, or maybe play some mischievous role in the election. [00:17:00] That motivating factor combines with the entertaining factor that puts the press in this situation of, okay, why not anger? Why not just play this all the time?

A figure like Walter Cronkite back in the day, not somebody who I have the highest regard for, but his affect, the emotional front that he put on the way he was subtly bringing his [00:17:30] politics into CBS News was always ... The word is avuncular. He was everybody's uncle. And that was not the picture of an uncle who was off on a tirade. He was kind of gentle and unassuming.

It's hard to think of a figure who has large access to the media now who represents anything like that. Maybe it's [00:18:00] you.

Bill Walton: I'm working on it. I'll have to get a pipe.

This is one of the purposes of the show, to talk about issues in a way that we can do it without ad hominem attacks on the other side. And Jonathan Chait,

opening with, "I can say it, I hate George Bush," is really, he's reduced himself to really a child.

Peter Wood: [00:18:30] Well, there is something childish about anger. In fact, if I can indulge my interest in history on this ...

Bill Walton: Please.

Peter Wood: We have the word tantrum, which is actually a pretty recent word. It seems to have come out of British society at the end of the 18th century. It was very quickly adopted by Americans. Why? It was a word that could be used to stigmatize childish [00:19:00] rage. And it was clearly a word used for, I guess, the social scientists would say social control. It's telling you that that shape kind of behavior is childish and not to be indulged. So even if you're just overwhelmingly angry, it's not the place to go out in the public square and display it. In the past, people who did were [00:19:30] most immediately marginalized.

John Brown of the Harpers Ferry raid was a very angry man by all accounts, but not respected for it. The idea that you give into your maybe justified hatred of the system of child slavery in the country by going out and slaughtering people was just not how adults were [00:20:00] meant to conduct themselves.

So I think that this dissent where are the adults in the room or we've marginalized adulthood? Well, yeah, we have to a fairly large degree. I see conservatives as fighting back against that. When parents show up at school board meetings these days, some of them behave in a childish way. They ramble, they scream, [00:20:30] but most of them are there with kind of good talking points. They've done their homework. They know what's going on in the schools. And they want to challenge the members of their school board about what they're doing.

The characterization of these parents, and by all means, are they all conservative? They're just parents. But characterizing them as Merrick Garland did as domestic [00:21:00] terrorists whereas many on the right are doing this just as out of control people is the sort of thing that really drives people like me through distraction.

Bill Walton: And me. You write something pretty interesting. You write, "This wrath is further prodded by a progressive elite that seems to take sadistic delight in devising new ways to torment ordinary Americans." And then we run down the list, [00:21:30] the anti-Americanism, the 1619 projects, critical race theory, abolishing our national border, flooding the country with illegals, and really with abandon, defund the police, climate change, we should shut down the economy because of a one-degree rise in the Earth's temperature, driving up gas prices along with that. And a lot of us think that the Wuhan virus [00:22:00] was manipulated. Whether the Chinese let it out on purpose or whether they just

took advantage of it, the Chinese did. And then I think you see the American left moving very quickly to change the way our elections are held.

And now we find ourselves with bills in Congress that want to enshrine the kind of voting abuses that took place in 2020, and make it part of permanent law. [00:22:30] It seems designed to goad us into the wrath that we're talking about here. And I for one, wonder how this ends. I fear it. I fear it ends badly, but I don't know what badly looks like.

Peter Wood: Right. Well, I do think that at least some on the left are deliberately goading the right. Actually, I'll go a little bit further than that. I think the FBI's operation in Michigan [00:23:00] where they essentially orchestrated a kidnapping plot against the governor there was the template for what the FBI was doing on January 6th.

Bill Walton: I only saw the headlines. The FBI really was involved in kidnapping, the plot to kidnap the Michigan governor?

Peter Wood: Yes. Well, the FBI in the form of about half of the participants [00:23:30] in the plot were paid informants of the FBI. They were FBI agents or just people who had been groomed by the FBI. But the plot there was clearly one that did not occur spontaneously among plotters. They were coached into doing it. And when they finally committed to a plan that they hadn't devised, they were arrested for [00:24:00] conspiracy.

More fools they to have been caught in such a nefarious web, but what a disgrace that our most important law enforcement agency in the country would engage in that sort thing. We would call it in most circumstances entrapment. I'm not a lawyer. I don't know if this actually meets the definition of entrapment, but I would expect that the attorneys for those [00:24:30] who have been arrested are going to mount a defense along those lines, unless they've been further tempted into plea bargaining out so they can avoid long jail terms.

But in any case, it's, I suppose, unproven at this point, but it seems very likely given the evidence that has come out, that the leadership of the Proud Boys and some of these other groups that allegedly [00:25:00] were fomenting a riot on Capitol Hill were in fact, people colluding with the FBI. Why is the FBI doing this? I think their theory of it goes something like this. There's bad people out there who mean to do terrible things if we don't catch them beforehand, that they're very hard to catch while they're fomenting their own plots. So let's infiltrate them and give them a plot, and we can prevent them from doing something [00:25:30] worse by tempting them to do something now.

Well, that's one way of reading what happened on January 6th. Maybe it's too conspiratorial. I don't know. But the facts will presumably eventually come out. But even if there was no FBI involvement, the recategorization of the whole

thing as an insurrection, doesn't need a kind of common sense test. If people were planning to [00:26:00] overthrow the government, surely they would've shown up with some deadly weapons in hand and some tactics for one, asking security guards to take down the barriers. There was something about it that never really added up, and thus, well, I guess, I'm circling back to this idea of why is the right on the point of wrath?

Well, in my, sort of offhand construction [00:26:30] of this, wrath isn't just more intense anger. It's the place that anger goes to when its legitimate outlets have been boarded up or chain shut. So when Americans find that the courts aren't interested in their grievances, that the law enforcement authorities stand down, that our elected leaders say [00:27:00] you're all in the wrong and where the press incessantly repeats the idea that election mischief was the big lie or that anybody who doubts the insurrection narrative is disloyal, then you have wrath.

Bill Walton:

Yeah. This is The Bill Walton Show. I'm here talking with Peter Wood. And we're talking about how wrath is playing up. And you point out in the book, and I agree, that [00:27:30] if you look at the way these institutions have responded to ordinary Americans and not heard their legitimate concerns, they feel betrayed. They feel betrayed by all the courts, the police, the politicians, the bureaucrats, all the people that normally you think you could go to and get a fair hearing in the past. I don't think people feel like we're able to get a fair hearing anymore.

Peter Wood:

Right. I think we don't [00:28:00] feel like we can get a fair hearing. And we also have a distrust deeper than any before of the authorities who are telling us what to do. If the FBI comes knocking at my door ... Over the years, I've had conversations with FBI agents and involved in various investigations. I always treated them with the utmost respect. I think these days, not. Maybe I just don't want to have that conversation. I don't trust them.

But there is that [00:28:30] distrust that applies to some other things. You've mentioned a few of them. The COVID mandates, the way in which the whole epidemic was framed for us and became an excuse for the federal and state governments to assume enormous powers that they never had in the past, all justified in the name of safety and all presented initially as these are just temporary emergency steps that we've seen the emergency [00:29:00] to diffuse out into being a permanent condition.

There's the climate change stuff, a topic I've been interested in for decades. I remember when the great climate change worry was that we were going to freeze to death in a new ice age. Then within the space of about two years, it pivoted, no, we're going to bake to death in a Sahara of some sort. The beginning of that narrative [00:29:30] was a UN report in 1987. The former prime minister of Norway led a commission and came up with the idea of sustainability. Well, that word is now almost omnipresent in our lives and it's very connected with the global warming climate change narrative.

Sustainability was in its birth kind of access road to socialism. It was let's [00:30:00] take our resources of the world and distribute them equitably and with a mind that we shouldn't use up anything now that might be of use to future generations. And that definition goes into the thinking that if the earth heats up a little bit or a lot, we are somehow compromising the ability of future generations to enjoy the good things we've had. Well, that sounds like such [00:30:30] an appeal to good sense. Who could be against it? But then you find that the whole global warming narrative segues so easily into, well, the real problem is capitalism. And if we can just rid ourselves of the profit motives and go to some sort of benign collective economy that is completely global, we'll avoid this great catastrophe coming down on us.

Bill Walton: Sounds like we're, [00:31:00] and my view is the climate change is a ruse, is a guise, disguising a ... not very well disguising an economic and power and social agenda. And if you look at the hardcore climate people, they're de-growth people who think the world economy should be shrinking. And of course, with the world economy growing in the last 250 years, we brought billions of people out [00:31:30] of poverty, out of starvation, into pretty good lives. And they want to turn the clock back on that. And-

Peter Wood: Exactly. I think there's a professor at Middlebury College named Bill McKibben who's one of the leaders of all this. McKibben is on record as saying that the human population of earth should be reduced by nine tenths of ... That's-

Bill Walton: Nine tenths. 90%?

Peter Wood: 90% because then we would have a population that could easily [00:32:00] survive by basically subsistence farming and hunting and gathering. We no longer need to fuel on.

Bill Walton: I need to share something with him that the population of the earth is slow ... The growth is slowing dramatically. China's fallen below replacement rate. Japan's long been below that. Even Africa is beginning to see the birth rate decline. Western Europe certainly. They're going to get what they want with fewer people without having to put us through all this [00:32:30] hell.

Peter Wood: Well, let me-

Bill Walton: One thing I wanted to ask you about. You're involved with a very, in fact, you lead a very interesting group called the National Association of Scholars. And I hadn't heard about it before I came across your book. And evidently there are a lot of like-minded people on or about campuses that share our point of view. And you've gathered together, I think probably to research and reinforce [00:33:00] your thinking?

Peter Wood: Well, we number about 4,000, that's actual members of the organization. Our mailing lists, all told, bring the sort of followership I would say closer to 20,000.

Been around since the early 1980s and were formally incorporated in 1987. So this organization, I guess, could [00:33:30] be called the remnant of those who still believe that a classical liberal arts education is a good idea. That the front and center in higher education and in all education should be things like the pursuit of truth and intellectual freedom. We add to that the cultivation of good citizenship, virtue citizenship. Thought ideas that would've been terribly controversial [00:34:00] not so long ago, these days, those things, pursuit of truth or true citizenship, intellectual freedom add up to fascism. That's ...

Bill Walton: Yeah.

Peter Wood: So anybody who is willing to join an organization like mine is at some risk, especially if you're pursuing an active career in higher education of being spotted out as the enemy. We don't [00:34:30] make our membership list public for that reason, but we try to be truly faithful to the mission, although I can talk to you and others in a fashion that suggests that I'm pretty partisan. And that's true. I see myself as a conservative and I'm trying to promote an agenda that I think makes sense to [00:35:00] the common man in America.

The organization itself approaches these things with real resolve to present the actual neutral account of what's actually happening. We do in-depth search reports. Some of them are hundreds of pages long. We take up subjects like the sustainability [00:35:30] movement or China's Confucius Institutes or administrative blog on campus. We're taking a look at the natural sciences and how they've been infected by a kind of crisis of reproducible results.

So we try to cover the whole waterfront in higher education. Lately we've been moving into some areas of K12 education with the 1619 Project and stuff like that. But I want [00:36:00] to do it in a non-dilemmical way. And the purpose of this is that we give people who are undecided as well as people who may already have strong opinions, a genuine knowledge basis to deal with the issues at hand. I think that's the role that we can play in the political economy of America. We're providing something that doesn't otherwise exist.

Bill Walton: Well, you call yourself partisan. [00:36:30] I guess I call myself partisan, but coming back to this idea of the divide. There's a real bifurcation. It's a binary. I think you called it binary distinctions. On the one hand, you got the left who are secular, and they've been, I guess, since the French Revolution and they're globalists, they're elitist, they're statist, they're environmentalist, strongly attached to victim group policies.

And on our side, we believe in faith [00:37:00] and we believe in the nation and borders and family and the integrity of local communities. And we don't agree. I mean, there's a fundamental division and we no longer really can agree on facts. I mean, global warming, climate change is a good example. We've got lots of people, very smart people on our side that agree that the situation is not nearly dire and certainly doesn't [00:37:30] require the draconian measures they're trying to bring about. And then the virus, the Wuhan virus, lots of information

now about how lethal really is and to whom and what the proper measures are to deal with it. And yet, you can't get people to agree on even those basic facts.

Peter Wood: There are organizations and individuals who preach the message of let's go back and find the middle of the [00:38:00] group called Braver Angels for example, that tries to bring together left and right to have productive conversations. I don't fault them for trying, but I am just not capable of believing that you could get a so-called climate denier and a climate fanatic in the room together and find much of a productive conversation.

Bill Walton: [00:38:30] They're always very short conversations and very quickly grow personal and heated and filled with wrath. Just a quick aside. I originally started this show a few years ago, and I had the title was Common Ground. And I was seeking the same thing. And then after a few stabs at it, I really couldn't find much common ground. So I really focused on what I thought were true things and wanted the [00:39:00] show to be about true things and highlight those. But I think people trying to find the middle now, that's a tough task.

Peter Wood: I spent yesterday working on a book review of a book by a man named Evan Osnos. He's a writer for the New Yorker magazine. And he wrote Joe Biden's campaign biography. But the book that I was reviewing is new [00:39:30] entitled Wildland: The Making of America's Fury.

So what it is, is the mirror opposite of my book, Wrath of America enraged. Osnos takes his timeline from 9/11 to January 6th. He and I agree on one thing, that America has become a very angry place, but Osnos' view of it is [00:40:00] that, well, it's just these irrational people on the right who were made fearful by the attack on 9/11, their world started falling apart and they didn't know what to do. And that made them prey to these demagogues like Sarah Palin and the people who led the ... He takes it up to Trump and beyond, but we're in this land where [00:40:30] if only we can get beyond those terrible people who have been twisting the fears of ordinary folk, the ordinary folk will come over and we will once again have a country where we can trust that democracy will do its thing, democracy in his view, being essentially the folk will settle down and listen to what their betters tell them they should do. So Wildland-

Bill Walton: Democracy worked very well in [00:41:00] the Soviet Union with one party.

Peter Wood: Exactly. The worldview of Mr. Osnos and mine, I said they can't exist in the same room because they're in the same room right now. But I'm astonished that when I put the books on top of each other, they don't burst into flames.

Bill Walton: This is The Walton Show. I'm here with Peter Wood, and we're talking about the divisions in America. We've got a few minutes left. [00:41:30] Peter, speculate. I feel this tremendous anger and a sense of betrayal that our institutions have gone to the dark side. Yet I very much do not want to provoke something that we would all regret. And so in your group and your book and your writings, have

you thought about some lines of action that might lead us out of this terrible place?

Peter Wood:

Well, [00:42:00] I have hopes more than I have lines of action, but I do see that the spontaneous creation of movement of parents to go to school board meetings and push back against the 1619 Project, and that's the diversity inclusion stuff and critical race theory is a hugely positive development. Those are not people who are picking up their AR-15s and trying to [00:42:30] enforce their point of view with bullets. The decision of airline pilots and air traffic controllers to sit at home, stick out rather than accept the vaccine mandates, similar things have happened here in New York with police, firefighters, and some teachers point to point me to a spirit of civil disobedience [00:43:00] that is not violent. It's just this willingness at some point to say, "No, no more, you're not going to get away with it."

We have the Durham investigation coming along at a glacial pace, but data appears to be doing its work slowly to rid the country of the idea that the press played a very wholesome role or the law enforcement authorities were to be trusted [00:43:30] when they went after Trump for four years of.

So I take it that those are avenues that should be encouraged at every moment or things that can be done short of becoming violent. The left wants conservatives, the right, the deplorables or whatever we call them to act out, to be the first ones to throw [00:44:00] a punch or to throw a punch back after one's been thrown at them. The trial in Kenosha right now is a good example of that. Anybody who does resist violently is going to be held up nationally as the image of who conservatives really are. They're just being restrained at the moment by superior force, but we need to save the Bidenistas of even more power [00:44:30] to keep those people down because they're dangerous.

Well, I want to be dangerous in the sense that I want to be able to challenge this new authoritarianism that has taken away the consent of the governed and undermined many crucial aspects of our republic. We've not going to get there by simply playing by their rules, but the way you break the rules has to be shrewd and it has to be nonviolent. [00:45:00] It has to figure out where the pressure points are. That's the best I can do.

Bill Walton:

Well, I agree. I've been involved in thinking about this for not as long as you have, but I've learned about this communist from Italy, Gramsci, that talked about the need to take over the cultural institutions. And he called it, "We need to go in a long march through the institutions." And a hundred years on, he wrote in the '20s, [00:45:30] they've succeeded. And if I have a hope, it's the hope that what's going on in the schools now might be the thin end of the wedge that we can begin to take some things back. Because it seems like every time you and I and people of our mind, of like mind talk about this, we talk about if we could just get education, if we could get K12 education, we could do a lot of good and begin to change a lot of other things. And of course, the barrier is to getting [00:46:00] in there, not just school boards, but it's teachers

unions, curriculum developers, consultants, the whole education establishment, which is aligned against us.

But with the lockdown they made have made a mistake because all of a sudden the mothers and parents started seeing what their kids were being taught. And for the first time they're saying, "No. We don't want that. There are schools. They're not your schools." And I think if we can push that through a next election and make that a much, [00:46:30] much more pronounced movement about not taking back to your schools, but taking back our culture, that might seem to be a peaceful way to bring it about.

Peter Wood:

Well, the term culture war to me is a very real matter. I think we need to be contesting things in schools, first of all, but it belongs in how we handle the arts and literature and music. Whatever [00:47:00] is out there right now is essentially an arm of propaganda for this progressive left world view. Not necessarily in every case is political view, but the culture that pervades is what tells people how to lead their lives, what's permissible, what is the good way to be. And if the good way to be is angry all the time, we're not in a good place. That's not what America is all about.

So I'm [00:47:30] encouraged by the results of the election earlier this month, but I'm also thinking that the head of steam has been worked up that should, if things go well, play out well in the midterm elections next year, and we'll get somewhere with this. Nonetheless, we are still left with the Biden presidency and all that entails.

Bill Walton:

Well. Yeah. I don't even want to think about that full term. [00:48:00] Peter Wood, thank you, author of a great book, Wrath: America Enraged. I highly recommend you pick it up. It's very interesting reading. Really sort of tells you how we got to where we are today. And Peter, I look forward to talking with you again sometime in a not too distant future about maybe some things that are developed this year that are going to move the country back in the right direction.

Peter Wood:

Cool. Thank you so much for having me.

Bill Walton:

Thanks for joining. It's The Walton Show. [00:48:30] You can find us in all the major social media platforms, all the audio podcast platforms, and also Rumble and YouTube. Occasionally YouTube takes exception to our content, but I think this time it's been unexceptionable and you can find us on YouTube quite soon. Thank you. Peter, thank you.

I hope you enjoyed the conversation. Want more? Click the Subscribe button or head over to thebillwaltonshow.com [00:49:00] to choose from over a hundred episodes. You can also learn more about our guest on our interesting people page. And send us your comments. We read every one and your thoughts help us guide the show. If it's easier for you to listen, check out our podcast page and

subscribe there. In return, we'll keep you informed about what's true, what's right, and what's next. Thanks for joining.