



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** An Immigrant's Journey of Faith and Freedom to America – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Cornel Potra

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**Dr. James Dobson:** Welcome, everyone, to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

**Roger Marsh:** Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, you're probably aware of the fact that a person who comes into the United States who is not a citizen yet must go through a step-by-step process to legally become one, and yet there are many people crossing the border illegally each and every day, who are then offered services and resources that most of us have had to work very, very hard to get. Immigration and immigration reform, a very hot button topic for many, especially during this election season.

So how should we as Christians think biblically about immigration? Well, today here on Family Talk, Gary Bauer, the Senior Vice President of Public Policy at the Dr. James Dobson Policy Center, is joined by his guest, Cornel Potra. Cornel is a man who came to the United States from Romania with hopes of attaining religious freedom and a promising future. He became an American citizen, he became a pastor, but is now an immigration attorney, and he's got a fascinating testimony to share. So let's join Gary Bauer right now as he further introduces today's guest on today's edition of Family Talk.

**Gary Bauer:** Hello, everybody. Welcome to Family Talk. I'm Gary Bauer. I'm really glad that you've joined with us today. This is an important time in America, as we all know. This is an important year. This year we will elect a new president. We will elect an entirely new House of Representatives. I remember the House is up for re-election. And we will elect a third of the United States Senate. So at a time like this, we're having really big debates about a lot of important issues. Everything from America's national defense, how do we stay safe in a dangerous world? There's debates about the economy. What's the best way to grow the economy? How do we make sure that this is still a country where people have

opportunity to start out from a modest beginning and go on and accomplish great things for them and their families? The list goes on and on.

There's two issues that are getting a lot of attention and that we certainly care about here at the James Dobson Family Institute and on Family Talk. One of them is our God-given liberties. As you all know, because hopefully you were taught it, but if not, if you listen to this radio program or to the work of Dr. Dobson over the years, you know that America was built on the idea that our liberty comes from God. America was built that liberty comes from him, not from Caesar, not from the government. That's a big deal that makes us very different than a lot of other places around the world.

In recent years, there have been efforts to restrict the liberties that we take for granted, particularly what's been called our first liberties that are in the First Amendment to the Constitution, the freedom of religion, the freedom of assembly, and the freedom of speech. And there are differing views about those freedoms and whether they should be restricted or not. In the political divide in America, there are people on both sides that have very different views. At JDFI, we're all in on freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly. We're very resistant to the idea that any government bureaucrat should be able to restrict those liberties. Another big issue is the issue of how we should control our borders. How should immigration policy work? Should the borders be open or should the borders be closed? And of course, as you know, if you've paid any attention at all, we're in a big controversy now because in recent years, our borders have been essentially open, and somewhere between 15 and 20 million people have entered the country illegally, and that's a hotly debated issue.

Well, we're blessed today to have a guest that's uniquely qualified to talk about both of those issues. His name is Cornel Potra. He's the founder of the Potra Law Firm, which is located north of Atlanta. His firm specializes in immigration law, and it's a subject that he knows very well because he himself was a legal immigrant from the nation of Romania. Romania has had many decades in the past of being under communism. They were, quite frankly, under the thumb of the then Soviet Union. And so Cornel knows something about what it's like to live in a country where the freedoms we take so much for granted are in fact being severely restricted by communists, by Marxists, by bureaucrats that think they know better about what kind of liberty you have than you do.

So Cornel, welcome to the show. Dr. Dobson, his wife Shirley send you their best. And I'm certainly happy that we have a chance now to spend some time with you and to have a good conversation about these important issues. What I would like to do is start off right at the beginning by asking you to talk to us about what it was like as a child growing up in Romania and how that informed and molded the life that you went on to live here in America.

Cornel Potra:

Thank you, Gary. What a pleasure and what an honor to be on the radio broadcast with you and Dr. Dobson. First, I would like to say that we raised our

kids here in the United States, five of them, by listening to many of Dr. Dobson's special radio broadcasts and marriage counseling, marriage advice. We have raised our family under the teachings of Dr. Dobson and his books, and we are very grateful for that.

Gary Bauer: Thank you for those kind words. Dr. Dobson and all of us are very blessed by your partnership with us and your support for the ministry, and we're glad to spend this time with you today.

Cornel Potra: Thank you, Gary. Yes, I was born in the country of Romania and most of the people of my age remember the revolution of 1989, December 1989, when communism was overthrown in Romania. And the people were fed up with the socialist, Marxist, Leninist ideologies that were imposed upon a beautiful nation, a beautiful country of Romania by the Soviets. And Romania and the government bought into that system and suppressed the people. In the beginning, they came up with promises that life will be better, that the more we surrendered our freedoms to the government, the happier we would become and the more content we would become because the government knows better, and the government knew how to take care of the needs of the people of the country.

So I was born in 1964 in Romania when Romania was still doing all right, but was recovering from the Second World War. Romania was considered to be the breadbasket of Europe. And Romania has mountains, an opening to the Black Sea, Danube River, lots of resources, a very beautiful, rich country. And the communists managed to reduce the nation and the country to poverty. I remember getting up early in the morning to go and buy some milk or a loaf of bread, we had to stand in line for hours, had to wake up at 4:30 in the morning, stand in line. And many times by the time I got in front of the line, the bread and the milk were gone.

So the poverty was extreme and the persecution was extreme, especially for the people who were Christian. I was born in a Christian family. My parents were heavily involved in the church, an Evangelical church. I was born in a family of 10 children. Seven of us are alive today. And life became so harsh and so unbearable that when I finished high school, I decided that I would escape Romania. I heard a lot of things about the United States. I would hear stories of some people who escaped communism and came to the United States. They would secretly send pictures and share their stories about the freedoms of this country, the freedoms that you, Gary, mentioned in the beginning of the show. And something in me said, "This system is not right." I didn't know any different, but I knew deep down in my soul there was a better place in this world where I could express my opinions without being threatened to be put in jail and lose my life because I spoke freely.

Gary Bauer: You mentioned that it was a dictatorial country and that you didn't have freedom, but I think it's very hard for Americans, and I find this to be quite

frustrating myself, because over the years I've done a lot of study about what has happened in country after country that listens to this sort of siren song of Marxism and communism, which can sound so good when it's first being presented. Everybody's going to be equal. Everybody would have everything that every [inaudible 00:10:38]. It's all going to be shared. We'll take money away from bad people and we'll give it to the people that deserve it.

And there are so many countries around the world right now, we're seeing what happened in Venezuela, which is, when you were describing Romania, Venezuela was sort of that type of nation in Latin America, and it went down the road of communism and socialism and it's turned into a disaster. In fact, millions of Venezuelans have escaped to try to get here and to other countries. But I still think it's hard for people to get their arms around it. Can you give us an example in Romania of how you were treated as a believer and how your family was treated, if there's any specific stories that you would feel comfortable to share with us? I think our listeners would appreciate hearing that.

Cornel Potra: I remember on Monday morning going to school and my teachers would ask me, "How did you spend your Sunday?" And I told them the truth, I went to church. And because of that, my friends in school abandoned me, and I remember being isolated. My teachers treated me differently than they treated other students in class. When I finished high school, I was not able to attend a university in Romania. Christians were persecuted because of their belief, because they went to church, because on Sunday they chose to go to the house of the Lord. I remember one time

Gary Bauer: The schools were controlled by the communists, right? These were the government-run schools.

Cornel Potra: Yes, the teachers and the educators were Communist Party members. They had to be because they were in the forefront of the young generation, and the dictator wanted to raise a generation that was brainwashed to believe that communism was the best system in the world. And we see this here in the United States, Gary, with the Ivy League schools that are brainwashing the young generation of this country to lead them to believe that our form of government is not the right one, and that we need to go back to a system of communism, Marxism, Leninism, socialism, where people are brought all to the same level.

In Romania, under communism, there was no middle class. There were people who were part of the government who received privileges, Communist Party members, and then there was the working class. And the working class was the byproduct of the system, which was brainwashed to do exactly what the system asked them to do. It was like a robot, a machine that was predictable, that did not speak what they were not supposed to speak, they did not see what they were not supposed to see, and they were not supposed to hear certain things.

And we see this happening in our educational system. So many schools that were started out on the right path but took off. And today we have the young generation that is brainwashed to believe differently than what the forefathers of this nation believed in. And this is so sad, and this is hurting us. My wife and I both were born in the country of Romania, and when we see what's happening here in the United States and the system that allows for such teachings that were thrown in the garbage can in Romania and in other parts of the world. And we see that it's not working in Venezuela, as you said. For the most free country in the world, the United States of America, and it's very hurting for us who forsook and who left behind such a system.

Gary Bauer:

Cornel in recent years, we've sadly seen these demonstrations in Washington D.C. And New York City and other places. That's a right we have to demonstrate. We don't want to do anything about that. But often these demonstrations turn into basically a riot. And one of the things that often happens is these young rioters will go to the statues and monuments of America's great founding fathers, the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial or statues to American military heroes and so forth, and they will attack those statues. In some cases, they literally have torn them down or they will deface them, they'll throw paint on them or fly the flags of foreign nations on them.

And people will often say, that's outrageous that they're doing it. Well, it is, but it's actually a symptom of what's happened in the classroom. These young Americans have been taught in classrooms that all those American heroes are actually terrible people, they're bad people, that America's a bad country. So what we're seeing when the monuments are attacked is a symptom of how much these American youth have been indoctrinated with something that you and your wife experienced firsthand in Romania, this sort of Marxist, socialist idea of what life should be like. It's very ironic and it's also tragic that we're experiencing this in the United States now.

Cornel Potra:

That is so true. The voice of the prophets, if we think about the Old Testament, always spoke about the consequences of Israel straying away from the precepts of God. And I like to think about Dr. Dobson as being one of the prophets that God used mightily in the history of this nation. He spoke a lot about our schools, our educational system. He spoke against the educators and the system taking the prayers out of school and replacing it with so many other false ideologies and teachings. And look where we are today. We are raising the flags of other nations in the world, and we strayed away from the foundational doctrines of this nation, but mostly from the foundational precepts of God, the Bible, the scripture that established this great nation in the world. And it's very, very sad to see this happening to the most free country in the world and to the world. Look at other nations, what's going on in Europe, on the streets of London, on the streets of other major cities in Europe, in Paris and other countries. What's happening is just unheard of.

Gary Bauer: Cornel, when I give a speech somewhere over the years, I've been honored to have the chance to talk to a lot of different audiences. And for quite a while now at the end of a speech when I've discussed some of the issues we're discussing now, and then later after the speech, I'll stay for a while in case people want to come up and talk with me or ask a question. And almost every time now there will be people who come up at the end with tears in their eyes and they'll tell me, "Mr. Bauer, I came here from Cuba," "I came here from Venezuela," "I came here from Communist China," or, "I came from Eastern Europe, from a country like Romania, and everything I saw happen in my country where we lost our liberty, we now see happening in America." And do you feel the same? It sounds like you may see the same things, the early signs of what it's like when liberty begins to slip away.

Cornel Potra: Absolutely. Absolutely. We have seen it, especially in the past 10, 15 years with the US Supreme Court decisions about family, about marriage, about the educational system in this country. We have seen a departure, an alienation of this country from the principles of God and the principles upon which this nation was founded. And it is very sad to see how many strange ways the nation is taking on, especially the young generation. And obviously we cannot but wonder, "God, what's going on with the United States of America?" And you mentioned the elections coming up in November, and this is a great time for the American nation to rise up, and we need to pray. I would like to ask that all the Christians, all the believers who believe in God, I do believe that this election will be a turning point for good in the United States if we make the right decision. But if we don't make the right decision, this country will go down so rapidly, so fast that we will not recognize it in the next couple of years.

Gary Bauer: I think we all have a sense of that. Even if the average person can't always describe exactly why they feel so uneasy, the polling shows that about three-quarters of the country will say, "We're headed in the wrong direction as a nation." And so you think, "Well, why is that?" And they'll say that even when the economy is strong, so it's not essentially an economic comment, it seems to me. I think it's people turn on the TV and they see the crime, often unspeakable crimes now, things way beyond what we would've seen in the past, things that seem unimaginable, the breakdown of the family, this attack on religious liberty that I know you're very concerned about. And there really is a concern that if we continue to move away from God, which according to our founders is the source of our liberty, there's an open question whether America's going to be able to make it or not.

Cornel Potra: I do believe in the grace of God. And the way I see the evil in the world today, it is like a ferocious dog, wild beast on a leash. And God holds the leash. God releases the evil, allows the evil in the world because of the wickedness of the heart of man. But I still believe that God is in control and nothing will happen absent the will of God. He knows what's going on. He's not taken by surprise, by the evil that's on the loose. But all these events that are happening in the world, there is such an awakening call in all this for the believers to be awakened to the

call of God, to the voice of the gospel of mercy and grace of God. God is calling us through all these things.

I thought COVID, that started in 2020, I was on a mission trip to Africa, Kenya, and we just came on Friday, and Monday morning the whole system shut down. If we wouldn't have returned on Friday, we would have been left outside the United States. And we entered the United States, everything shut down. And I thought, "God, you will use this COVID, this pandemic to bring the heart of this nation to you." And I couldn't wait to see how the revival will break out in the United States and in the world. And Gary, it didn't happen. And then we saw the streets burning, demonstrations, the riots, the stealing, the breaking into stores and all the rest of the evils, and then the transgenderism movement in the United States and all the legal battles that are happening in the United States, and it's a call for all the believers to rise up. We need to pray because this is a spiritual warfare, and if we don't do it, who else will do it? God holds the leash, but he's calling on us to stand up and be warriors for the kingdom.

Gary Bauer: Cornel, this has been a fantastic conversation, and what you've been telling us about your life in Romania and the importance of freedom. But there's so much more I want to talk to you about, including to dig down a little bit deeper into the issue of legal versus illegal immigration into our country. Could you come back tomorrow and spend some more time with us?

Cornel Potra: Absolutely. My pleasure.

Roger Marsh: Well, it is our prayer that our country does not suffer the same fate as other countries who have lost their freedoms and liberties. And friend, if you'd like to share today's broadcast with a friend or a loved one who would value the opinions shared on this broadcast, remember you could do so very easily using the Family Talk app or by visiting [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Now, in order to help protect our God-given rights here in the United States, it's imperative that every Christian who is eligible to vote casts a vote during this election season. It's the only way our biblical values will be best represented in the public square.

Now, to help encourage other believers to practice their right to vote, you can get a special faith votes sticker from our Dr. James Dobson Family Resource Center. Now, it's a very impactful sticker, just the simple phrase, faith votes. It speaks volumes about how important it is for us as Christians to get out and vote on November 5th. Now, we have a pack of 25 of these faith votes stickers that we'll be happy to send you as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute today. So to reserve yours, go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) and then click on the link on our homepage there. Together we can put our faith and our patriotism in action.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and may God continue to richly bless you and your family as you grow stronger in relationship with him. And be sure to join us again tomorrow for another edition of Dr. Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.