

Episode 48: Cutting the Knot



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*****Brady legal music*****

JJ

Hey everybody, this is the legal disclaimer, where I tell you that the views, thoughts and opinions shared on this podcast belong solely to our guests and our hosts, and not necessarily Brady or Brady's affiliates. Please note this podcast contains discussions of violence that some people may find disturbing. It's okay, we find it disturbing too.

*****Brady musical introduction*****

JJ

Welcome back everybody to Red, Blue and Brady. This is the final episode of our introductory racial justice podcast series, though you know certainly not our last or final podcast on the subject. We're gonna be incorporating discussions of racial justice and into all we do here on the

podcast and to help us do that this week, Kelly and I are joined by Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan Senior Policy Counsel at the LGBTQ Task Force and the lead author of their new gun violence prevention policy. We're gonna be discussing the idea, you know, that mental health is linked to gun violence as well as how police brutality, racism, transphobia, homophobia and misogyny are all part of the gun violence problem.

Then, in our "Unbelievable, But" segment I'm explaining why guns and toilet paper do not mix. Finally, in our news wrap up, we'll take a moment to recognize those who were killed by gun violence as well as ways to protect those you love.

Thanks for sticking with us through these difficult topics. It means a lot.

*****music plays*****

JJ

Gun violence has taken an enormous toll on the LGBT community, from the Pulse shooting in Orlando in 2016 to youth suicides and anti-trans violence across the country. The awful statistics just go on and on 1/3 of LGBT youth, for example, report having contemplated suicide nearly three times the national average. And many have contemplated involving a gun, transgender and gender nonconforming people have been very impacted by gun violence.

You know, since 2013 nearly 2/3 of fatal violence toward transgender and gender nonconforming people has involved a gun. And the overwhelming majority of those victims were black women under the age of 30. So to explore these intersections of identity and gun violence, we're so happy to be joined by the great Victoria. Victoria, would you mind introducing yourself to our listeners?

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

Hello, I am Victoria Rodriguez-Roldan. I am actually a senior policy counsel at the National LGBTQ Task Force where I focus a lot on our Disability Justice project and our Trans Justice project and more lately on our All of Me, All the Time campaign for nondiscrimination protections.

JJ

Oh, what is the "All of Me, All the Time"?

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

The All of Me, All the Time campaign is essentially the idea that people without non-comprehensive protections under the law can't be all of themselves all of the time. Thinking about how we hold many different identities say people of color who are also LGBTQ, who are also disabled is someone. And thus highlighting the need for comprehensive, explicit nondiscrimination protections, especially at the federal level.

Kelly

That's amazing.

JJ

Well, and that, I think, goes directly into the way we were both, Kelly and I both fangirling about getting you in today. One because we had read something that the National LGBTQ Task Force had put out, which was a long title rethinking LGBTQ policy, policy recommendations for gun violence prevention, using a racial disability in LGBTQ justice framework. And we both saw this and were like minds blown. This is amazing. So thank you all for making it and for creating it. And I was wondering if you could tell us about why this came about and how this came about. You know why using a racial disability and LGBTQ framework? Why gun violence? All of it.

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

So by the time there's this whole story that is somewhat related to the Pulse shooting just that by the time of the Pulse shooting we were already figuring out, okay, so what's our stance on gun violence prevention? And the overall position that the board of directors took at the task force was, essentially, we want a nation free from gun violence, let's keep it general. And after Pulse, pretty much all the LGBT organizations are like, hey, gun violence prevention is an LGBTQ issue. You know, hate crimes, all of that stuff.

However, in our case, we have the Disability Justice project, which I lead, I'm the director of it. And thus we felt we can't just take generically whatever is said that all the mainstream gun violence prevention orgs are doing because we felt oftentimes that say, stigmatizing mental illness, which is a topic we work on a lot. Also say measures like in some proposals and bills like the No Fly List which, given its racial discrimination, shouldn't be used to deny someone ice cream, let alone boarding a plane. So we wanted to create our own set of positions of this is how you do truly progressive a gun violence prevention advocacy. Because at the task force we try to be within the LGBTQ movement. The progressive voices of the movement were an unabashedly progressive org. And we wanted to create so this is how you do it, these are our positions, and thus you might see when you read it that, say, some of the core tenants are don't talk about mental illness don't conflate it with gun violence prevention, it's a red herring that conservative lawmakers like to use along the lines of whenever there's some mass shooting that doesn't involve a Muslim person, we're gonna call it oh, poor guy, need a mental mental health treatment. Let's blame all the mentally ill people.

And also we wanted to focus on issues that are often neglected, like we talk about mass shootings and so one, but oftentimes in the movement, we end up basically going to bed with law enforcement essentially. You're welcome for that mental image. One of my favorite lines in that entire document saying weapons of war do not belong in the hands of civilian police departments. And we wanted to tackle police perpetrated gun violence as a GVP issue. We wanted to tackle issues like overly criminalizing people of color, demilitarization of law enforcement and so forth and so forth. We wanted to focus on those issues that steered away from, say, the No Fly Lists from over criminalization and over reliance on non-violent crimes, and for that matter, especially on the use of the mental disabilities as a basis for it.

Kelly

Kind of from you know, that framework where you're thinking about this issue in terms of race and disability and LGBT rights and wondering what are some policy choices or programs that you all recommend that don't necessarily get the attention right now from the mainstream?

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

Well, I would say one of the biggest ones that surround gun violence, for example, police perpetrated violence. Like we talked, for example, we had a recent presidential candidate Beto was talking about, hey, let's take away all the assault rifles and let's ban them and so on. But I'm also saying okay, so what about law enforcement that is so heavily militarized in many parts of the country that will do no-knock warrants and SWAT teams over the possession of a plant? And that is a form of gun violence. That is something that impacts people of color another, especially people of color, poor people.

And another issue that I think about a lot like we talk for example, a lot about mass shootings, like we focus a lot on the topic of oh, somebody walked into Walmart and shot 20 people, and so on. But we're forgetting all the everyday gun violence in cities like Chicago that primarily impacts marginalized communities basically, and that is something we often neglect in the everyday discussion, I would dare say when we talk about mental health, also, that we need to address to work together with the disability community.

There is sometimes a fraught history where the disability advocacy world doesn't really trust the GVP World and neither because of the friction that there has been where oh, we end up opposing any bill that goes around like the next SS Social Security database idea, which would have used the [?] to add it to the next database. Uh, which we opposed and wrote comments against. But there needs to be some working together to come up with common sense solutions between each other.

JJ

Yeah, and I think that that's something that comes up a lot because I know, so one of the things that Brady's done, but other a lot of other gun violence prevention orgs have started to do is talk about how suicide is a form of gun violence. But what I think that what the movement's not doing super well is talking to communities who are afflicted by suicide or talking to people who are going through suicidal ideation and talking to them directly and saying this is how you can have agency and control in this situation too.

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

I mean, one of the often forgotten the issues that is addressed a lot in many mad pride and disability advocacy worlds is how it's the topic of course, of treatment and mental illness and how oftentimes the way we treat mental health and we use law enforcement as first responders is essentially stigmatizing mental illness and making it worse. And one of the tests I make is, you know, if I suddenly right now had a heart attack and dropped on the floor unconscious. What do you do? You freak out and call 911. At least I hope that's what you're gonna do. And what is gonna happen is an ambulance full of EMTs is gonna come and take me to a hospital full of doctors and nurses whose job will be to try to save me basically to try to keep the heart attack from killing me. But if it were mental health crisis, the people that will come in once you freak

out and call 911 is gonna be the big guys armed with guns whose task is to essentially protect us from the bad guys.

That's overall the idea of what is law enforcement, modern law enforcement in America, in theory at least. Um so we need to see it both how we treat mental illness and in the GVP context we often talk its solution to suicidality and suicide. The topic of risk based warrants and we that it's one of the topics address in the document just to try to focus it on actual predictors of violence. Avoid mentioning disability or mental illness in the criteria in the legal criterion focus of, for example, history of domestic violence history of violent attacks against others. Personally, I wouldn't even focusing on criminal history so much. Just do not give too much validity by the state to things like, you know, nonviolent drug crimes.

And so on one issue that I do take along sometimes when it comes to basically what is the criteria for taking a firearm away from someone. Is, from the legal perspective, as a lawyer by training, is that unfortunately, and this is one of the great legal tragedies, gun ownership is a constitutional right. However, if I can take that away from someone based on a disability, what other constitutional rights can I take away and what precedent does that set in a court fight over other rights, like right to parent, right to raise a family, right to privacy, right to vote.

Kelly

I was just gonna say the analogy that you used with 911 and, you know, a physical illness versus a mental illness, I never heard that before. But when you say it, it makes so much sense.

JJ

I love that you point out, though, and you do in the document as well that when you're talking about the past history of behavior, it's not necessarily past history of criminally recorded behavior because that was sort of one of the concerns that sort of we've even had. We talk about laws that come up with, like, mandatory sentencing, which is we continuing? We being, you know, America in this sense, not Kelly and I, we have no power, but we are, are we harming communities that have already been harmed because they're already over policed? So of course, there's gonna be more things on record in those communities.

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

I mean, that was one of the blow backs when Beto made that statement of, you know, sure will take them away. Which was, I think it was Julian Castro who made the comment of I don't want more law enforcement in our communities. Uh, do a more enforcing, violent loss, basically, which obviously creates a bit of attention because if we are to tackle gun violence, we need to tackle access to guns. But that requires basically loss, that will in some way punish you for having those guns. One of the possibilities we talk about is ways to limit it, say, in requiring insurance, other requirements that essentially are onerous.

And this encourages gun violence or gun and gun possession but that doesn't necessarily criminalize it. And that is attention that I acknowledge that sometimes to some extent you need to criminalize certain actions. But at the same time, we don't want to create a system that is going to, again, proportionally target poor people, people of color and so on. For example, if you set up

the most stringent licensing requirement out there, you have to jump through all these legal hoops say in New York City, here and in some other parts of the country, the people who are going to be doing that are wealthy, primarily white people, people who can afford to say, hire an attorney to say, hey, I want to own a gun, help me jump through all these hoops and the people who will get arrested for illegal possession are the people who cannot afford them. So we need to find ways that universally tackle that and it may well be just banning it outright, which is the eventual goal where we talk about, let's just talk about guns specifically. Let's just get rid of firearms altogether. And when we do that, let's also talk about police firearms, like banning the militarization of police banning the use of military surplus programs and funding for law enforcement.

Kelly

I have a question to kind of follow up on. You know, this tension we have between a world that looks like the UK or even Canada and where we are right now because Brady as an organization, we're kind of gun owners and non gun owners. And our posture is kind of Heller is what it is. And so what can we do? You know right now. So I'm wondering, you know, kind of in a short term or with their structure we have now, how can organizations like Brady be intentional about the policies and the programs that we support with our platform to make sure that we aren't for things that are gonna have a disproportionate impact on people of color or that are somehow going to have the unintended effect of giving, you know, opportunities to stop and frisk people or, you know, over police them. I'm just wondering, what can we do today and tomorrow?

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

I mean, I think a lot. And today and tomorrow just work more closely with racial justice advocates, and advocates for other communities like disability and and the LGBT community. I think a lot of the disability community because of the historical fraction where gun violence prevention advocates will say, hey, we have all these measures that would take away guns from certain people so costs justifies the means and justify the means And the disability advocates are saying, hey, these people also have civil rights and don't single us out basically. So that is a bridge that really needs to be addressed so that we can come up with solutions to GVP that address that don't single people out under disability.

And also we need to talk about racial justice advocacy, anti-police violence advocacy, where we talk about programs like stop and frisk like criminalization and so on. Where, like a significant amount of police shootings, the excuse is, I thought he had a gun. Yes, it was a cell phone. It turns out he didn't have anything, but we need to tackle that attitude. If McDonald's workers are expected to deal with all the antics and quasi-violence of the average customer, and I think anyone who's worked in retail can tell you of the patience you need to deal with people.

JJ

Kelly and I just looked at each other, horrified with flashbacks.

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

Police, police, can deal with the average semi-violent person without killing them, without saying, oh, I panicked. Oh I was afraid for my life. Guess what? The average employee, at Target that goes with Karen, has good reason to fear at times.

JJ

But I wondered, too, if then, part of that is, it's the context. It's the context, right? It's that police officers are trained if a hand goes to the waist or to someone's head shoot and don't stop shooting because they're trained that violence is going to be done, and that's a problem, and that's and so that's a problem. But then it's that because of that in that history and the way that sort of policing has worked in certain communities in the U.S. and then not worked in other communities in the U.S. I think that when people go into interactions with police they are justifiably nervous, intense and scared, and then it becomes this endless wheel of everybody that feels unsafe. Everybody feels outgunned. And then, but you have somebody who has the power of the state behind them. Someone doesn't.

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

I think what another good test is when you get pulled over for running a stop sign or for going a bit too fast? Do you feel safe when the cop is walking towards the car to tell you you know why I pulled you over? You know?

JJ

Yeah and that's I think, also a way too of sort of like doing a privilege check because I do and Kelly you just shook your head that you don't. We've talked, Kelly and I have talked about this cause we both go running in the morning and she related a story. I don't wanna tell tales for you, but about not wanting to.

Kelly

Yeah, I ran past the capital very often, and if it's dark. I usually if it's cold and it's dark. I put my gloves in my waistband pocket because I go in and out of having cold, hot hands and I will never take those gloves out. Period. I don't care if I can't feel my hands anymore. I will wait until I'm away just because I don't want to take that risk of being misperceived.

JJ

Whereas then the privilege is that what I've seen a cop out on my runs. I've been like, oh, good, nothing's going to happen to me like a scary guy isn't gonna pop out of an alley.

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

Sad that in many cases the scary guy is a cop.

JJ

And that's, I think, the difference of what and a lot of that is because I'm a white lady. There's a power in that, you know, happenstance of birth. And I think a lot of times people don't want to have conversations about this, that maybe that the movement hasn't actually we just like the movement hasn't been, you know, honest about racism, hasn't been honest about disability issues like it's...

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

And in the case of disability, where people are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators. But also when we in both law enforcement and GVP advocacy, we need to question, you know, to what extent are they willing to hold themselves accountable for their own police perpetrated gun violence and their own use? Because I don't see, like I ended up tweeting it out in that famous debate where Beto said, yes, we will take them away which was, you know, refreshingly honest in many ways. I said, well can we do it with law enforcement? And the question is, to what extent are people willing to give up that power to not just have a monopoly over the use of force? Which is how Max Weber describes the state, the one that has the legal monopoly over the use of force.

Kelly

I just wanted to kind of touch on something you said earlier when you were talking about mental illness in the disability community, because one thing that struck me is to kind of shift the conversation to the trauma related to gun violence and the trauma of victimization. And sometimes when we talk about it, we only think about, you know, oh, mental illness means you are going to become violent instead of thinking about what impacts does violence have on mental illness, on mental health and kind of getting us to reckon with that. Because that is, I think part of it.

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

I mean some disability advocates every time, personally, every time there's a mass shooting or similar tragedy, I pretty much start counting the minutes till someone blames mental illness, unless the perpetrator is a brown person who shouted Allah Akbar before it. Then we start talking about terrorism and all the Republicans actually care, which also speaks to privilege here. But the point is many in the disability community do point out, and I think Coakley, who leads the disability project at CAP, which is all the victims become disabled after a brush with gun violence. And being mentally because being exposed to violence, having your loved ones be exposed to violence and so one it's inherently traumatic or, for that matter, because you were physically a victim. That is in many ways how we need to approach the disability community. How inherently disabling it is to be a victim of gun violence, and we also talk a lot when we discuss the topic of victims like a significant amount of victims of police gun violence are people with mental health disabilities. It's at a point that we see police and jails as somehow these wonderful first responders and mental illnesses and the solution that we come up with is more inpatient beds as if it were the 1950s when institutionalization was all the rage. And for some presidential candidates, it kind of still is.

JJ

One of the things that that that that immediately makes me think of too is the idea that when people have overlapping vulnerabilities too, if you're poor, if you're disabled, if you don't have access yeah, you're more likely to be a victim of violence, period. Because it's and it has nothing to do with the choices you make or the life that you lead and everything to do with the fact that you've got a very, very high deck stacked against you. And we don't talk about individuals who live in communities where they are perpetually being attacked by gun violence on top of already

existing vulnerabilities, and I wonder how we do that better. How do we know intersectionality is a buzzword that's been co-opted by a lot of places. But I wonder, how do we do gun violence prevention? That's much more intentionally intersectional that admits all of those things and then tries to make it better.

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

So I think shortly after Pulse, several of us started attending the monthly round tables of gun violence prevention orgs and without going too much into the details and, for that matter, in annual convening, where me and Rebecca Coakley did a panel about disability and gun violence prevention. We like the problem I felt is that a significant amount of that room of all the leaders of gun violence prevention. The room was essentially to rhyme into what it could be a haiku--pale, stale and male. And as long as we're centering very privileged voices in this advocacy, we're not gonna be able to have that mindset basically, that allows us to see who are the actual everyday victims of gun violence. So there is a sort of looking in the mirror for the movement that is needed.

JJ

With the acknowledgment that we exist out of a system. Yes, that is a problem. But that doesn't mean we can't be working to fix ourselves and the system simultaneously.

Kelly

Acknowledging that there are, there's the national kind of like big groups. But then there are, you know, these organic groups at the local level that do look more like the communities and kind of start to listen to what they've done, learn from them, amplify them, I think is a big part of it too.

JJ

And give them not just time and attention, but like funding, pay people for their work, you know, for being present, I think. So it's, I guess, how we elevate those grassroots levels, sometimes folks who have been working in their communities for forever for decades.

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

Hire them, pay them. Yeah, I realize money is short. But who are we elevating in the national voices? One of the big questions whenever we're in these meetings, say coalitions of all the orgs or for them matter with lawmakers when we're lobbying and someone is who isn't in the room. In disability I sometimes talk of the sexy and the non sexy disabilities. Basically, you know, and oftentimes to people in the room is booked it's the photogenic will cheer you, sir. Extra bonus points if they're white. Maybe there's for diversity points a middle aged gay man in the in the process. Who claims to know what's it like to be black because they're gay. That's a problem in and of itself who is in that meeting and who isn't. Ah, for example. Yeah, and one of the ways that I think about there's this anecdote that I'm tying into. And I always tell it, it's during what was the Murphy Bill at the time, which would have weakened HIPAA protections. HIPAA confidentiality protections around mental illness. And what if I was being marketed as an anti-violence bill under the whole idea that people with mental illness are perpetrators of violence. I was having a meeting with the chief of staff to a member of Congress, a very progressive member, a quality caucus member, the type that keeps a rainbow flag outside of their

office in the Longworth building. And this staffers telling me, well, you need to understand, we're talking about the serious mental illnesses like bipolar and schizophrenia, you know, scary stuff. And you know, when you come up with a comeback, that will probably get you into trouble but it's too good to resist.

JJ

Normally, those happen to me in the shower so I don't get to use...

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

I said, oh, you mean like me and my wife are both bipolar. And then I got to spend the next five minutes watching her try to dig herself out of the hole being like, well, if it's well managed and so on, which was basically you're one of the good ones. You're dressed in a suit, you're dressed in a blazer. You have a law degree and you're sitting in this room. You're one of the good ones. The equivalent of it's almost as if you were white, basically, or I don't see race. And that's what I think about. If okay, who is in the room who is perceived in Washington in what way and the same applies to the progressive movements here, including GVP.

JJ

I wonder, is just playing Devil's advocate, is there a danger and tokenism within that, though, of people just being selected and then used for imaging purposes? I'm thinking of every college brochure I've ever seen, where they're like somebody who checks every single box. But I mean, I'm playing Devil's Advocate and answering myself. I guess you know, there are qualified people who exist in all those spaces already.

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

I mean, as someone who knows what tokenism looks like in the flesh. At times I would say that the question because, like, for example, companies like to talk about how their workforce is very diverse. But if you were to look at the stratification of it, okay, how diverse is people over a certain pay range or managers or supervisors or the executives, then that then you start seeing a bigger problem, and that creates a very, problematic definition of diversity. Where you just half a token leader and you say, hey, we have a person of color, we couldn't possibly be racist or a person with a disability and so on, and the question has to be who is making decisions? It's not just who is in the room? It has to be who was helping make those decisions, who is leading who are the executive directors, who are the board members of the organizations, who are the policy directors and on that same boat the question of whether we should start reconsidering even the idea of a seat at the table and just abolish the table entirely. There's the whole idea from Shane Newmyer, who is a wonderful disability applicant who says that if you're not at the table, you're on the menu. But if that is the case shouldn't we shut down the restaurant for cannibalism, so that is food for thought.

Kelly

When you are talking about a blank person, we have this person. Just how striking those languages are. Because I do think that kind of shows what tokenism is when if someone says we have, it's almost like they are ours, so you know, we can deploy them at will versus giving, it's like having someone be fully incorporated into all aspects. I think that's really striking.

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

We need to think about how the movement in and of itself, is impacting marginalized people to go against that idea. So there is a certain extent of seeing ourselves. There is there's some parts of the queer world, in the more radical side of things, that see gun ownership as an essential thing against what they see as an increasingly fascists and totalitarian world. So we see that even in the left. And a good question is, how are we gonna address that also? Some of whom were making the pact with the devil for even attending that protest, so a minority in the crowd.

Kelly

And I think that that is a great question. What can we do? Can we address, you know, these real concerns that people have about historical racism or present racism and the need to protect themselves while also having answers to that?

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

I mean the reality is if you can get away with a mass shooting in Texas, odds are you can get away with it anywhere. Before, like we need to address the reality of the myth of the good person with the gun, it's basically that, a myth. By the time you address anything, people have already died. And we need to understand even the people who argue that most of the Second Amendment protects the country, and so on are essentially saying all the gun deaths that we have are somehow outweighed by that benefit. And we need to get them to be very honest about that, of saying all those deaths are worth it, because that's not something that's gonna sell, because that's essentially what they're saying without being explicit, because they know they can't get away with that explicit nature of it.

JJ

That's the thing that we struggle with here too is, how do we get the vast majority of sort of what we would call a normal gun owner like a responsible average gun owner, which could very well easily include someone who says, you know, I walk home late at night and I live in an area that has a lot of crime where if I call the cops, they're not coming. It makes sense for me to have a gun or like statistically speaking, if you're you know, like a trans woman of color, yeah, it seems like it makes very good sense to be armed because you're very likely to be killed and like, that's a reality that Americans are okay with. But it seems like maybe the way to address that and get those owners in is to say yeah, but why do you feel like you have to have one? And how do we fix that problem?

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

And also who it's most likely to be killed by police because they have a gun. There have been the exercises and just Googled the videos around, and I'm sure you've seen them or let's send a white guy with an assault rifle walking down the street and police show up and they just try to talk him out of okay, why are you doing this? Send a black guy to do this and they almost shoot him in the process and in everything short of the military, that's a response. So whose gun rights are we respecting in the first place? Who is most likely to get into trouble over it, to begin with? So, like who has the right, to carry, to keep and bear arms to begin with in this country in peace?

JJ

Which I think brings up a question that we've been trying to get through the series that we've been doing and just in general, in this podcast and then Brady more as an organization too which is how do we address, you know, white supremacy and gun violence at the same?

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

White supremacy could be said to be fused at the hip of pretty much everything in America.

JJ

Yeah, that's how part of that is how do we even begin to untangle that knot? Or can we, is it even worth doing? You know, we just acknowledge it and then go, okay, here's our knot, how do we work around it?

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

Or cut the knot like Alexander the Great. Maybe that's what you need to do instead of trying to untangle. Yeah, just cut it up. One of the things that need to be addressed there is again why and who is making that advocacy? Who are you trying to protect yourself from? When you talk about being the good person with a gun, who is going to be shot for being the good person with the gun? Which is where we talk about police perpetrated gun violence.

JJ

This is an unfair question. A little bit, but where do you see sort of the gun violence prevention slash gun violence, conversation in the US now and you know where do you think, where do you see it going in the future, especially as we get deep into presidential debates and then sort of all of that political nonsense.

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

I mean, there is the possibility that as we move forward in some states, that causes a backlash in other states. Like Virginia is in the national news, uh, both good and bad, that could have its own impact, both positive and negative. I am also thinking, however, how are we gonna deal with the Supreme Court? Are these laws even going to survive the current Supreme Court that we have? What is that gonna look like? Depending on who wins the election this year, like will we even have meaningful gun control in this country if Trump gets reelected and gets to appoint two more justices. So I will admit I am not 100% optimistic unless the gun violence prevention movement can engage the rest of the progressive world properly. There is too much of an attitude, if I can criticize it, of whatever gets the fewest guns out there justifies the means regardless of who we are railroading in the process. And who are we actually sending to jail and who are we not. So we need to actually engage other movements in how to build a truly progressive world. It cannot be a bunch of Republicans with a grudge towards the NRA. Basically, it has to be a truly progressive movement.

JJ

Bearing all of that in mind then you know what is our ideal version? Like, what is anti racist, non-ableist, anti-sexist, like LGBTQ friendly. What? What? What is the ideal gun prevention?

What does it look like beyond the 11 things laid out in your fantastic piece that we will be linking?

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

The ideal policy focuses precisely on access to firearms. And, oh, blanket wide. It focuses on the idea that police perpetrated violence also at the same time twice. But I think the ideal world is a world without guns not a world where the most privileged have access to guns. Which is what we do when we try to come close to banning it. But not one like putting up a lot of hurdles that don't quite ban firearms, but make it hard to get. What you create is people of color get arrested for suspicion or what not. So, yeah.

JJ

Do you think that there's an opportunity for organizations that are for not the elimination of all guns and organizations that are for the elimination of all guns, do you think that there's a way for there to be some sort of joint work there? Do you think that it's just intrinsically not?

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

There is the opportunity to work on the topic. If you see it inherently, if you try to acknowledge that the system is inherently racist and ableist and all the other ists. Ah, but you have to think about how to address those things, as an integral part of it and involve people of color and involve people with disabilities. And so one like those have to be part of your leadership because otherwise, if you just see it as allies, it's not gonna work. You're just gonna keep screwing it up. Ah, we need to stop seeing progressive movements as oh, here's voting rights, here's reproductive justice, here's LGBTQ issues and so on. When in reality we need to see it as a single big ball of wibbly wobbly activists winding stuff.

JJ

Everything is tied into the center of democracy, and so we have to be willing to address everything at the table, it's just that's hard. It's really hard to do.

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

Nobody said it's easy.

JJ

It's hard to do a fundraiser.

Kelly

We can definitely learn from each other and kind of I think about it broadly.

JJ

Is there anything that in particular you would like our listeners to do or that our listeners could do to help you know that wiggly, wobbly balls do not grow any bigger at least?

Victoria M. Rodriguez-Roldan

I mean, I would say that one of the biggest issues to address is always think again who is at the table? I realize that the listeners to this podcast odds are you're already activists in some were other or are close to it. Just wonder, who are we engaging? And try to address that.

JJ

Well, thank you so much for coming on. This has been amazing. Thank you so much.

*****music plays*****

JJ

Well, it's happened. Time to do an "Unbelievable, But" segment that talks about the current virus. In Lake St. Louis, police had to respond after a customer discharged a gun in a very crowded store. If you've seen the lines at the grocery store lately, you know probably what I'm talking about. Luckily, no one was hit.

The incident began when a 60 year old customer reportedly got into an argument with an employee over toilet paper. The customer assaulted the employees, and they began fighting until the customer pulled a gun out of his pocket. According to police, the employees grabbed the customer's hand and a shot was fired into the ceiling. Listen, guns and heightened emotions don't mix, and especially in this time when many people have very real fears, we need to try to stick together. So if you are going to be fighting over toilet paper, please, you know, leave the guns at home.

*****music plays*****

JJ

So I'm going to start this wrap up with an act of kindness, because I'm sure we could all use some good news. Comedian Dave Chappelle surprised Milwaukee last Wednesday when he announced that in less than a week he was coming to Bruce City to perform four shows. Then, at the end of his final set of his final show, he surprised audiences again when he said he was donating all of the ticket proceeds to the families of those killed in the February shooting at the Molson Course facility in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Now allegedly he came to Milwaukee after hearing about the tragedy because he wanted to contribute to the city's healing. Chappelle also performed a benefit show last August in Dayton, Ohio, his hometown, after a mass shooting took place outside a bar.

But now I have to pivot to the awful realities of gun violence. Early Sunday morning, a shooting in the parking lot of a Rosedale shopping center in Baltimore, Maryland, injured five people and killed 13 year old Ricky Forehand. Ricky's 15 year old half brother, Jeffrey Quick III had also been killed by gun violence less than three years ago. The two slain teenager's shared a mother, and were best friends.

Meanwhile, a year ago this week, a gunman with an assault weapon senselessly murdered 51 people at two mosques in Christ Church, New Zealand. Six days after this horrific mass shooting, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern took immediate action and announced a ban on military style assault weapons. This week, you know we honor the victims of the Christ Church massacre

and we salute Prime Minister Ardern's swift leadership to save lives. In the United States, we had 418 mass shootings in 2019 alone.

Meanwhile, how many gun reform bills have passed? Zero. While legislation has been sitting on Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's desk for more than a year.

Additionally, right now, families across the country and all over the world are facing disruption to their daily lives including school, college, work. You know, these closures that required them to seek new living or child care arrangements while this is going on, remember that in America, 4.6 million children live in homes with access to an unlocked or unsupervised gun. This is a critical time to remind the importance of safe storage and be sure to ask others, is there an unlocked gun in your home?

Research shows that safe firearm storage is the key way to save lives, reducing the risk of family fire by 73%. We know that 75% of kids know where a gun is stored in their home, and one in five parents are mistaken into thinking their child hasn't handled a gun without supervision. They have. As life circumstances change, we have to remember to have ongoing conversations with family and friends about responsible gun ownership and gun safety.

*****music plays*****

Kelly

Thanks for listening. As always, Brady's life saving work in Congress, the courts and communities across the country is made possible thanks to you. For more information on Brady or how to get involved in the fight against gun violence, please like and subscribe to the podcast. Come see us online at Bradyunited.org or follow us on Social [@BradyBuzz](https://twitter.com/BradyBuzz). Be brave and remember, take action, not sides.

*****Brady musical outro*****

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