

Episode 94

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SPEAKERS

Christian Heyne, JJ Janflone, Kelly Sampson, Kris Brown, Sen. Chris Murphy



JJ Janflone 00:08

Hey everybody, this is the legal disclaimer where I tell you that the views thoughts and opinions shared on this podcast blog solely to our guests and 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. Hey everybody. Welcome back to another episode of "Red, Blue and Brady." Today, Kelly and I are so excited to bring you audio from our live event, the Brady book club The Violence Inside Us. As we covered in Episode 90, The Violence Inside Us, is a wonderful book written by Senator Chris Murphy. Today we're getting deeper into the book, why needed to be written why it matters and where we go from here. Kelly, Senator Murphy and I are joined by Kris Brown, President Brady and Christian Heyne Brady's VP of policy and you know, frequent podcast guests. Then in our "unbelievable but..." segment, Kelly and I talk about why guns don't belong in children's bags, seems obvious, I know. And in our news wrap up, I'm highlighting an increase in gun sales and the latest developments in micro stamping. Alright, everybody, thank you so much for being here today. I'm going to go ahead and have everybody introduce themselves maybe starting with you, Chris. And you prefer Chris, right? Not Senator Murphy?



Sen. Chris Murphy 01:34

I do if you, if you can manage it.



JJ Janflone 01:37

I will, I put a, I put a post it so I will know.



Sen. Chris Murphy 01:41

It's a lot fewer syllables than senator.



JJ Janflone 01:43

So okay, so Chris, I'd love to start with an overview of what prompted you to get involved in gun violence prevention, and then to spend, I believe it was a little over two years, putting together, you know, this fantastic book on gun violence, and then American violence more broadly.



Sen. Chris Murphy 01:59

And first of all, I love that you have a tab. I don't think I've seen that many tabs in a book before. That's pretty impressive. Wow.



JJ Janflone 02:06

Its a habit leftover from grad school, I have a tab problem. Everyone at Brady knows.



Sen. Chris Murphy 02:14

Well, a thank you everybody for having me on to, JJ and Kris and Kelly and Christian, really looking forward to our time together tonight. And thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk about this book. You know, in many ways, this book is an attempt to give people a visual into what the last seven years of my life have been. And I feel as if I'm desperately trying to make up for lost time. While, Brady has been in this fight for decades, one of the most successful anti-gun violence movements in the history of this country, I wasn't working in this space prior to 2013. And it was two events that I detail in this book, which caused my awakening. First, obviously, the murder of 20 kids in Sandy Hook, Connecticut changed my life forever. But then, about a month and a half later, I'm just sworn in as senator for all of Connecticut, I visit the north end of Hartford for the first time, and I meet with a group of parents of gun violence victims in the poorest section of Hartford, the largely African-American North End, and they are furious. They are furious at me, right. They just cannot understand why I have been in public life for over a decade

and I was just showing up for the first time, that it took the murder of white children in a white suburb of Connecticut, for me to start asking questions about what was happening in Hartford, and I was mortified by that. And I set out to try to remedy what had been a failing, by me. And so I've spent the last seven years trying to, you know, not just understand what drives these mass shootings, but try to understand the entire epidemic of American violence. And this book is, you know, first and foremost, that story, the history of American violence going all the way back to our founding, but also a discussion about what we've learned and how we've learned to control it, what policies are impactful. And then throughout the book is, you know, my personal journey, I try to be as, you know, as honest as I can about how I think that I've measured up, and the times that I haven't during this period of my political career. And, again, the hope is, by the end, folks who want to become a little bit more educated activists, a little bit more forceful activists, will find in this book, the evidence to make this case for the changes that we all support, a little bit more effectively. So that's sort of how I came to write this book as a tool, as a as a guide, but also as a means for me to compile a lot of what I've learned.

K

Kelly Sampson 04:52

Chris, in the book, you talk about the turning points of Sandy Hook and Parkland as sort of critical moments in the fight against gun violence. And yet, we still haven't seen a massive change on the national level. So I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about those events, and what's happened, as well as the political groups and lobbying groups are trying to block that legislation. And I love to hear from Kris Brown on that as well.

S

Sen. Chris Murphy 05:16

Yeah, I'll start. You know, I think the one thing that's really most fascinating to me about the research I did in getting ready for this book, something that I think I knew a little bit about, but learned more about, is how impactful changes in gun laws actually are. And I think that's just important for us all to know as we move forward on this advocacy. So, American violence rates over the last 100 years, look like this: up, suddenly down, back up again, suddenly down again. And those two moments where violence rates start to plummet, not coincidentally, come after the two most significant anti-gun violence measures passed by Congress in the last 100 years. The two earliest firearms control acts of the late 1930s, and then the Brady Bill and the ban on assault weapons in the mid 1990s. And so we have this evidence that I sort of lay out in detail in this book, that when we pursue and enact change, it matters. And it doesn't just matter for handgun violence, it sends a moral signal to the nation, that the highest levels of leadership in this country are taking the issue of violence seriously. And that legislation, in the late 30s, in the mid 90s, helps to reset norms for behavior. And so I just want people to understand how impactful

it's going to be when we finally get this next major anti-gun violence bill passed. But as you mentioned, you know, the NRA just built up a political juggernaut, from the sort of mid 1970s, when these sort of radical anti-government right wingers take over the NRA, until Sandy Hook. And, you know, for much of that time, Brady had gotten some big wins, but it was basically Brady, and Brady alone. And we now have all of these partners, that working with Brady, everybody feels a little bit different lane, everybody sort of works together on big projects, we've now been able to build a political infrastructure that's just as powerful, probably more powerful right now than the gun lobby is, and that's why we're starting to win in state legislatures. We're on the precipice of winning at the congressional level. But we just had to build up a big enough political movement, that we could rival the gun lobby, and we can talk more in depth about how we all did that. But we're, we're at that point, I think now.

K

Kris Brown 07:36

I can't say it better than my friend Chris just answered that question, really. Except to say that, I think, what happens in the states is, is equally important, because that builds momentum over time. As a Virginian and I feel this acutely, because you couldn't have predicted 5, 6, 7 years ago, that we would have a General Assembly elected, that is a gun violence prevention, majority General Assembly, and that you would have a governor having been elected in 2017, that exit polls show in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the top two reasons that he was elected were health care and gun violence prevention. That's a mandate. And indeed, the legislature reacted with that. We have seven new bills signed into law in the Commonwealth of Virginia around this issue. And for those listening, I think the other thing that is really important to note, and you talk about this in your book, Senator is, a lot of these stories, just because we don't have the conclusion yet, doesn't mean they're over. It, it takes a while, sometimes longer than we'd like, to make change. But we know, without a doubt, we're on the right side of this issue and this is what the American people want. It took six years and seven votes in Congress to have the Brady Law enacted. If Jim and Sarah gave up at the first obstacle, the second, the third, the fourth, the fifth, we wouldn't have one of the most popular laws in our nation, enshrined in law, but we do. And I think that's the spirit that I see so often when I'm out. And it breaks my heart, the number of survivors that I interact with, who take their time, still, to raise their voice because they're looking for a better America than the one they have right now. And that inspires me every day. And I do think we're on the precipice of some major change with leaders like Chris Murphy in the Senate and others, and we have to keep our eyes focused on that.



JJ Janflone 09:48

Well I think, and on that note of interacting and working with survivors, Kris, as you so aptly pointed out, I think that we have to talk about, that when we're thinking about the reality of gun violence. 100 people a day in the US are lost to us, right. So that's the ripple effects too of 100 deaths. That's not even counting the people who are injured. So in the book, Chris, you detail two stories which you made allusions to, but I'd love if you could go into a little bit more detail for our listeners, Shane Oliver, Dylan Hockley. And I would love to talk about those two young people for a little bit, because I think, while unfortunately, people know about Dylan, they don't know about Shane. And both of those young men should have their lives recognized. And Christian, as a survivor yourself and as someone who now interacts with survivors every day, and fights for policy for survivors, I would love for sort of your interpretation of what it's like when someone like Chris kind of comes into this space, and is ready to fight.



Sen. Chris Murphy 10:44

Yeah, and I you know, and listen, I mentioned this in the book, I mean, I you know, feel like an interloper, right. Because I have not experienced either personally, or in my close family, or friends circle, the gun violence epidemic. And so I'm sort of viewing this through the eyes of so many that I've become close to. But you know, for folks that, sort of, think they're going to pick us up, and it's going to be a book about Sandy Hook. It's not, that's really not my story to tell. There are obviously snippets of my experience, going through that horror in the book, but it opens with the story of Shane Oliver, as you mentioned. And you know, Shane Oliver grew up, maybe two miles from me, in the north end of Hartford. Shane dies about a month and a half before Sandy Hook, in a murder that gets absolutely no attention. And Shane's story, in so many ways, is emblematic of both the inevitability of violence in a place like the north end of Hartford, but also the randomness of violence. So Shane's entire life is defined by violence. There's a story in the book of his 10 year old summer, in which he's being recruited by some drug gangs to be a lookout, I think, and he knows that that's going to come with real serious risk to himself. And so instead, he invents this small business, as a 10 year old, he decides to sell bottled water outside a church all summer, so that he can tell these guys that he can't help them. He's got his own business he needs to attend to, right. That's just not anything that would even sort of come close to the mind of a 10 year old growing up in a suburb of Hartford like I did. But then Shane dies at age 20, the 20th victim of gun violence in Hartford on October 20, killed by another 20 year old, a month and a half before 20 kids die in Sandy Hook. He dies because he gets in an argument over some things some kids said about his girlfriend. And he doesn't like what they said, they get into a scuffle, Shane throws a punch, there happens to be an illegal weapon sitting in the front seat of one of these other kids' cars.

He goes and gets it and he shoots Shane, and by the evening, he's dead in the hospital. And so, you know, this is the reality for kids like Shane, both a life in which violence is unescapable. But then outcomes that just don't make sense, that would never happen in any other country, a fight over a girl turning deadly. And so the book starts there because that death and his life matter just as much as Dylan Hockley. Dylan Hockley is one of the kids who dies in Sandy Hook, his parents started Sandy Hook Promise, and I just thought it was really important to sort of, sort of tell Shane's story so people can see who he was, to see how important he was, to see how much pain his death caused, how it just changed the life of his parents forever. And to kind of command us to think about the gun violence epidemic through that prism, as much as we do through the prism of mass shootings.

C

Christian Heyne 13:46

Well, I just think it's so important, right. That framing is, it's vital to this discussion. You know, as as I think everybody here knows, but and probably a lot of the folks who are watching in, I come to this movement as a survivor. In 2005 my parents had just been returning from a holiday vacation, where they spent the weekend getting sunburned and eating barbecue, right. You know, we have two golden retrievers at the time, they just had an amazing couple of days. And when they came back to return the boat that they had used that weekend, to my dad's best friend a man was laying in wait. And he turned the gun on them, because my parents were there. He shot both of them, in addition to my dad's best friend. My dad was shot three times, and my mom was shot and killed with a single bullet to the back. When we picked up the pieces this gunman went on to terrorize our community. He shot him into a police officer, he killed another mother in front of her two kids and put both those kids in the ICU. And when we picked up the pieces, my dad did survive, and we tried to figure out how exactly this had happened. I think what we were shocked to find is, you know, what you are laying out so well, Senator Murphy, right, that the way that our gun laws are patched together and the way that our loopholes have been intentionally designed and put in there by an industry that profits off of the gun violence that we see in this country. There is no community that can be safe or feel safe from gun violence, because we just don't do enough to make sure that we're protecting Americans from it. And even more so, what is remarkable about my story, and the stories that you're laying out is how unremarkable they are. This is happening every single day in this country over and over and over. You know, 100 people are going to be shot and killed today -- today. And still the, that is the price of inaction. And I just think that the way that you framed it is so important, the way, it's the way we need to talk about gun violence, because there's not going to be a single solution that is going to solve this complex problem that we have. It will require a comprehensive approach and the only way we're going to make that happen is if people understand what it is like to be a survivor in this country, because there's too many of us and it doesn't go away when the cameras go

away. It's something we have to live with every single day. And, and regardless of if people are telling our stories or told them in the first place, there are communities that are experiencing gun violence every single day, disproportionately than other communities, that it's just a part of life. And we are allowing our elected legislators and members of Congress and, and leaders to do nothing. And I think what Sandy Hook did really is it shook the nation awake that we just can't do that anymore. We've been stacking up those wins in the States, because people are really, have seen front-and-center what the problem of gun violence looks like. And that ripple effect, the fact that my mom's not just one person, she represents an entire community of people who will never be the same. And so I just think that that framing and that perspective, it's the whole ballgame. It's why we know that that inaction, it truly is, you know, life and death. You know what we're talking about, it's people like my mom, it's people who just can't come back from this. So I just can't thank you enough for for sharing that perspective Senator because it's vitally important.

S

Sen. Chris Murphy 17:16

Thank you.

K

Kelly Sampson 17:17

Christian, thanks for sharing your story. I had a chance to hear you tell it before, but every time you do, I just want to thank you for all you're doing. And Chris, when you were talking about Shane Oliver story, and Dylan Hockley's story, one thing that was sort of underneath the surface was the ways in which gun violence, though it threatens all of us, it can look different ways in different communities. So I'm just wondering, in the time that we have, if you could talk about some of the different forms of gun violence that you talked about in the book. And also, if you could kind of start off with talking about racialized gun violence, which you alluded to, in the beginning, when you talked about the impetus towards writing this book in the first place.

S

Sen. Chris Murphy 17:56

Yeah, I mean, the structure of the book is, the beginning of the book really sort of sets a foundation. It talks about the biology of violence, it talks about, sort of, a global history of violence, and then it talks about America's unique history of violence. Then we sort of go through the different kinds of American violence, right, the the gun homicides, the suicides, the mass shootings. And then by the end, we're ready to talk about what we know works, what we know can make this all better, and also what we know about American violence that probably will lead us to be a more inevitably violent place no

matter what we do. But as you mentioned, if you set out to write a book about American violence, you end up writing a book about race, because there is really no way to explain American violence than through the prism of violence as a mechanism for white Americans to subjugate and oppress Black Americans, and now broader communities of color. And, you know, the maybe the most interesting historical moment that I cover in the book is this moment in the mid 1800s, where violence for the first time in America starts to depart from European norms of numbers. So right around 1840, violence numbers in United States start to really peak, start to really shoot up, and we never come back down to earth. We have been a global outlier on violence rates, homicide rates, assault rates, ever since the 1840s. And there's a handful of things that happen there. The invention of the handgun is one. American decides not to regulate firearms in the way that other countries do and there's a mass distribution of firearms to the American populace. There's also this sort of incoming massive wave of immigration in the mid 1800s and, sort of, these new immigrants vying for space lead to instances of violence. But really what happens during the sort of mid 1800s is the massive expansion of slavery in the United States. Because of the invention of cotton gin, hundreds of thousands more people are brought to the United States and enslaved and America requires this epidemic level of violence, at like, minute-by-minute, hourly violence in order to keep that number of people in chains. And because of that, because violence is, sort of, the mechanism by which we order our entire economy, the country becomes numb to it. You see, all kinds of violence start to spike, you know, white on white violence starts to spike during this time, because we just kind of become anesthetized to the use of violence in order to gain advantage, or sort of keep a lid on unrest. And while violence sort of changes its form over time, it goes from slavery to lynchings and vigilante justice to mass incarceration, it never leaves as the primary way by which, what I call in this book, "in groups" used to keep supremacy over "out groups." And by the end, the sort of point of the book is that listen, you can pass all the gun laws you want, and it will get you some pretty significant returns. But you aren't going to end America's outlier status with respect to violence, unless you have a racial reckoning as well in this country, unless you address all of the systemic ways in which we continue to sort of keep communities of color, economically disadvantaged, and the ways in which we continue to use violence as people are watching, unfortunately, on TV regularly this summer, to subjugate those communities as well.



JJ Janflone 21:26

And I think one of the ways too that that's really been demonstrated is in, unfortunately, which sort of we're gonna be going almost chronologically through your book, Chris, the the way that mass shootings get a lot of attention in the media. But that at the same time, very few Americans are aware of just how many mass shootings there are. So going off of what the gun violence archive would define as a "mass shooting," which is four or more

people who have been shot, you know, that almost every single day in the US, one occurs. And I'm wondering if you know, Christian, as someone who I know, is into the data, if you can talk about why it is that you think that is. But I did want to want to thank you, Chris, for highlighting that. Because again, I think that goes back to a lot of times that racialized difference, but also just the difference of what gets reported what doesn't.



Christian Heyne 22:14

Yeah, I mean, it's such a important point, right. And part of it is that it's incumbent on us to frame gun violence much in the way that the Senator just did, right. I mean, we need to, we can't decouple systemic racism in this country from gun violence, because it frankly, is a root cause of gun violence in the way that our systems have been built, right. For whatever reason, for far too long Americans, the way that we have covered gun violence, has only left room to capture the national attention when we see something that's out of place, as opposed to sort of what we've become accustomed to, which is the daily plague of gun violence, and, frankly, the disproportionate impact of gun violence in communities of color. And I think that, you know, the gun violence prevention movement has come a long way, in this regard. I will, you know, I'd be remiss not to mention that there have been groups in communities across the country that have been Black-led organizations, that have been fighting on these issues for a really long time. So it's not like there weren't people throughout the country talking about it, we need to do a much better job of lifting up those voices, and, and really showing what gun violence looks like in America. We don't talk enough about firearm suicide, right? Like three out of five gun deaths that happen in this country every day, are firearm suicides, that are completely preventable. Guns are by far the most lethal means available for individuals who attempt suicide. And, and we know that if we can intervene, if somebody survives a suicide attempt that they go on to live lives, where they don't die by suicide. We can, we can make a huge difference if we follow the evidence, if we talk about what the daily plague of gun violence looks like in this country. And that doesn't mean that we ignore the horrific tragedies that, and the uniqueness, of mass-casualty gun violence in America as well. It's all a part of a similar conversation. But it goes back to this idea that gun violence has gotten so bad in this country, it really requires us to look at each individual type of gun violence and address those head on. And we can't have cookie-cutter solutions because too often, and we're just going to say this as well, right. Too often, our "solutions" have exacerbated cycles of gun violence in communities that are already disproportionately impacted by gun violence. You know, solutions that that rely too heavily on the incarceration of young black men, who are already more likely to be victims of gun violence than than any other demographic in this country, right. The same communities that are being plagued by by gun violence are also being over policed and over incarcerated. And we have to, we need to address these systems if we want to have a real impact on what gun violence looks like.

So the only way we're going to move forward meaningfully, and to create real national change is if we, is if we follow the evidence and really tackle each type of gun violence, so that we can have the best tailor-made solutions possible to protect communities, to strengthen communities, and, and to hopefully try to get closer to the lived experience of every other industrialized country in the free world, right.

S

Sen. Chris Murphy 25:36

Let me just build, if I can, just for two seconds on a couple of important things, Christian said, because it is true. When I'm sort of telling these stories in the book of the different kinds of gun violence, you will see lots of differences, right. In particular, you know, there are very different demographics that bear the brunt of different kinds of gun violence. Whereas homicides in this nation, are far too often in Black communities, in urban communities, suicides in this country are driven largely by white, rural, male populations. So there are a lot of important differences. That being said, there are some really important connecting threads. What we know is that in states that make it just a little bit harder to get your hands on a gun, right, require you to go through a background check, require you to get a permit from your local police department -- there are lower rates of homicide, there are lower rates of suicide, there are lower rates of accidental shooting. So any place where you're just making it a little bit harder for folks to get their hands on a gun really quickly, then you're going to get a return across the board. Similarly, poverty factors into all of these rates, right? If you are poor, you are more likely to commit suicide, you are more likely to be the victim of a homicide, you are more likely to be the victim of domestic violence crime. Poverty tracks exposure to violence. And so if you're investing in stronger gun laws, and you're attacking the sort of crisis of wage stagnation and poverty in this country, then you're going to get gains all across the lot here. So really important to understand the differences, but also important to understand how there are solutions that get you gains everywhere.

K

Kelly Sampson 27:24

You just mentioned domestic violence. So I'd love to drill down on that a little bit more to ask both Chris's. You know, if we could talk a little bit about gender-based violence and domestic violence, because we've actually seen both of those rise during COVID-19. And some of that most likely has to do with people being in their homes and having access to firearms, as you just mentioned. So I'm just wondering, if we can talk about that specific type of gun violence, especially as it relates to the pandemic era that we're in right now.

K

Kris Brown 27:53

I'm happy to lead off, Kelly. Obviously, we have seen a big increase and reports of domestic violence since the COVID pandemic hit. And we also saw, at the same time, a huge surge in gun sales all across this country. In fact, between February and roughly late May of this year, 2 million more guns were sold than were sold in the prior year. And so we know already that the presence of a gun, in a situation where there's intimate partner violence substantially increases the likelihood of injury and death of, usually women, but not exclusively women, in these situations. The pandemic makes it a horrible choice. Because we know that often the counsel for individuals who are suffering intimate partner violence is to leave the home. Of course, the counsel in the pandemic, is to stay at home. And so I know so many organizations right now really trying to promote outreach, ensure people who are victims of domestic violence are seeking treatment for that. That's the system that we have in the United States, of course, to ensure that we're documenting these incidents and understand them. And it cries out for additional funding to provide outreach and protection for individuals who are victims of intimate partner violence. And I'll leave to the Senator to talk about the real relationship here that we know in any more detail, as he does in his book, about the United States and our experience of domestic violence compared to other countries and the role of the gun in that, which cannot be understated.

S

Sen. Chris Murphy 29:46

Yeah, I mean, Kris covers it really well. What we know is that home is not a safe place for everyone. And so stay-at-home orders can ultimately lead to more violence. And Kris, you talk about the enormous resources we're going to need, part of the reason many of us are begging our Republican colleagues to pass a COVID funding package is because our schools need additional funding. Many of these kids who are coming back to school are coming from homes in which they were not safe. They went through traumas at home that need to now be addressed and identified in school. So this is, this is a broader crisis. But yes, you are, you're right. We know that there are some really popular common sense interventions on gun laws that can keep domestic partners safe. And, you know, one of them is this really simple idea that if you're subject to a restraining order, that you shouldn't have guns in the house. I tell this awful story in the book about Lori Gellatly, who did everything you would have asked. She had an abusive spouse, she moved out, she reported him she got a restraining order, but because we couldn't take his guns, and he still had them, he marched into his in-laws home and shot her to death and shot his mother-in-law as well. And, you know, this is a piece of legislation that enjoys 90% support, and we still can't get it passed. We will, we could get a pass through the House we'll soon have a president who will sign it, and we'll soon have a majority in the Senate who will get it done. But the tragedy here is that, you know, it's not like some of these other problems in America today, in which we're still searching for the solutions, right? We

have them. Now it's not going to erase all domestic crime. In fact, what what studies show is that as you do public policy interventions, the "stickiest" kind of violence is domestic violence. The hardest kind of violence to move the numbers on is domestic violence. But they move, they still move. And that boyfriend loophole that we talked about, or the domestic violence restraining order loophole that we talked about, are really, really important to close.



JJ Janflone 32:11

Actually, for that, I would like to open this up to Chris, Kris and Christian. So I'm sorry that my mom went for a J name I feel a little left out.



Christian Heyne 32:21

We assure everybody this was unplanned.



JJ Janflone 32:24

Kelly, you at least have a similar consonant sound starting. Anyway, I think I want to open this up to all of you, to talk about the the scary reality that, Chris, you even in detail in the book too, which is things like the gun show loophole. You know, things like gun trafficking, things like crime guns, and how groups like the ATF, because of things that have happened are largely hamstrung from acting on aspects of these crimes. Because I would like to hear all of your takes on this, since that's one of the things that often comes out of these conversations, too, is how do we solve some of these issues? And I think as as you detail in the book, Chris, there are some things that could be happening right now. And there are things that, in fact, happened in the past, but we have sort of allowed unfortunately, to go by the wayside.



Sen. Chris Murphy 33:09

You know, one of the sort of favorite refrains of my colleagues who don't want to pass any new laws is that "we should just enforce the laws that are on the books." They sort of forget to mention that they have passed all sorts of small provisions attached to budgets that, that get stuck on the budget year after year, that don't allow for these for these laws to be to be enforced. And the ATF has more restrictions on them than any other agency in the federal government. In fact the, if you total up all the words, in the riders that have been attached to budgets, that restrict the powers of the ATF, they are actually more voluminous than the statutory powers of the ATF. And so for instance, one of the things

the ATF can't do is go check a gun store more than once a year. And so, you have most gun store owners doing all the right things, right, only selling guns to the right people, doing background checks, not engaging the traffickers. But you got a handful of bad apples, some of them sitting right outside of major cities, that are regularly selling guns to people who shouldn't be buying them and violating laws. And yet you can't get into these places because we have passed all these restrictions. So yes, part of this is low-hanging fruit. And we've had a little bit of success with Republican colleagues in beginning to, to unlock some of these avenues, grabbing some of that fruit, but it is sort of stunning, the hypocrisy of those that say, "Hey, just just enforce the laws you've got." The ATF is not allowed to do that.

K

Kris Brown 34:56

Yeah, I mean, I think Chris got it, obviously, exactly right. And if you ask the average American about this, honestly, they really are shocked. Because, of course, we do hear over and over again, it's all about enforcement, from a particular set of individuals. But they know that the agency that is charged with that enforcement has, over time, been literally handcuffed, for lack of a better analogy, in its ability to actually enforce those laws in a meaningful way. So much so, that the data that we have, which is admittedly old, but it's the best we have, because we stopped being able to access this data from ATF says that about 5% of the nation's gun dealers, and I think it's important for listeners to know we have more gun dealers in America than we have Starbucks and McDonald's combined, there are a lot of gun dealers in this country. About 5% of them, though, are responsible for the sale of 90, nine-zero, 90% of crime guns. And the problem that Senator Murphy noted, is therefore very substantial. When you have that universe of potential gun dealers that you're supposed to enforce and you're not pinpointing, with precise information, which of those gun dealers is likely the responsible gun dealer associated with the sale of those crime guns, you are allowing many communities across this country, and these are predominantly minority communities that are impacted by this kind of violence, to be flooded with crime guns. That is an eminently fixable problem, and one that is essentially an enforcement issue. So when I hear people saying that, as you all know, it drives me bananas, because it is the ultimate in hypocrisy. And it can so easily be fixed, and lives saved.

S

Sen. Chris Murphy 37:03

Yeah, I mean, I won't add a ton, I think that you both captured it really well. I, I think what we're really describing here, too, is, you know, like we were saying earlier, there's there's a complex problem here that requires comprehensive solutions. And, and a lot of what we talked about as, in the way of an approach to solving gun violence, is focusing on how we

how we can prevent the demand side, right. How do we prohibit individuals who would be at risk of dangerous behavior? How do we make sure that we are investing in communities, so that they don't feel the need to pick up the gun in the first place? How do we sort of build up those communities and strengthen them so that there are other opportunities provided, that's all a really important focus on the demand side, we also need to focus on the supply side. Guns don't grow on trees, they're manufactured and sold, and oftentimes the gatekeepers to ensure that these firearms are not diverted to the criminal market, they're gun dealers. And we need to do more to hold them accountable, we need to do more to hold the industry accountable. We need to prevent things like theft and trafficking, a lot of this can be done at a federal level. There's a lot that states can do too, right, and we can empower states to be able to issue stronger licenses, you know, for gun dealers. Same thing with being able to empower local law enforcement to, to do what the ATF, frankly, just can't do, for the reasons that the senator laid out. To inspect gun dealers to make sure that they're not a part of that 5% that are that are diverting 90% of guns in the criminal market. I mean, let's be real. In so many communities around the country, it is easier to find firearms, to buy a gun, than it is to find fresh produce. That, that is a really sad state of affairs in this country. We need to, when we talk about gun violence, just like we've been saying all along here, we need to think about solutions holistically. Enforcement is a big part of it and focusing on the supply side is something that we can all proactively push towards, that doesn't lean on communities in a way that can perpetuate cycles of violence as well.

C Christian Heyne 39:09

So there are a small group of people who are profiting off of gun violence in this country, we should hold them more accountable. And we need to.

S Sen. Chris Murphy 39:18

Remember, remember, it's not just an American problem, right? There are no gun stores in Mexico, right? Every gun that's used in a crime in Mexico is an illegal gun from the United States. And so I spend one chapter in this book just sort of explaining how we export American violence, all around the world, largely through an illegal firearms trade that starts with legal weapons in the United States. The stories of gun traffickers who, you know, come up from Central America, South America, they spend a weekend going around to gun stores, excuse me going around to gun shows in the South, buying up weapons, in which they never have to present their credentials, never have to prove who they are, never have to show that they're a legal purchaser. And then they traffic those guns right back to super dangerous places. And so, you know, this inability to police gun sales, to just make sure that the right people are buying them, not to stop gun sales, just

to make sure that only the right people are buying them. It leads not just to an American epidemic, but it leads to a Mexican epidemic into a Honduran epidemic into a Guatemalan epidemic. Because those countries don't sell guns, the only way they get them is because of the loose laws here in the United States.

K

Kris Brown 40:31

And I might add, on top of that, violence that causes many in those communities to want to flee.

S

Sen. Chris Murphy 40:38

Right.

K

Kris Brown 40:39

We're perpetuating all of that, with these. The lack of enforcement is at the root of this, if the gun dealers who are turning the other cheek, were forced to actually comply with the laws, because none of that is legal sales, then we would not have this problem. It takes investment in the ATF oversight from that agency, and a different approach than we have today to that critically important job.

K

Kelly Sampson 41:09

I'm gonna make a slight departure, but it still connects to the overall conversation we're having about the easy availability of guns and our country being flush with them. Because one of the things the book does really beautifully is Chris goes into detail about how we need to be more informed about suicide, especially firearm suicide. And so I'm wondering, Kris Brown, if you could talk a little bit about firearm suicide, especially given our End Family Fire campaign?

K

Kris Brown 41:35

Yes. Well, we touched on this briefly before, I mean, for Brady's perspective, obviously, we're looking to make a difference and reduce gun violence in this country, across the board. And while there are many connections with different kinds of gun violence, there are certain different driving factors, as well, that need to be considered. And so several years ago, Brady, looked at the problem of lack of safe storage in the home. This is a pervasive problem. We have more guns than human beings in this country, we have 4.6 million children who live in homes with unsecured guns. And that's older data, by the way.

It's certainly more than that, given the spike in gun sales that we've seen over the last year. We also have an epidemic of suicide. 60% of the, on average, from last year, 40,000 Americans died from gun violence. 60% of those are suicides, and the critical thing that we learned after 15 months of research. It didn't take 15 months, but we had public health groups, incredible experts who helped us in suicide prevention, individuals from the vets community who experience huge, record numbers, these days, of suicide. 20 vets a day, on average, are ending their life by suicide and the majority of those are with guns. The issue is access. Means matter. But we have a pervasive myth in American society that is hugely problematic. And that is someone intent on completing a suicide will do so no matter what. It's just not true. It's absolutely not true. Nine out of 10 people who attempt suicide, and do not complete that suicide, go on to die of natural causes. They don't attempt suicide again. And so if you can control the means, and guns are the deadliest, right, 9 times out of 10, someone using a gun is going to complete a suicide. On average compared to all other means of suicide, they have a 3% success rate. So imagine that 90% of the time, attempting suicide with a gun is going to be successful, completed, not successful, completed, about 3% on average, for all other means. So the End Family Fire campaign and our suicide prevention component that we're so proud that we launched last week, focuses on safe storage. And that means guns, unloaded, locked, ammo separate. And that can make all of the difference. We want people to be talking about that. And also understanding that ending family fire in your household could also mean remote storage. And you have to carefully analyze the risk factors in your home, depending on the life cycle of your home. What that looks like, if you're living alone, versus having children in the home versus having older parents in the home. That's something that you have to constantly assess. And so this campaign is our version of designated driver and secondhand smoke. It's that campaign that we hope will drive the behavior change that will make a serious reduction, both in unintentional injury of kids in the home, but also on the epidemic of suicide that we face in this country.



JJ Janflone 45:09

Kris Brown, I want to thank you for those comments. Cuz I think that's a great highlight of what people have been working on. But also, Senator Chris, I want to, I want to thank you, too, for the portions of your book, where you do go into talking about suicide, and you go into talking about, sort of, the peculiar way in which Americans are accustomed to violence, but still are not comfortable talking about suicide. And so I really do, I think that we've articulated how great this book is, but I really want to take a moment to sort of non shamelessly plug how absolutely fantastic *The Violence Inside Us* is, and how everyone should go out, either on Kindle or physically, you know, pick up the book, and give it a read.

C

Christian Heyne 45:52

If I can jump in real quick, too. I just want to give a quick shout out Senator Murphy, to you while, I get the moment to take the privilege to do so. I, you know, I can recall working on the Hill in January 2013. And you calling all of our groups and bringing us in. You were a lame duck senator in a, you were in the bellows of one of the Senate buildings, in a basement where you were kind of all crammed in. And you did the work. I mean, you asked for as many resources as you could possibly get. You were reading books that we were giving you, which is, you know, let alone It's hard to get the sitting Senators to read pamphlets, let alone books, and you were you were a sponge. And really, it was an incredible moment. I mean, it's horrific. It's always horrific what it takes to shake the nation awake. But you were, kind of, this example of what we were seeing happen in the rest of the world, right, of "What is it that we can do? This can't be normal Enough is enough. Let's get to work." And Americans at the time, I think had the same switch, and we have been stacking up wins since then. And we have been doing it, and I just want to thank you so much for your steadfast leadership on this, to do the work, to stick to it. I can also attest that the morning after the filibuster, I had to run on to the Hill to try to get there as quick as possible to do some work, and you had been on I think it was a 15 hour filibuster. You were at the Senate before I was, drinking coffee and looked a lot better than I did.

S

Sen. Chris Murphy 47:32

There was a lot of adrenaline that next morning. As I remember. What I remember is that the next morning, I had committed to, it was the last day of school, and so I had committed to make something for the like end of school celebration. So I had to get up the next morning and make like a big fruit salad at like, four in the morning or something like that to bring to school. So I was up way earlier than that, getting ready for the last day of school celebrations at the elementary school up the street.

C

Christian Heyne 48:03

It was incredibly impressive, I got a picture where somehow my bags under my eyes are bigger than yours. So I just I'm very thankful for that, for your dedication to push it forward, and to move this issue forward, to just find ways to continue that forward progress. And I think what has been so exciting is to see that the press, the country, everybody has been waiting for so long to write that story of 'people are going back to their normal lives.' They never have, and I think that Americans are so hungry across this country to have real change. And you've been such a huge part of leading that. So I just wanted to take the moment to thank you so much for all that.



Sen. Chris Murphy 48:37

Well, I mean, this, you know, you mentioned sort of that education that I've undergone. And I appreciate the nice words. I mean, this book is an attempt to sort of put it all into 300 pages. And you also mention that this is a really tough issue to spend your life working on, right. And these are sometimes tough books to read. And so I will assure folks who haven't read it, that I knew that going in. And so while there are some emotional stories in here, there are also just some really interesting, compelling stories, right. The story of the NRA, and how it starts, and how it gets taken over, that's a fascinating story. The story of the invention of the repeating revolver in Hartford, Connecticut, that's just a really interesting story. And then there's some, you know, just inspirational stories in the middle of our movement, that gets told in this book. So it is a tough, it's a tough issue to order your life around. It's a tough issue to decide to spend two weeks reading about. But I've tried to structure it in a way in this book that you know, you can leave a night of reading this book and feel sort of lifted up, or feel just, you know, educated by a compelling story, rather than depressed by the sheer weight of the epidemic.



Kris Brown 49:45

Well, I for one was really pleased and had a smile on my face with the little nugget that you included on the history of the Colt and the manufacturing plant, of course, and the world coming full circle with you having your office there, as a leader of the gun violence prevention movement in the U.S. Senate., so.



Sen. Chris Murphy 50:08

The place that the Colt 45, the original repeating revolver was invented, that exact building is where my Senate office is today, which is, you know, it is it's a strange world. It's a strange world we live in.



Kris Brown 50:23

Yeah, yes, exactly. But a good one.



JJ Janflone 50:27

Well, and people can listen to some of those stories. And I think we did much more like NRA and gun lobby focused, we did a podcast with the Senator that is out too on the books. So check that out, it is Episode 91, I believe. Maybe Episode 90? There's so many episodes, but we'll link to it and this will also be posted on the podcast. But yeah, as Kelly

knows, Christian knows, and listeners of "Red, Blue and Brady" know, I probably read a GVP book about a week now, just generally as part of my work. And there's there's this handful, that I immediately go on Goodreads and suggest to everyone and this was definitely one of them. So thank you so much Senator it was great, so.

 Sen. Chris Murphy 51:08
Thank you. Thanks.

 JJ Janflone 51:09
Definitely gets the Red, Blue and Brady stamp of approval. So we have to make a stamp. But

 Kelly Sampson 51:16
That is a fantastic note to close out our time, because I wish we could talk more, but obviously, we don't have endless time here, which is why everyone should buy the wonderful book and get more involved. So this question is to everyone, which is where can people go to get the book? Where can people go to learn more about gun violence? And what can people do to get involved right now in saving people's lives?

 Sen. Chris Murphy 51:39
Well, I'll take the book question. And then you can take the sort of resource question. The book's everywhere, so. Obviously, I'd prefer you buy from your local bookstore. If it's not open in person, you can do it online. I have sort of pushed folks to do that in Connecticut, and but it's available, it's available everywhere.

 Kris Brown 52:02
And as someone who just finished the book, I have to also say I have read a lot of books myself on the topic, obviously, over the years. And I would just say for those people who may not be as steeped in reading like JJ, a book a week on gun violence prevention, but want a good overview that's digestible, I highly recommend Senator Murphy's book. It was I wouldn't say it's an easy read. But it really provides an incredibly thorough overview about the history of violence, about guns in America, and about what we can do next. If you want more information, obviously, with a shameless plug, on any issue, facts, research policy, our End Family Fire campaign, please go to BradyUnited.org, and you will find a

treasure trove of information about the issue of gun violence prevention, and how you can get involved and make a difference.



JJ Janflone 53:02

Thank you again, so much, Senator. Thank you to all of the Chris/Kris's present, including Christian, and also to Kelly. This has been great. Thank you all so much. This first story comes from one of your favorite sources, Florida Man.



Kelly Sampson 53:20

Oh, it's really sad that that, yup.



JJ Janflone 53:27

Yeah. And it's not Florida's fault. It's just that actually they have really open, because they have sunshine laws, they have really open reporting standards. So this isn't us hating on Florida. This is us thanking them for being so open. However, they do have some pretty lax gun laws, which is concerning. So Kelly, a Florida man has been taken to jail after he went to his son's school to retrieve a handgun that he had forgotten into son's backpack.



Kelly Sampson 53:51

Oh, why was it in the backpack?



JJ Janflone 53:54

See, that is a question that the Miami Herald Journal article that I found does not answer.



Kelly Sampson 53:58

Like I mean, I need to know like, what? Why? I mean, it's good that you remembered that you forgot it, but also, I have questions.



JJ Janflone 54:07

Yeah he, the gentleman arrived to his eight year old's elementary school. He asked to see his son, along with his backpack. He then took the pistol out of it, and placed it in his

waistband. There apparently was another parent in the room who witnessed the incident. He then notified police, who were then called and he told the cops that he had he had forgotten that he placed his pistol in his son's backpack.

 Kelly Sampson 54:28
Mm hmm.

 JJ Janflone 54:29
The man was charged with possessing a weapon on school grounds, improper exhibition of a weapon, and possession of a concealed firearm. It does not, I could not find any reports whether it was loaded or not.

 Kelly Sampson 54:40
Yeah, I just why? Like clearly, if it was in there, then clearly he knew it was in there and like probably placed it in there. So I'm just like, what were you thinking?

 JJ Janflone 54:50
The only thing I can think of is, and I was guilty of this when I was a nanny is that sometimes if you're getting the kids out the door like, any bag will do. Right. Like I definitely took to play dates before with like, a grocery bag stuffed with all their stuff, right. So maybe had to put it in the bag. But no, a gun should not be loose in a bag at any time.

 Kelly Sampson 55:11
Yeah, especially a kid's bag. Like, you know what I mean? I

 JJ Janflone 55:15
Yes.

 Kelly Sampson 55:16
That's a very specific like I imagine it was a, how old was the kid?



JJ Janflone 55:21

Eight.



Kelly Sampson 55:22

Okay yeah so its like



JJ Janflone 55:24

Too young.



Kelly Sampson 55:25

Yeah. I, I just have questions.



JJ Janflone 55:31

I begin this week's news wrap up with another report on how gun and ammunition sales have skyrocketed this year. According to the FBI there have been more than 25,934,334 background checks through August, which provides a window into understanding the number of gun sales this year. It's not uncommon for gun sales to rise during an election year. But so far there's been a 95% increase in gun sales, compared to this time last year, and 139% increase for ammunition. Meanwhile, in California, after years of tireless advocacy by Brady California, Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law a bill that requires newer model handguns in California to be microstamped. Microstamping is a technology that imprints a unique marking known as a microstamp, on the bullet casing of a firearm. This allows law enforcement to connect bullet casings found at crime scenes directly to the gun that fired them. Kind of similar in the way that, you know, law enforcement can use your license plate to identify your car's, make, model, VIN and owner. California originally adopted a microstamping requirement in 2007 but gun manufacturers have effectively boycotted the law by saying they were unable to comply. This recently passed bill A.B. 2847, authored by Assemblymember David Chiu, will end the gun industry boycott by requiring the microstamp markings in just one place in the firearm instead of two, which the gun industry has publicly said they are able to do. If this seems super interesting to you, don't worry, we're gonna have another podcast episode down the line devoted just to this. This law also then mandates that for every new gun introduced to California, three guns without micro stamping technology has to be removed from the inventory of guns sold in state. Are you interested in sharing with the podcast? Listeners can get in touch

with us here at Red Blue, and Brady via phone or text message. Simply call or text us at 480-744-3452 with your thoughts, questions, concerns, ideas, whatever! And you know what else you can share? Chocolate. Come join me in eating your 2020 feelings by shopping Hu's Kitchen Chocolate which is free of dairy, gluten, refined sugar, palm oil, and cane sugar. My personal favorite are the dark gems. It's a bag bursting with 70% dark chocolate -- paleo style. Click on the link in the description of our episode to help support the show, and to buy you, or your loved ones, some tasty treats. 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, get in touch with us at Bradyunited.org, or on social [@Bradybuzz](https://twitter.com/Bradybuzz). Be brave and remember -- take action not sides.