

Episode 98-- Indigenous Populations, Gun Violence, and Publi...

Wed, 11/25 10:27AM 43:10

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

gun violence, people, indigenous, country, christine, suicide, sarina, indian health services, folks, brady, called, important, gun, kris, domestic violence, increase, communities, issue, congress, health care

SPEAKERS

Sarina Sharma-Welsh, JJ Janflone, Kelly Sampson, Sikowis, Kris Brown



JJ Janflone 00:09

Hey everybody, this is a legal disclaimer where I tell you that the views, thoughts and opinions shared on this podcast belong 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 "Red, Blue and Brady." Today, Kelly and I are so excited to bring you, I think, a really important continuation of a conversation. We started a few podcast episodes ago. So today we're joined by Christine Sikowis Noviss. She's a colonizer and a co chair and founder with the Great Plains Action Society. We're also joined by Kris Brown, president of Brady and Sarina Sharma-Welsh, she's a San Diego Team Enough chapter member. Now, what we're doing is, we're talking specifically about how Indigenous communities can find themselves cut off from democratic processes and just in general, a larger public awareness about how gun violence impacts their lives, that would allow these communities to bring about changes necessary for basic public safety. And so I want to kick it off by sort of immediately starting with Christine, and talking about something that we had started talking about in the last podcast, which I highly recommend that you go check out that you featured on, which is the incredibly high rates of missing and murdered Indigenous relatives of sometimes it's called missing and murdered just Indigenous women, but Christine uses the term "relatives," and I think that's actually even

better, because there are missing men, women and non binary individuals. And so I'm wondering, Christine, if you could just start by maybe informing our listeners about, you know, what's going on with this high number of missing and murdered indigenous individuals? And and how that intersects with gun violence?

S

Sikowis 02:00

Yes, the gun violence within it, well see, I don't know what the statistics are specifically for gun violence within Indigenous communities. But I do know that there is a very sharp increase in gun violence and domestic violence situations for BIPOC folks across the country. And I have been particularly concerned -- and I'm just going to sway off your question a little bit -- during this particular lockdown, if you want to call it, or shelter-in-place, you know, during COVID, because during shelter-in-place orders, or when people are, you know, stuck in their homes, domestic violence increases. Along with that, because Americans are weird, there's a really, there's been a surge in the purchase of firearms. And so you put the two, the two together, and it's it's creating a perfect storm for increased, you know, murder rates and domestic violence. And, of course, that's going to affect BIPOC folks more, and obviously, we have the highest rate of domestic violence in the country and so that is obviously going to affect Indigenous woman very much.

K

Kelly Sampson 03:11

Thanks, Christine. And just for any listeners who might not be familiar with the term BIPOC, it's an abbreviation and it stands for Black and Indigenous People of Color. And it's just a way of being precise because, a lot of times we're having conversations about race, people will go back and forth around people of color, or Black people or Indigenous people, and so it's just a way of being precise. And I just wanted to turn to Sarina, who's a member of Team Enough, because Team Enough focuses so much their work on racial justice. And I was just wondering if you could weigh in on why so little attention is paid, when we talk about gun violence, to the sorts of issues that Christine was just mentioning.

S

Sarina Sharma-Welsh 03:48

Yeah, I mean, it is a real tragedy in the country. And there are a few reasons as to why the issues of Indigenous people are so ignored in this country. And I would say the first of which is racism, which has been rampant throughout this country's entire history. And additionally, they don't have much representation in Congress, either. I believe there are a mere four representatives in the House right now. And so honestly, I think the best way to, you know, move forward on this issue is to educate others about the current state of Native Americans in our society and to increase awareness, which can really lead to

change.



JJ Janflone 04:28

And I think that's a great moment too, Christine, maybe for you to talk a little bit about what Great Plains Action does, and then also like what your role is, because I know when we've talked before on the podcast about you being a decolonizer, I think that was really powerful and really important for people to understand, like, what that position is, and sort of, I think, even you know, not to put you on the spot, and you can always tell me, no, but like, what, like where your identity is centered within this group too. And like why that's important, because I think what Sarina is pointing to is that folks are unaware of, sort of, just the accurate representation of like the Native experience in the US today or even what it was historically. And I think as a result of that, you've got a lot of folks who just either just don't think about things or if they do, have a really wonky frame of reference.



Sikowis 05:13

Yeah, I think that's why I founded Great Plains Action Society. Living in Iowa is very difficult for an Indigenous person, especially a Indigenous person that is not from here. You know, I am not Meskwaki, I'm not Winnebago, I'm not Omaha, you know, I'm Cree. I'm Plains Cree Saulteaux, and I am from Canada. Though I don't actually recognize the border that separates these two countries, I want to abolish border imperialism. But I, founded the Great Plains Action Society because I felt so alone here. You know, there's, there's only about 14,000 Natives and the Meskwaki Nation is kind of in the center of the states. And they're doing fantastic things. But there, there's a little, you know, they're there, they're doing their thing, you know, and there's very few of them too. And so I was like, 'wow, there's this whole state of people who're alone,' you know, kind of like a lot of Natives living in little pockets all over, but quite, quite alone. So I wanted to uplift the voice of Natives here, and the presence, because regardless of whether or not I'm, you know, on my territory, I'm on Turtle Island, and as a sovereign person, I, you know, should be able to express my indigeneity no matter where I am. And that does, you know, include talking about, you know, issues that are off of Indian, you know, out of Indian country, you know. Indian Country isn't a reservation, Indian country is like this entire, you know, mass of stolen land. And so, it what, what Sarina said about us being isolated is true, on reservations, because people want to, you know, they initially began as internment camps, right? So they were places that we were placed, corralled into, essentially, to get us out of the way to do something, to do something about that "Indian problem," right? I mean, that's what it was called at the time. And so now they've turned into thriving places, you know, with culture and traditions that have been revived. But, you know, there's still a lot of sickness we're overcoming from the genocide. And also with the genocide became the

erasure of us. So on the on the social landscape, you know, do we even exist? That's what I say sometimes. Where are we on that social landscape? You don't see, I mean, has there ever been a Native American sitcom, for instance? When you look at a magazine, do you see a Native American face? Do you see, you know, indigenous, well now you do, actually, because it's become quite hip -- but you see a lot of indigenous indigenous motifs lately - - in target or, you know, Urban Outfitters, for instance, they had an issue with our stuff. They like to adopt our culture, our stuff, our things, but they don't want anything to do with us. That's the settler colonial mentality. And so that's why we are so non-existent on the social landscape. And I think it's because people have just their you know, it's not even being taught in schools. It's a whitewashed history. So we're not, you know, people aren't even being taught the real history. And they're not being taught about real people, doing real things. So that's, that's what Great Plains Action Society does, one of our goals is to uplift and empower the Indigenous voice.

K

Kelly Sampson 08:06

We appreciate how you use language, because to your point about getting taught real history, just for you to say there was a genocide, we have been just, I just think it's so powerful. And in terms of gun violence, one of the places where we don't often hear the true color of what's happening is around suicide. So I wanted to turn to Kris, because suicide is one of those parts of gun violence that goes under reported by the media. And that's the eighth-leading cause of death among Indigenous populations, and so I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about that particular aspect of gun violence.

K

Kris Brown 09:02

Yes, thanks, Kelly. And I echo your compliments and comments about Christine just incredibly precise, and really, really important, what you're doing. So thank you so much for that. We have a problem in America. Overall, we know this, we have an epidemic of gun violence. Of course, that's true when you think about it simply based on the numbers. Attached to every number as a human being. So we lose 40,000 Americans every single year to gun violence, and nearly 80,000 additional individuals are shot and live with those injuries for the rest of their lives. If you think about the number of Americans were losing (40,000 a year) to gun violence, most Americans would be shocked by the reality that approximately, just over 60% of those, are due to suicide. And the reason they'd be shocked, and are shocked, based on all of the polls that have been done about the perception of gun violence in America, is because most Americans think that either homicide or mass shootings are, by far, the greatest number of gun deaths and gun injury in this country. And that's actually not true -- the vast majority are actually suicides -- not that these other forms of gun violence are any less horrific, or any less preventable, they

are. But the issue of suicide is not one well-covered by the media. It is not one that therefore helps shape an understanding, by most Americans, of the impact of this. And in particular, on particular communities in this country, and certainly for Indigenous populations, we see some areas that are overcome by suicide. And the thing that's hardest about this is, just like other kinds of gun violence, suicide by gun is preventable. We know this. That's why Brady, several years ago, began the process to roll out our social media campaign that is now in the public domain and has been for all of two weeks. But still is very important, to shape people's understanding that that linkage between guns and suicide is a deadly one. And let me just explain what I mean by that. If you attempt suicide with a gun, 9 times out of 10, you will complete that suicide. In other words, using a gun doesn't give most people, ever, a second chance. Why is that important? Because most people who attempt suicide and survive, go on to die of natural causes, years and years and years later. And I say that, and I think it's important to say it because it debunks a myth that I hear over, and over, and over again, which is this -- someone who is intent on completing a suicide will do so no matter what -- that's not true, it's just not true. And therefore, if you can find ways to create a barrier in time or access to guns, from individuals who are at risk, you can save a life. And we really need to engage in much better communication about this issue, about the fact that this is a preventable and avoidable harm. The media needs to cover this like the public health epidemic that it is. We lose, on average, 63 people a day to suicide by gun. That's greater than any mass shooting that's ever happened in American history. We need to tackle this, like the public health epidemic it is. And one thing that gives me some hope. I like to always end on a positive note when I'm talking about these things is, although Congress stopped funding, for two decades, the CDC's research into gun violence, which was a major public harm, they put \$25 million thanks to Rosa DeLauro, and some amazing champions in Congress, to gun violence prevention research. One of those areas that needs to be top of the list is obviously how we communicate to the public and to special populations, to make sure we're reducing suicide risk and educating gun owners because they're the ones who are at higher risk of, all the steps that they can undertake to ensure the gun that they brought into the home (mostly with the perception that that's going to save a family member) isn't used by that same family member to end their life.



JJ Janflone 13:38

And I think that sort of sets us up really well for questions I have for Christine and for Sarina, which is just that, as Kris pointed out, the rates of suicide in Indigenous communities, particularly people who are living on the reservation, is exceptionally high, like shockingly so. I believe it's 130 times higher for adult women than of their peers believe is about 140 for men between 18 to 35. And one of the things that has come out from us being able to actually do more studies now, is that every six days in the US, an

Indigenous youth dies from gun suicide, specifically. And I think that those numbers are they're not just appalling and shocking, but I think it's the fact that people don't know about them as well, that there hasn't been like a targeted health campaign for this. And I'm wondering, Christine, if you could speak to maybe some of the, maybe like the lack of resources people have access to, or why you think that that that is? And then Sarina, as I hate to do this would be like 'as a youth,' if you could, if you could like represent sort of for Team Enough, what are some of the the issues that, sort of like, young people have in in gaining access to those services that are there?

S

Sikowis 14:41

Yeah, I just wanted to say thank you, Kris. That was a lot of good information. And I wanted to add to that too, because we're talking about Indigenous folks, right? Native American veterans have the highest record of military service in the country for over the you know, the past 200 years. They have five times the national average of enlistment. And as we know, we have a high high suicide rate from military service. Also, I wanted to point out that since 1999, the suicide rate for Indigenous woman has climbed 139%, the suicide rate for Indigenous men has climbed 71%. That compared to the national average is astonishing. The national average is 33% since 1999. And so put all these numbers into, you know, suicide by gun, and it's very astonishing. Um, I actually haven't done the statistics for that. But I would love to hear the actual number, you know. Because I, you know, like it's not out there, like, and that's the problem, like you just said, like, you know, where are these numbers? Why isn't there a critical, why isn't there a crisis being called on this? The statistic for the entire country, is that the suicide rate for for youth for youth, okay, like 24, and under I believe, in Indian country is, is the highest in the country as well. And so why isn't there a targeted campaign? Why isn't this being talked about in Congress? Well, first of all, our population is only like, what 5 million, you know. And so we're not really that important, you know, in terms of a demographic, right, we don't have the numbers, you know, to, to consider this maybe a crisis, you know, even though it is within our community, it is a crisis within our community. Also, the the general policy of this country, which is built on white supremacy, has been to silently cheer-on our demise. And so, you know, I think that, even till this day, there's just a block, a mental block, if you will, within the consciousness of this, this country to want to help Brown and Black folks overcome a crisis. And it's often blamed on us as if, like, it's our fault, there's no understanding of the larger picture. And so just like the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women crisis, we have a suicide crisis. And, and people just, they are just completely oblivious to it. I can yell, I can scream, I can write, I've been doing that. I've made graphics that show, you know, what's this is, and they just get like, no movement, and I don't know what it is. You know, but you know, you post a picture of yourself and your, you know, your kid and people love it. So I don't know what it is, I think there's a I think there's just a

mental wall, like a block, you know, there's a burying your head in the sand syndrome. And, you know, it's not me, and I'm good. I'm living in my, you know, my nice environment. And I just really think that's what's happening.

S

Sarina Sharma-Welsh 17:32

And I think also, another issue that we have to take into account is the fact that, you know, a lot of minorities in this country, including Indigenous people have been forced into lifestyles of isolation, and, you know, getting used to being mistreated, and, you know, that has caused certain mental illnesses, even like depression, which sadly makes them more susceptible to committing suicide, which is so tragic. And I think that the key to that is making connections with other people, whether it's within your own community, or outside of your community, like in activism, we build coalitions between organizations. But because of those reservations, that isolation that they face, it's so hard to make that happen. And so as a teen, I have been involved in activism for the past two-and-a-half years, and I have worked to represent the underrepresented, whether that's part of speaking to local city council members, or lobbying state legislatures. And so I think that those kinds of connections can make a world of difference, because that innately, that gives them a platform for their voices to be heard on a national stage. And I think that's what really needs to happen, again, speaking to the lack of awareness in this country about the simple day-to-day struggles that these people face. And it's something that, you know, a lot of us don't even know exists among people in the United States. But it's something that people again, I go back to education, people need to be educated about this crisis. And that really is the only way to move forward and improve these issues.

K

Kelly Sampson 19:05

I want to pick up on a thread that Christine brought up when you talked about the, astounding really, increase in suicide rates among Native men and women, and how even within that the women's rates were much higher. And I know when you were on the podcast with us, we talked a little bit about the Violence Against Women Act, which I'll refer to as VAWA from here on. But I was wondering if you could talk about the gender disparity among Indigenous people when it comes to gun violence, and specifically domestic violence, which obviously can affect men, women and non binary people, but there is a gender disparity and how that connects to the expiration of VAWA.

S

Sikowis 19:44

Yeah, I do want to make sure that I note that increased gun violence is also, like, a massive issue within the LGBTQIA community and Black trans women are facing high rates of gun

violence. So I just want to make that note. And yes, within our communities as well, Indigenous trans and, you know, non binary folks are also facing facing high rates of violence. And I'm like, again, I don't know what the numbers are, I've looked, but I haven't been able to find them. But I'm guessing murder rates include the use of guns. And so, you know, this would be a great project to work on with Brady, to be honest, to find out these specific numbers. Because I myself haven't been able to. I mean, I know they're high. That's all I know. And that's the problem, you know, so. But back to VAWA, the Violence Against Women Act in 2013, was a big deal, there was a lot of lobbying that surrounded increasing protections for Indigenous folks, for immigrants and for LGBTQIA community, because we face special situations that increase domestic violence. And then as I mentioned earlier, death by, you know, gun and just, you know, just violence in general, you know. Immigrant communities are vulnerable, women are vulnerable, they're taken advantage of, because they are in a situation where they are trying to stay in the country. And as you know, a lot of people can take advantage of that. They're Indigenous, these people are Indigenous most of the time, so we can't, we have to stop separating as well, this idea that because you're from south of the border, that you're not, you know, Indigenous. And so there's, you know, there's the, it's the same thing, it's a, it's a it's a continued colonization and genocide against Indigenous people. So that, so for specific Native American people, there was also like provisions put in to increase protections, such as, you know, the ability to prosecute non-tribal members on on tribal, in tribal courts, because of domestic violence, or violence against a person within our communities. And that was a really big deal, because that was the first time we had been given the ability to try non-tribal members within our courts. And mind you, it's very limited, because very few of our courts are considered don't pass the test. And so, you know, we, we have very few courts with the ability to do that, but we're still doing it. And it's kind of a big deal. It's a really big deal in terms of our sovereignty, and our ability to do what we want with our own court systems, which also gets us out of that gray area, where so many non-tribal members for years, hundreds of years -- well, I don't want to say hundreds of years, right, like, the development of the court systems and all that, like a let's just say like, you know, 100 years, right -- where they just basically got out of doing terrible things to people, because they fall into that, that gray zone where nobody knows whose jurisdiction is what, and so this is trying to solve that problem. It's not even close to, like, you know, like, actually solving the problem, but it's a step in the right direction. And it's really important, because it provides like, tons of like resources, a lot of money to tribes, from the Office of Violence Against Women to for resources for programs, or, you know, just education for, you know, even to find people that go missing. And it's been held up now, in Congress for a year-and-a-half, it expired, yeah, over a year-and-a-half ago. And because it needs to be reinstated. And it's been sitting in what I call, or many people call, "Mitch McConnell's graveyard," and it's not being passed, because the NRA, who I call a domestic terrorist organization, is lobbying heavily against it. And it's because of something called the

boyfriend boyfriend loophole, which will increase the the net, if you will, or the scope of who is considered a 'partner,' and then who then, if they are charged with a domestic violence assault charge, then they are unable to obtain a firearm. And so, you know, it's not just like a live-in person that you're married to, or that like, has been living, like, you know, has been living with you for a while, it's been increased to, you know, boyfriends and people that someone has been, you know, an acquaintance with for a period of time that they have, you know, a relationship with. And that's a really big deal, that's a very big deal, you know, and so and this, you know, this is, and also what Trump did is basically cut the definition of domestic violence in VAWA from like this, you know, like on a, on a paper to this. So, it had taken years, 25 years, to develop this policy and this definition of what domestic violence is to, economic even, I think, I can't remember but I think there was even, there was even talk about economic abuse, you know, like, you know, physical, psychological, emotional, you know, it really it really tried to flesh out like what actually is domestic violence? What is what is abuse, what is, what is it? And Trump then put it back to its sterile, like a judicial like one sentence definition which is "physical harm that is done to someone that lives within the household." And so we have a real issue right now with domestic violence, we have a real issue with violence against women in general in this country. We have an increase in gun sales, and we have a domestic domestic terrorist organization lobbying against it. And as we all know, that organization is in deep with the Republican Party, and in particular with this current president, and that's a real problem. So VAWA, obviously is not important to the white heteropatriarchy that is in power right now.

K

Kelly Sampson 25:37

And you brought up so many really important points. And I was just wondering if Kris had anything to add, especially around the boyfriend loophole, because Brady's been working to fight against that for a really long time?

K

Kris Brown 25:48

Yeah, well, I think Christine kind of covered the universe here very, very well. One of the major points, that I think is important just to understand from a very basic level, is what Christine is talking about, and the understanding of domestic violence that has been developed in the courts, since VAWA was first authorized, is really critically important to protect and save lives. It's really just that simple. And the boyfriend loophole, the so-called "boyfriend loophole" exists because when VAWA was first passed, it had a narrow definition of what kinds of relationships between individuals could allow federal prosecution and gun removal. And that is individuals who were married, and who may be cohabitating for a period of time. Here's the problem. Many people have relationships

with other individuals who can abuse them, and they don't happen to be married. Why is it that the law should protect someone who is being abused by their married partner, and not the partner who they don't happen to be married to? That's ridiculous. That's why this is called the "boyfriend loophole," and in the VAWA reauthorization that Christine was talking about that passed the House, that would be fixed. That's important, because as you mentioned, Kelly, we've been working on this for a really long time. And we have had that loophole closed in a number of states across this country. But why should it be someone who's an abusive, being abused by a partner who doesn't live with them, in one state, gets protection under the law, and can get all kinds of positive things happening that actually save their lives, including removal of guns from that abuser. And yet in a neighboring state, because the state has not passed that "boyfriend loophole," closed it, they're not subject to those same protections. So we need one federal standard all across the country. That's critically important and I look forward to the day when we do have leaders who embrace that as a key and important priority.



JJ Janflone 28:01

Speaking of things, I think, sort of across the board, a question that I want to open up, actually, to all of our amazing panelists so far is, is something that I think Christine in particular maybe if it's okay, I'll link it down below. I think you've written really beautifully about this in a number of places. For all of you who don't know, please go look at Christine's writing, because it's phenomenal. She does a really, really good job. And she's humble, so she's probably not going to say it, but she does a really good job. Is that we have a lack of health care access for folks, and that that actively harms people. And Kris, I've heard I've heard you talk about this. Sarina, certainly I've heard Team Enough talk about this, this idea that without healthcare, too, there are millions of gun violence survivors, so people who have survived being shot, but still have these massive health care bills that are now, could possibly be considered a preexisting conditions, folks who are in crisis, who are sort of left to suffer because they don't have access to health care. And I'm wondering if we can sort of unpack that. And then because we live in a world where COVID-19 is a thing, if we can unpack why this health care access, particularly for Indigenous folks is so inherently now tied to being able to do like vote-in-ballots, and things of that nature, to be able to do things via the mail. So very big questions, I know, but that's why I asked three people far smarter than me to answer them.



Kris Brown 29:14

I'm happy to see if I can take the lead on your question.



JJ Janflone 29:19

Thank you, Kris. I know it's a lot



Kris Brown 29:20

It's fairly expansive, so let me try and cut it down for my answer, and then others can answer other pieces of it. But in terms of health care access, it's actually critically important, because we know after the Affordable Care Act came into effect, about 40/45% of individuals who did not previously have any health care coverage, who were victims of gun violence, received coverage and care as a result of the Affordable Care Act. We talked about that in great detail, as part of a report that Brady put out a few years back, when the ACA time number 520 was under threat, to really push back on efforts to attempt to take any of the benefits of the ACA away. And the reason why -- beyond just humane empathy, and an understanding of the kinds of care that we should be providing every single American in this country -- is economic common sense. A lot of the efforts to repeal the ACA really seem to rely on this premise that if we don't pay for it, people won't get sick. That's not true. And in America, because we have an epidemic of gun violence, people are getting shot -- 100 of them on average, every single day -- and if they don't have health care coverage, the ambulance still takes them to the hospital in many communities too slow, and not good care, which is a separate problem -- but they end up getting treatment. And who do you think pays for that treatment? Taxpayers do, so we pay for it one way or the other. The real issue is an understanding that gun violence, for survivors of gun violence, costs them on average for a hospital stay and taxpayers \$40,000. But that's just for the first two to three days of care. After that, when they're discharged, many have lifetime economic consequences and health care costs associated with that. It's in our societal interest to ensure quality care, because those are individuals who can get back into the public marketplace, and be a great benefit to our society. So it's short sighted thinking. All the way around, the ACA has done incredible things to ensure that people who are victims of gun violence, get treatment and get continued care. We should be doing things to bolster the Affordable Care Act, not potentially deny those life saving benefits to people, out of a totally mistaken notion about who deserves health care in this country.



Sarina Sharma-Welsh 32:09

And again, going back to gun violence prevention, a huge majority of Americans support common sense gun laws, such as the universal background checks. And yet Congress has done nothing to sign this into law. And so voting, all those people voting for gun sense propositions, gun sense candidates can not only help us retain our democracy, exercising

our rights, but also fill Congress with people that truly represent the people's will.

S

Sikowis 32:41

Right on. Yeah. The vote is very important this year. Yeah, in terms of health care. Oh, man, that's a really, I mean, I'm trying to make this succinct because I know that this is a one hour program. So um, Oh, my goodness I'm trying to condense this, because there's so many issues with an Indian country and health care and access to health care. It's just it's kind of mind blowing. I mean, what is happening right now is there's a lack of health care. So we all know that, right? Like, we can see that that's kind of across the board in Indian Country, right. But it's like, it's another crisis. It's, you know, Indian Health Services is so limited, and so sparsely located around the country, right. And that's what a lot of our people rely on, because they can't afford to buy the expensive insurance, or they don't, you know, we don't have large numbers of people within, you know, positions in companies that provide good health care, you know, with their job. We know, we have some of the highest rates of, I think, probably the highest rates of dropout, high school dropouts, you know, in the country, you know, people just not even you know, graduating. I know that that's actually changing pretty sharply right now, a lot, so like, I don't know if I want to say that, you know. But I'm hoping that's going to change very quickly here. Just the ability to get to Indian health services can be a hard thing because you have to go to your, you know, Indian health services. So my friend right now who lives in Iowa has to drive, like I don't know, 10 hours north to go see her doctor. And this is, this just happened like just, you know, as of like, you know, yesterday having to drive up there to go get a flu shot, to go get a check up, to go you know, do whatever it is that you know they need to do. There's no Indian health services in Iowa, for instance, okay, because I was doesn't have a population large enough to warrant Indian health services here. But yet, Sioux City, which is technically in Iowa, has a very high number of Indigenous folks living there. That's where we have like our you know, most of our indigenous folks living in Sioux City on the border of Nebraska and Iowa, 'cause there's the Omaha, and the Winnebago and the Santee reservations like very, very close to that. So there's a lot of movement of people, Native people in that area, and there's no Indian health services, you know, there's no rehabilitation, there's no treatment, you know, and you know, halfway houses in the area that are culturally competent, and or focused on indigenous folks. Now I say this because there should be. One of my mentors and, and, and people I admire the most in the world, Frank LaMere, who passed away last year, was fighting to get Indian Health Services in Sioux City simply because our rates of substance abuse are very high there. And so even though the police force was saying, for instance, like the, the captain put a whole presentation on this, when I was there to watch, said, "Look, we don't want to arrest drunk and houseless Native American people anymore," you know, for, you know, vagrancy or, you know, public intox. We're at a point where, like, we we see that these people need

services, they and, and we want to change that. And so there was this, this, this talk, and there's like a lot of people coming to these meetings, and, you know, there's the beginning conversation of making this happened, because even the police force was like, we got to do something, you know. They were talking about getting, you know, even cultural cultural ambassadors to be within the communities to try and solve this problem. You know, so for instance, like, you know, indigenous folks make up about like two to three percent of the population in Sioux City, which is high for us, but make up 45 to 63%, of the houseless population. So this is a huge healthcare issue, because we need Mental Health Access. And then when you don't have access to a mental health resources, what happens, right? Increase in suicide, increase in violence, increase in all sorts of things. And then again, back to gun violence, you have an increase in, you know, death by, you know, firearm. And so, you know, I don't know if I did a good job of explaining that. But I mean, I can't even go into like access to abortion, we don't have access to abortion on reservations, or through Indian Health Services, because it's because of the Hyde Amendment, which doesn't allow this particular service to be given through federal funding. So for 40 years, Indigenous folks haven't had access, on their own sovereign territories, to take action on unwanted pregnancies, which there are many of. And then so a lot of women are, you know, they don't end up getting it, and they end up in situations that maybe they necessarily didn't want to be in. And that is, I know, and I haven't attributed it to it yet publicly, but this is just what's in my mind, I would say that that is another reason why we have an increase in suicide rates as well. So it's all tied together, you know, like, we're talking about woman and suicide rates and death by gun. And you know, it's it's all it's all one-in-the-same.



JJ Janflone 37:56

Really quick, because I know Kelly has a question, but I just want to say, Christine, I think you actually did do a really, really good job explaining it. Because I think, and this is one of the things that we struggle with all the time is gun violence is so difficult and so hard. But I think that this is the thing that comes up a lot, right, when we're trying to talk about even gun violence is that I think, again, there's this idea that it's just one thing, it's this perfect little one tiny knot, but it's not. It's thousands of threads, of different things running through it, that have been bound up into this thing, that unfortunately, folks like the gun lobby make money off of, while other people are suffering. And then we have to sort of sit there and sort of tease out what is the mental health aspect? What is the legislative aspect? Where is the gender aspect? Like we end up having to solve all these problems to get to this one thing, which is that there's, there's a gun present, at least on our end. So I appreciate you even like trying and an hour-long program. To explain some of that. I think you did a really great job.



Sikowis 38:55

I just I wanted to add something to it because it gets in my craw. You know, I was on a call with Nancy Pelosi's people and Biden's people. It was called this 'grassroots kitchen cabinet call' or something like that. And you know, what I had to say to them was this like, y'all have these like massive organizations around the country, you have like millions of dollars right now right to get out the vote, but it's being spent on the status quo, it's being used to get out the votes, in my opinion, the majority of it is being used to get out the vote, within populations that are already you know, are not necessarily as disenfranchised, right. I'm like, I would love to see more movement of money and resources towards like, folks like, the amount of money that goes towards BIPOC folks in this country to Get Out The Vote is minimal. And so like yet, that is where the largest number of unregistered voters sits. But I still feel like people are trying the path of least resistance right now, you know, and still putting all that money towards, you know, the the blue collar, white women, you know, that they think is going to come out numbers right. And, and so I really think we need to change that like significantly. They got, there is just a ton of money surrounding this election in particular. And a lot of that should be funneled towards like folks that are getting out the vote on the ground and within those communities, I do that work. I've been doing that work for two years now, GOTV and Indigenous political engagement efforts. And believe me, when I say this, the amount of money we receive, to do the work that we're doing, is like pennies compared to what I see Indivisible, or Lean Left, or these massive organizations, like compared to what they have. We could be one of those big organizations, we could do that work. But we're just not given the opportunity. I don't even think that the National Congress of American Indians and the Native American Rights Fund are getting the the right amount of funds that they should be getting, in order to get out the vote. Because those folks are fighting, they're going to litigation, and they're trying to change rules. And they need more funding, they need way more funding. So I just wanted to say that



JJ Janflone 41:15

No, I mean, I, as always, every time you talk, I'm like, "Thank you, Christine." I feel like I just need to thank you for your wisdom and your thoughts. All right. Thank you all so much. Kelly, thank you for being the co hostess with the mostess as always. Kris, thank you for your time. And Christine, as always, thank you so much for all of your your deep wisdom. I think you gave us a lot of ideas for ways that Brady and Great Plains can partner maybe in the future.



Sikowis 41:37

Thank you, thank you, as always.



JJ Janflone 41:41

Hey, want to share 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 is fun chocolate? Come join me in eating your 2020 feelings by shopping HU's kitchen, which is chocolate free of dairy, gluten, refined sugar, palm oil and cane sugar. My personal favorites are called the dark gems. It's a bag bursting with 70% dark chocolate. They're paleo friendly. They're great snacks. Click on the link in the description of our episode to help support the show, and to buy yourself 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.