

## Episode 43: If They'd Just Listen



**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255.**  
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**\*\*\*Brady legal music\*\*\***

### **Kelly**

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

### **JJ**

Hey everybody welcome back to “Red, Blue, and Brady”, and I am so excited for this minisode today for so many reasons. But let's do the first one, which is that I am joined by a brand new cohost. You've met her once before when she was on to talk about toy guns, but she's back again. It's...Kelly!

### **Kelly**

Woo! Hi, everyone.

**JJ**

Kelly, do you want to let everybody know what you do at Brady, besides being awesome?

**Kelly**

I am counsel here where I focus on constitutional litigation, legal alliance and racial justice.

**JJ**

So, Kelly, besides your fantastic taste in podcasts and your phenomenal legal prowess...what, What are we doing today? Why are we having this minisode today?

**Kelly**

So we're having this minisode today because we're kicking off a series that will only be the start of a conversation that won't end as long as Brady's around. Which is considering, amplifying and thinking about the intersectional nature of gun violence. And today is a particularly poignant day because it's Trayvon Martin's birthday and he would have been 25 years old. And so this is just a sliver of a conversation that is so complex and multi-dimensional, but you have to start somewhere. So that's what we're doing.

**JJ**

Yeah.

**Kelly**

So oftentimes we talk about gun violence as though it's a blanket issue. But in reality, gun violence encompasses different phenomena that all involve guns but have different root causes. Gun violence oftentimes is used as an umbrella term, but we know that it encompasses different things. You have mass shootings, urban violence, suicide, domestic violence and all of these different phenomena impact different populations with different concerns. And so hard part of what we're trying to do here is drill down on what gun violence looks like.

**JJ**

And we want to be really clear from the outset because I think people hear the phrase like racial justice and get really nervous because right, I think that they're afraid am I gonna get yelled at for not knowing things. Am I gonna get yelled at for, you know, not having solved the problem of racism in America yet? And the answer to that is no, because it's and I've learned this just even preparing for this podcast. I feel like I've learned a ton already.

So this isn't to shame people. This is to educate people. This is to give people a chance to say, hey, awkward conversations are really hard. Talking about race in America is a difficult thing and like you can't see us but like I'm a white lady, Kelly is a black lady like I think we do not speak for all white and black women.

**Kelly**

No, we don't.

**JJ**

You can tweet us like lots of angry things, but not about that. But that doesn't mean just because it's hard that you don't have that conversation and you don't try, and we owe it to the 100 Americans that die every day literally, that we have to have this conversation

**Kelly**

Right and I think in our country, especially there is this sense of shame. Or, you know, if I say something wrong, everyone's gonna attack and stone me. But that's not that sort of conversation that we're trying to have because let's be real America is so diverse, so complex, so multicultural. And each of us is just an individual with one experience, which means inevitably, there are things that we don't know. There are conversations that we don't understand. We're going to make mistakes. And so we're not going for 100% perfection because that's not realistic. We're going for an attitude that's willing to learn, willing to be corrected with the understanding that that's natural and, um, ethical moral thing is to keep learning and to be open to that.

**JJ**

And so to that end, you know, because the whole point of this podcast right is that every week we give you a tiny little snippet of gun violence, cause gun violence is difficult. We give you a tiny little snippet of gun violence prevention so that you the listeners could go out there better and informed, ready to work on this, you know, ready to face the reality of gun violence and gun violence prevention head on.

The little snippet we're going to give you today is we're joined by these two phenomenal Team Enough members, some great ladies that I get to work with at Brady every day who, as I've talked about our Team Enough kids before in the past, like people who are not yet legal to drink but have resumes that, like, put my adult resume to absolute shame. And we're gonna talk to them about sort of the reality of being young women of color in this space. And you know whether they feel welcome in this space or--not the space as our tiny little Harry Potter podcast studio--but space as the GVP movement.

**JJ and Kelly**

\*laughter\*

\*\*\*music plays\*\*\*

**Kelly**

So let's just kick this off, can you ladies introduce yourselves?

**Tatiana**

Hi, I'm Tatiana Washington, I'm on the executive council members on Team Enough.

**Aalayah**

Hi, my name is Aalayah Eastmond. I'm a survivor of the Parkland shooting and executive council member of Team Enough.

**JJ**

And I wanna give, I think actually, Tatiana, it was a tweet that you had retweeted that made me wanna have this conversation, because you retweeted something I believe about young activists of color, getting pushed out of spaces and then white activists, sort of taking that space up. And we've seen that a lot with sort of like indigenous black and brown bodies, young activists getting pushed out of the climate change conversation, but I think we certainly see it in gun violence as well. And so I was like, we have these two fabulous Team Enough members, and I think maybe you actually even retweeted it too, Aalayah...well now you know I stalk your twitter. And so I was like, we've gotta talk to you all about that.

**Aalayah**

For me personally, that's been my entire journey in this movement. Coming from Parkland and Douglas, it did spark the national conversation to happen again. But we did clearly see a disconnect between black and brown students that survived the shooting at my school and then the white students. And I think it's important that we hold people accountable, including the media, because the media made it an effort to give just those students alone a platform. And then some of those students, you know, didn't make an effort to include other students of color from our school into their organization or their platforms. So that's been my entire journey here in this movement is just trying to push my voice and not only my voice but those that look like me and sharing my platform that I gained on my own with those that don't have the opportunity.

**Tatiana**

Yeah, I would add on that I got involved in activism before, like pre March for Our Lives and like pre that national youth gun violence prevention movement after I lost my aunt to gun violence. And so there wasn't really ever a space for like, my peers in Milwaukee. We didn't have that space. No one was like, really listening. And then when, like the walkouts happening like March 2018 for the Parkland shooting it was like, "oh, oh my gosh all this stuff is happening!" But we had to kind of, like, capitalize off of another shooting that happened in like another community. And I figure they'll listen to us and like that doesn't that doesn't feel good like that. Like, these things are both very tragic. And they shouldn't have to, like, use this other very tragic thing so people will listen to, like, what happened in, like, Milwaukee and like happened to the students at my high school. So it was, it was like, a little frustrating that, like, this whole like, okay, now this happened and then we have to kind of like use this for our benefit and it doesn't feel good because no one wants to listen...no one will just wanna listen to us.

**JJ**

I would imagine that that's incredibly frustrating and a way that is really hard to articulate, because no one wants to be in this movement to begin with, right? And then you feel like you have to be in this movement, but then to feel like you have to fight just to get heard at the same level of other people who have the exact same, or as close to it experience that you've had, the same background, the same skill set.

**Kelly**

And there have been grassroots organizations working to combat gun violence for decades. But oftentimes they don't get it the same platform as some of the national organizations.

**JJ**

And I think we have to, not just as Brady, but I think is a movement like we have to acknowledge that and be like, yeah, that's a thing that's happened and we need to do better and we need to fix it like we have to acknowledge it, and then we have to immediately be like, okay, and here is how we're fixing it.

**Aalayah**

A part of that problem is that I've noticed this with single individuals and organizations is that they don't really listen to what people in marginalized groups say the definition of being an ally is. They kind of created it on their own and say, "OK, this is what I think you need, and this is how I'm gonna help you," other than sitting down and having that conversation with them and them telling them this is how you help my community, this is how you be a proper ally. And I've seen that with individuals and organizations. I think it's really problematic because, like, you can't tell me how you're gonna help me. I have to tell you what you need to do to help me because you have the privilege and you have the platform. And I think that stems a lot of that problem.

**JJ**

What do you think a good ally is, then?

**Aalayah**

Honestly, it starts with listening because I feel like a lot of people in this movement just don't listen. It starts with listening, and then actually, not just talking about doing action behind it. Ah, a lot of...I don't want to be mean but a lot of students in this movement think that a simple retweet or tweet, is being an ally, and it's a lot more to it. I've seen a lot of people in this movement, like to speak on, um, different groups, but or different communities but would be scared to go to that community and have a conversation with them. And that's very problematic, like you can't...that's not being an ally. So I think it's one starting with listening and then actually making it an effort to listen to what they're saying being an ally is and then implementing that.

**Tatiana**

Yeah, I would also say the policy and pushes in this movement like I don't think we've looked at all like the explicit and implicit like consequences that these could have especially in impacted communities or black and brown communities. And it's like it's so frustrating, even things like a background check, like I don't think you look like how this could affect black and brown people and we look at the fact of how even like the history, how like Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party started to like arm themselves, and they were labeled as violent even though it's really they were defending themselves. And now it's like, oh, you like, like, kind of like criminalized. And it's like, how do we do this when we don't even acknowledge the racism that, like gun laws have? And it's like it has terrorized communities from white people terrorizing, being terrorists coming into communities, but then also gun trafficking, that's a whole another form, and it's like some of the policies of it pushed it not inclusive. But they also have consequences that I don't think have been considered.

**Kelly**

I also wonder, um, when you mention, you know, having people having a movement far before Parkland and March for Our Lives or even you, Aalayah, I know you referenced things that happen to your family back in New York--if part of the frustration is knowing that if people would listen to the experiences that you and other activists are bringing to the table, then maybe they could prevent all of it. And maybe you could prevent, you know, violence in Milwaukee and also mass shootings. And until we kind of actually grapple with all of that, then we're not gonna make much progress. as we could otherwise.

**JJ**

And then I think there's another element in here, too, which is, I think there's a gendered part of it as well of like women's voices, maybe not being value, but certainly not like young women of colors, voices being valued as much as others. And I just wondered if that's been your experience at all?

**Aalayah**

I mean, it's interesting that you just that you brought that up because we just had the women's march and we had this conversation with them not being inclusive of not just DC natives, but people east of the river that are impacted by a lot of the issues that they discuss during their march or rally. And, yeah, that does happen in GVP as well. But it's just really interesting that you brought that up because it literally just happened. And it was like this big thing with them not being inclusive of Black Lives Matter and DC natives east of the river. And it was just, it's just frustrating because it's not just GVP, but it's just movements in general just have this tendency of not being inclusive of marginalized groups. And it's just so frustrating.

**Tatianna**

So I would say being from Wisconsin, whereas like Milwaukee looks a little more diverse, the rest of state is like pretty white. And when I, like, go out of, like Milwaukee, like, do things, it's almost like...if I were, like, like one of my white peers, or even like a white girl, they'd be taken like, a little bit more seriously? And then it's like me. It's like what your credentials and like, what is this? What is that? It's like I like I have, I've been impacted. I have experience. But also even the fact that, like this issue, like affects black women like this, is that this is a woman's rights issue. And I don't know if this movement has fully like, I'm not to say like it's recognized. Recognized, acknowledged it, and I think that's when that we're missing is, that this is a woman's rights issue.

**Kelly**

I hear, a strand, as you are talking about the interconnectivity of GVP and also a variety of other movements. I'm just wondering for some of our listeners who may not have ever had to think about how GVP connects with other social movements that they may be familiar with. If you all could just give a couple of examples of of the intersectionality between GVP and you mentioned the women's march or environmental justice or any those other sorts of movements.

**Tatiana**

Well, I think it's also just hard to like have discussions about, like, bringing my full identity like I can't just be like, oh, like this is a discussion about, like gun violence and then, like, remove myself. We have to talk about racism, we have to talk about colorism, we have to talk about all these things. We have to talk about mass incarceration because, especially in Milwaukee, it has one of the highest incarceration rates with black men in the country. And then you look at the ZIP code, a specific ZIP code that's in the rates of violence is higher. But that's also that impacts education, there's an education gap. There's all these things. It's impossible. Just have a conversation about gun violence. But yes, it's one thing No, this includes mass incarceration this includes education. This includes, and like all inequities. So we just have to have a more holistic conversation.

### **Aalayah**

The number one thing that I feel, number one issue that I feel like is very touchy when it comes to gun violence is mental health, because a lot of people use mental health as an excuse for a lot of the altercations or situation that may happen. But also it's very important to recognize what gun violence may do to a community or a person when once they're impacted. And I feel like it's not touched upon because of what the media uses mental health to portray after something happens. So I think it's a conversation that needs to happen more because being in this work is in itself traumatic, and being in it and also being impacted just adds on to it. And we don't really have space to have that conversation on what it can do to our mental health. Specifically in black and brown communities, the conversation of mental health is never had, and it's always a stigma and you know it's it needs to be broken down, and we really need to have the space to talk about it specifically in our communities of color too, as well as providing resources.

### **JJ**

And that goes into something that before we started filming, we were all talking about, which is the solution that a lot of people bring up of, well we just need to arm teachers. We just need to police schools more that will solve school shootings. We just need to police communities more that'll solve everyday gun violence. And I don't think that that acknowledges the fear, the very well founded fear a lot of people have of policing and the damage that it can do to them. And so I wondered if we could talk about that to sort of like the resources that are on offer to different communities or how resources look different to different people.

### **Aalayah**

Well, I mean, I can speak from what, what happened after the shooting at my school. The conversation of hardening the school happened and then, you know, they wanted to have metal detectors. They wanted to have single points of entry. They wanted to, you know, everybody had to have their IDs. We had seven armed guards with rifles across their chest, and that started the conversation of hardening schools, and then all of the parents were like, no, it feels like our students are in prison and it's like it's always it's based on the community. I feel like because that's not something that you could do in black and brown communities, because that's already contributing to the school to prison pipeline, and there's a whole systematic thing with that.

But I just feel like nobody listens to what we want to see because if we have this conversation, the students, we would tell them we don't really want the's armed guards because they're scaring

us and it's traumatic. You know, a lot of the things that they were saying they were going to do wouldn't have made us feel any safer. I mean, it's just this constant cycle of people in authority positions, not listening, and I think it's not just within schools, but it's also, of course, in black and brown communities, and it's just this cycle that just continues to happen.

So I think it when we talk about policing schools or hardening schools, I'm not for it, but I know a lot of people that are for it, and it's just I think it's based on community and not every community needs the same the same measures because what might work in Parkland might not work in Brooklyn, it's just two totally different areas with two totally different resources and experiences.

### **Tatiana**

I guess my frustrations are like, where's this money coming from? To add police in our schools, to add metal detectors in our school? Because when I was in high school, we did, I didn't have text books from my classes. We have a teacher shortage it's like, where's this money coming from when this could be used better for students actually learn instead of traumatizing them, having kids being treated like prisoners and be treated like criminals. And I also say that we have to start talking about, like demilitarization of our police. And it's like, Oh, like anti- like we're anti police for this is that it's like no, but what if we are? So like, who cares? Because there's a legitimate reason when you look at the history of policing. And even with my aunt, her husband was a police officer, used his work issue gun to kill her, and it's like someone like that should not be a police officer, you know. So it's like there's this whole system we have to look at and like, reevaluate. Before we even talk about adding police into schools, which unfortunately happens.

### **Aalayah**

On what you said with the money, again at Douglas, we had this conversation too about like, where did they have this money to pay all of these armed guards to come in patrol our campus? But we had, like, five therapists in the library, and then every time you would go, you get a different therapist, and that was already uncomfortable, because I don't feel like resharing my story with somebody different every day. So the money thing definitely came up because it's like you have all this money for arming guards and metal detectors, but you don't have money to give us resources for or mental health. It was just not properly allocating that money.

### **JJ**

That seems like it's again, it's the focus, not where the people who are going through it are telling you. We need this focus and this attention. So one of the things that I would want to ask you and I ask this of, like all of our podcast guests are what are the questions you don't get asked about this, that you wish people asked? You know, what are the things that you wish you had the opportunity to say, on like a wide stage that people just don't bring up?

### **Aalayah**

I mean, for me, I mean, this is super depressing, like for me, people...for me, people always ask me to come on their platforms or, like, speak for them or, you know, tennis rally or do this or go on the news. But, like, I never get the simple question of are you okay? And that alone, it's just uncomfortable because it's like a never ending marathon. But it's like I never get a second to,

like, decompress or even have the people that I'm doing things for, even asked me, you know, are you okay? I also feel like I never get the opportunity to say no sometimes, and that's something that I've struggled with since the shooting is saying no. And I'm always saying yes, because I feel like now that I've survived that it's now my duty to do this work. But it's just I never get that question of are you okay? Are your friends okay? Is your mom okay? Is your community okay? How can I help? You know, it's just always called my platform and tell me about your trauma and what happened. It's just never are you okay? And that's just really hard.

### **Tatiana**

I don't know how this is going to sound but like, I'm tired of, like, our discussions, and it has to be like people of color, like I want to go have a whole, just a conversation about black people because, you know, just because we're all people color, the solutions are not necessarily things, but it's just like what? Like it's like we're all put in a box. It's like these solutions to different the black community, the latinx community are two different cultures. We can have a conversation about it just being about black people. You can have a conversation about just the latinx community. So I guess that's the big thing, it's like if I go speak at some things like I'm representing not only just like all black people, also like, I'm the like young person of color that has to speak, and it's like that's not necessarily like true. So I guess that's something that, like, can we just talk about like there's something wrong with just talking about black people or just talking about latinx people.

### **JJ**

No, I think that's really fair. And I think there's something...what I'm hearing in both of that is almost sort of like the fetishization of your identity and your pain. Like come talk, be person X for us so we can feel like we've done something and then we move on. It's like it's like not paying it back into you what you give.

### **Tatiana**

I feel like people like they want you to come speak. But then it's like if I say, like how it actually feels if I, like, speak my truth forever, that's like...If I say them, that makes them a little uncomfortable. It's like, yeah, it's like they want me to, like, make sure I fit their standard like, yes, we have diversity, but also like I'm light skinned. So I benefit from light skin privilege. So is like I'm like, "safe" or whatever and it's like no, like if I say something or if I do some things like that and I was like trying to get fit into this box that doesn't necessarily like I don't necessarily fit in or doesn't necessarily fit the movement.

### **Kelly**

I think that kind of ties into what you both were saying about listening, and it sounds like, you know, some of that is just slowing down a little bit. And I think it's kind of ironic to say in an organization that's about solutions. But sometimes you have to, like, slow down, listen, engage with people. So this series, we hope, will just be one of those, resource is for everyone to be able to continue your education, self included. I've learned a lot.

### **JJ**

Yeah continue to grow. It's this idea. But again, Kelly, I'm quoting you at you because Kelly is brilliant, everybody but this idea that we all share the same fate. And we thank you both so much for coming on, this was amazing.

**\*\*\*music plays\*\*\***

### **Kelly**

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

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

### **Selected citations:**

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