

Episode 118-- Why Survivors Must Lead in Gun Violence Preven...

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SPEAKERS

Suzanne Kelley, Mattie Scott, JJ Janflone, Kelly Sampson



JJ Janflone 00:08

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JJ Janflone 00:38

So welcome back, everybody to Red, Blue, and Brady. I am your host JJ



Kelly Sampson 00:42

and I'm your co host Kelly.



JJ Janflone 00:43

And today we're recording on what would have been Representative John Lewis's 81st birthday, happy birthday. And in his honor, we're talking with two people who are known, I think, for getting into some good trouble.



Kelly Sampson 00:54

John Lewis deserves all the celebration and honor. On top of being a champion for civil rights and voting access, he was also an advocate for gun violence prevention.



JJ Janflone 01:03

And was also just a cool human.



Kelly Sampson 01:04

Like, why is this not a movie because this man was present for almost every major event in like the 60s pretty amazing.



JJ Janflone 01:11

Yeah, watching him at ComicCon is one of those videos that I turned back to to like make me feel happy on a bad day. So I'll include a link to that in description of this episode, something nice and uplifting. I don't know if you've ever seen it, Kelly, but it's amazing.



Kelly Sampson 01:23

Was that when he's walking around his famous coat backpack with the kiddos,



JJ Janflone 01:28

And there's just a sea of small children following him. It's amazing. And to sort of talk about, just advocates, that are amazing in gun violence prevention, we are being joined by two women who I think personally are super motivating and inspiring. Mattie Scott and Suzanne Kelly.



Kelly Sampson 01:43

Mattie Scott is a 23 year veteran in gun violence prevention, which is amazing when you really think about that. She works in San Francisco as a survivor, activist and mother. She has dedicated her life to gun violence prevention, intervention and education.



JJ Janflone 01:56

And Suzanne Kelly has spent the last nine years working on raising awareness about violent firearm crimes in her hometown of Washington, PA. Also my hometown outside Pittsburgh and is dedicated to ensuring that the voices of crime victims and their families are heard.



Kelly Sampson 02:09

Right and both Mattie and Suzanne have lost loved ones plural to gun violence, and have turned their grief into action, fighting for an end to gun violence and for justice for those left behind. Together we're talking about the important role of survivors in gun violence prevention, and how those of us fortunate enough to not to be touched directly by gun violence can better support the survivors in our lives.



JJ Janflone 02:33

Suzanne, Mattie, it is so nice to be able to see you even if it's just digitally for right now. Can you go ahead, just for the edification of our listeners, can you maybe introduce yourselves and sort of why you do this work?



Suzanne Kelley 02:46

Well, my name is Suzanne Kelly and I'm out of Washington PA. I have, I'm building my organization is called Mystro's Movement. It's, It's for my brother in law Vinnie Mystro Kelley who was killed, it'll be thirty eight years in June, at Giant Eagle on Father's Day. We have our own organization. It's all mainly my family, which is his brothers, my sister in law's most of the Kelley family are involved. We do a lot of things in the community as far as raise awareness for gun violence, domestic violence. I'm also a CASA advocate for abused, neglected kids. We do mainly a lot of things for kids, because Vinny was a kid person like he, he was, you know, 46 years old when he passed away, but he acted like he was like, a kid at all times. So very good person. So that's what I do. And I'm also involved in NAACP, and I'm the Vice President of the Crime Victims Memorial Garden in Washington County.



Mattie Scott 03:37

Awesome Suzanne, I can't wait to come to DC to see you and Miss Kelly and Miss JJ.



JJ Janflone 03:42

After quarantine, we're gonna have a, get everybody together.

M

Mattie Scott 03:46

Yes, I can't, I can't wait. Yeah. Well, I'm Mattie Scott, and I'm the mother of George C. Scott. This is a picture of my son. Just a charming young man. I lost him July 17, 1996 to gun violence. And I have at the bottom of this picture, every breath is a gift. And when I lost him on the 17th the very next day was my grandson, his son's, his five year old son Gabriel's sixth birthday. So on his sixth birthday, he was away at camp. And I had to tell my grandson on the phone because he was wondering why his dad hadn't called him and he called and his mom couldn't speak with him. No one could talk with him. I had to be the one to tell him that his dad had died and gone to heaven. I could even tell him his dad had been shot and killed. And so the scream, the scream that I heard on that phone from my grandson is the reason, that reason, one of the main reasons I do this work because that scream, tore me up, tore my family up and I didn't want another grandmother or mother or anyone to have I have to hear a scream from a child like that. After telling him your father's gone and did not even tell him why, but that scream wakes me up every day to do this work and gun violence prevention, because at the time, my neighborhood was impacted heavily with gun violence and, and so I'm the founder of Healing 4 Our Families & Our Nation, we do violence prevention, intervention and education awareness, here in San Francisco and around the nation. I am the California Brady's president, State President. So I do a lot of work with legislation with everything with Brady to get people engaged and know about Brady, to know that it's not just a white organization, that's many people thought to educate them about Jim and Sarah Brady, and all the great work that they did. And the laws they were able to get on the books and the laws that we continue to get on the book, because of Brady, and Sarah and Jim's passionate spirit educating folks on that. And then I'm the chapter leader for, the San Francisco Chapter Leader for Mothers in Charge. And I just spoke about mothers and children is a national organization, run by Dorothy Johnson-Speight, which consists of mothers, girlfriends, grandmothers, women, period, all across the country that has been impacted by any type of violence, but mainly gun violence. That's the number one thing and so we deal with all violence, but gun violence seems to be at the top of the list and domestic violence, those two, and the third is suicide. So I'm just grateful to be able to be, from my own experience, to share my experience, strength, and hope with other people to hopefully have conversations and solutions that will tear these walls down. And the barriers down to that causes so much harm and our communities across our nation. So I'm glad to be on the call with all of you, and so thank you, and thank you all for what you're doing. And if there's anything that we can do to help you, please reach out.



Suzanne Kelley 06:47

Thank you.



JJ Janflone 06:48

And I wanted to say thank you to both of you for being in this space and continuing to work because I think I can, I can speak for Kelly and myself in that, you know, we're not, gun violence has touched us, but it hasn't, you know, I haven't lost a family member to it, you know. And so the fact that y'all get up every day and continue to do this work that is so personal, and is so hard is, is really impressive. And so I really want to thank you for taking the time and the space to share and to be present.



Suzanne Kelley 07:13

Thank you.



Kelly Sampson 07:14

Likewise, Mattie, I want to pick up on something you said about pushing forward and pushing for change. Because today, the day that we're recording this podcast is John Lewis's birthday, and he definitely is someone who made his whole life about creating a better world for people. And I know that he was a good friend of yours Mattie and was also devoted to gun violence prevention. So I was just wondering if you could talk a little bit about him today, and his legacy, as we're recording on his birthday.



Mattie Scott 07:38

Yeah, John Lewis, you know, an incredible human being who I looked up to, I remember when, growing up in New Orleans, he came to New Orleans at a civil rights rally. My parents were involved in that because of the mistreatment of black children being able to, you know, not being able to sit to the front of the bus or to drink out of certain water fountains. It was just, I grew up in Jim Crow in New Orleans, it was very bad. And I was my first time meeting him as a young person. But his legacy, he's, he came all the way to Philadelphia during the Democratic Convention, and he was always, always available for good trouble, always available for good trouble. And so, he also was there with Gabby Gifford and came with Mothers in Charge and did a press conference with all of us there in the Democratic Convention then. It was prior to this, the last administration, and it was done that was one of the Democratic Convention was done in in Pennsylvania in Philly at that time, and I'll never forget his, his heart and his kindness for all the youth that was

present there. All the mothers that was present there. We will all there Brady, Moms Demand Action, Everytown, Mothers in Charge, Mothers in Charge did the whole press conference and who was there at the forefront with us? Congressman John Lewis, he always made himself available for good trouble. He said this is good trouble. This is, we should not have to be in this situation, and he apologized for our country still being in this, this era of discrimination and violence. When he as a young man had to see so many elders get crushed in crossing that Pettus Bridge. And then here we are in 2014, and we're still here. You know, we're still in this place. So I applaud John Lewis for his leadership and his heartfelt commitment to justice for everybody, everybody in our nation, particularly women and children. You know, he talked about the domestic violence situations how that all came because of lack of jobs and things of that nature and families you know, equity. Sometimes those things arrive because of not being able to have a decent salary or income. He didn't feel like a person. And he understood that, he understood that and talked with those men, and talked with those families and brought them together. That's what I love about John Lewis, how he got down deep. He went deep into the root of the problem, to help solve them. And he knew that's what we were. And so happy birthday to Congressman Lewis, I just love him, I can go on and on about him, his legacy of what he's done for our nation. You know, I'm glad he didn't get to see the insurrection that would have broke his heart. But it's good to be in good trouble. Good trouble, as he said, you know, so happy birthday to Congressman John Lewis, and I just hope that we can continue his legacy and all the work that he did.



JJ Janflone 10:51

I think, I think sort of in the in the spirit of the great Mr. Lewis, one of the things that I think goes directly to what we're talking about today about why survivors of situations where people who are actually in impacted communities need to, need to speak I think, is something that he always brought to the forefront. He was always, was really involved with sharing his personal narrative. And so with that, I'm going to do something that I hate doing on this podcast, but I do want a lot which is, I am going to ask you all to talk a little bit more about the folks that you have lost. And so if we could start maybe with Suzanne, if you're comfortable. I would love to hear a little bit more about Vinnie, who I believe went by everything that I've read about him went by Mysterio, and about how he was taken and also to just because it that is still a crime that is unsolved. I would love to if you could share with our listeners a little bit about that on, on the off chance that maybe someone hears something, knows know something.



Suzanne Kelley 11:49

Well, Vinnie was amazing. Like he was always a hipster, jokester, like I've never. I've been in

this, in the Kelley family for 29 years, and I've never, ever seen him angry. And if he was angry, I've never personally seen it. You know what I'm saying? But his love for kids was, was amazing. And he was a good person. But he got his, that particular day, Father's Day he went to Giant Eagle to get dinner to make for his daughter. He has one daughter, her name is Sierra. And one grandson, his grandson was two weeks old whenever he was killed, and he went to get the stuff to make her dinner for Father's Day and ended up bank robbery had happened. And he pursued him. There was other people that pursued the bank robber, but Vinnie kept going and he was shot six times, thrown out of the car and left for dead on the side of Giant Eagles.



JJ Janflone 12:42

Take, take your time.



Suzanne Kelley 12:45

The side of the parking lot. So there's still a \$50,000 reward for the capture, whoever did it, for the bank robbery. Citizens bank and Giant Eagle both put up 25,000 to find the killer and it's going on eight years as of June 16 of this year. Yeah. And it's weird because giant, or Citizens Bank inside the Giant Eagles branch is the only thing that's open that you can physically go in and bank. So somebody had to know that, because the bank closes at three o'clock, and it happened at 2:35 that Father's Day. And it was, it was strange, because Vinnie never went to Giant Eagles to shop. He was always shopping say, Walmart. So it was just, I don't know, it was just, it was strange to me. I don't know. That's why I think was just his time that God wanted him because he never went there. You know what I mean? I don't know. Maybe that's just I don't, I don't know. But it was, it's still a really touchy subject right now because there's no justice. They can't tell which way he went because the Giant Eagles is by a big highway. And there's different ways that you can go, JJ, you know what I'm talking about. There's different ways that you can go in Washington to get on the highway or go down 19th. And they can't figure out which way they went. Or which way whoever did it went because of the cameras. They can't, they can't, you know, find it. We had a couple leads, but they came out to be nothing.



Mattie Scott 14:07

I'm sending you a big hug right now Suzanne. A big hug.



Suzanne Kelley 14:13

Thank you, thank you.

M

Mattie Scott 14:17

I see the difficulty in you're sharing that, and I'm feeling that. So I'm feeling it, but I'm sending you a warm, a warm hug right now.

S

Suzanne Kelley 14:25

Thank you. I'm sending one back to you to my friend. Thank you very much. One thing about it is since this has happened, I've been doing this for eight years and I've met so many families like you meet through tragedy then you become a family to all these people who, who've lost their loved ones to to gun violence, domestic violence, like I mean, it's it's, you have extended family and you all know the pain. So you all can relate to what's going on. You know what I mean? And I've met, I've met a lot of, I've sat in a lot of court cases, justice and some not justice, you like how did you just get away with this. You what I mean? And just, just to watch the family's reaction, you know, they're angry, they're mad. And another thing is Washington is so small that you basically know everybody. And since I've been doing this for the last eight years, I've met so many people, and I know so many people and the vigils that I do, it seems like I look at the same people all the time. Everybody knows somebody. So when you go to this vigil, and you don't have vigil for these, this family, you see the same people. And you're just asking, like, when is it going to, when are you going to change your mindset? When do you want to change, like, what's going on in our community, so you can stop doing this? You know what I mean? Like it's really, really sad. Like that people, the young black men who have been killed in Washington. I've known their families for years. And it's the same, it's the same people I have to look at. And I'd do not, that bothers me like so much. It's crazy. Because that all young black men under the age of 50, that are being killed laying in the middle of the street, and it's crazy. It really is. It's crazy. And we won't even go on domestic violence. Domestic Violence is a terrible, terrible thing, too.

K

Kelly Sampson 16:03

I was wondering too Mattie if you could talk a little bit about your son. You mentioned him earlier when you're doing your introduction, but just wanted to give you an opportunity to share what he was like, you know, as a person.


M


Mattie Scott 16:15

Yeah, my son George was a father of two young boys that he loved dearly. He was the

baby in the family, bubbly, comedian, a writer. Yeah, my family's very close. We're a very close knit family. We large, there's a lot of us. George was very loving, bubbly. As I said, he loved this community love where he lived at, family was very important. His spirituality, also grew up in a very spiritual home environment. He studied at the Nation of Islam, because he loved what they were doing. He loved how the Muslim, the Muslim brothers in the community, were together, they weren't killing each other, how they ate healthy and did all those healthy things. So that attracted him, even though he was raised Christian, but he wanted to do that, and he did. You know, he just loved people in general period. He had his troubles in the past going up, you know, with the law. He did a little time in juvenial. And he did some time in county jail and things like that for some things, minor offenses and things like that. Nothing major. He, what happened to my son was he attended one of the first graduation parties here in San Francisco. In our neighborhood, a first time college graduate, at this party was, was a friend of his. And when he, two of his other friends said he didn't show up at the party. Well, one of the friends had a gold chain on that belonged to another friend, that belonged to the guy who came to the party last. Well, my son knew that that guy was into that lifestyle. He knew he had a gun. And so he just he approached the other fella and said I want, that's my jewelry you're wearing, you left my house last night you took it, and I want it. And so my son took them outside of that party because he knew his friend had a gun. And they were both his friends. And he took them both out. He knew them both. They'd both been at my house. I know their parents, and they ate at my house and slept at my house. They all grew up together. So, as I tell people all the time, there was no police, anybody else outside my community that shot my son, it was someone that he grew up with, went to school with, and they knew him. And I tell it like that, because that's what mostly happens in our community. So he took them outside to try to resolve it. He tried to have the one give back the other one his jewelry peacefully, he would not, an altercation took place. Words got exchanged, it got heated. He pulled the other guy pulled his gun, which was a semi automatic weapon, began to shoot. And because my son was in the middle, he caught all five of those bullets and died immediately on the scene. He had, he had, he had a bullet in his neck, he had a bullet in his jaw. He had a bullet in his, in his under his lung. And another one in this hand, and, and the other one went into the hand. So when I had to go ID my son about, well before I went to ID my son, news traveled all around that my son was all shot up. He was shot in the face and oh, his face was disfigured and all of that. I mean, it was horrible what people were saying. And it wasn't like that at all. My son had a hole in his face, like on the side of his face, right about the size of a 50 cent piece. And that was the only thing, that damage to his face that I could see. But at any rate, he died right there on the scene. Everybody at the graduation party knew who the two gentlemen was, everybody in the neighborhood knew who they were, and some people in the community was looking out their windows because it happened by the tree where there's a lot of windows and so people, it was a hot July night. Everybody could see, you know, people look out their window and then

most say, well, I couldn't really tell who did it, but I saw the guy who shot him, but I didn't get a good look at him. But no one would come forward to say, who did this to this day. And here I was, in my community, a daycare provider took care of all these people's children, mind you, all their children were at my house or my sister's house, because we both had daycares. And nobody came forward to say anything at all. One girl was about to come. And she got threatened. So she didn't come. And at that time, I was out of my mind, I was not in my right frame of mind. At that time, I had lost it. I couldn't function. I couldn't even take care of my daycare kids. None of that I my mom had to step in and take over the business. And not one person came to say anything or give testimony. All the people who were at their party saw them all leave out of the party, none of them came forward to say anything, not even the girl whose graduation party it was. And at that time, I understand people who are fearful of retaliation, of getting shot for coming forward to tell because they knew the police was not going to protect them. So, but I was still angry and pissed off, because I felt like my community betrayed me, my neighbors betrayed me. I felt like my whole community just betrayed me. And here I am a daycare provider caring for your children. And this is how you give, you tell me you love me. And this is how you love me. You know, you don't tell who killed my son, if it hadn't been me, and it had been your son, I would have told, I would have told, I don't care. Still to this day, my son's case remains unsolved. And no one has come forward to say anything. When your son gets killed, the whole, whole community is killing him. We're killing our communities over and over again. Every day. I feel so bad for the mothers in Chicago and Philadelphia where murder goes on every single day. Every single day. That's why you know, we do this work, because it's so important. I mentored young people, we mentor young people we mentor at risk youth. We talked to those, we have barbershop talk forums, you know, we do all this work, because I don't want you to go through what I went through. These are our babies that grew up with each other, that know each other, that went to school with each other. Why to kill each other over turf, over drug wars, over property you do not own, over territory that's not yours. You know, it just doesn't make any sense. And I look at it as racial inequity and injustice in our communities filled with poverty. That should be programs and services. You know, George Floyd had to die in public, in public in front of everybody, for everybody to now wake up.

 Suzanne Kelley 22:56
Yeah. That's fair.

 Mattie Scott 22:59
The pandemic of gun violence is still going on, it's the pandemic of gun violence. What about that pandemic? Everybody's talking about COVID. What about the pandemic of

gun violence? It goes on every single day in our country, and nobody pays any attention. We've been screaming at the top of our voices. I've been doing this work for over 24 years, my son's been gone 24 years and still unsolved, not only my case, 1000s of cases are unsolved. Thousands. The statistics that we have here about the shootings that Brady put out, it still doesn't have the stats on what goes on in communities of color today. How many young people of color are killed every day? How many black boys are killed every day? How many black boys are shot every day? It's innumerable, you can't even keep up. It's so so much, you know. So, I'm just grateful to be here to do this work. I'm thankful for Robert and President of Brady, all that she does, you know, and all of you and everybody that's involved in this work, because it's gonna take, this is about all of us, or none of us. It's about all of us and none of us and we all got to get it. We just can't pick when it's, you know, I was angry when one of the school shootings happening. I was angry. I got, I was, I thought it was going to change when the 20 little children got killed in Newtown. And nothing. They did nothing. I was like what, where are we at with this nation?

M

Mattie Scott 24:27

Where's our heart? Where's our values and our morals? You know, where, where is it? Where is it? What, what, when is life gonna really matter? You know, Black Lives Matter. But when is, when is life gonna matter to all of us? Babies get killed in a school with eight teachers, how many black boys, Latino boys, Asian boys are murdered down in the streets every day because of poverty, of lack of, lack of opportunities, lack of, of education? You know, when are we gonna change it? That's the question I asked myself. And I won't stop, I won't stop until we get it, we get the job done, I will not stop. I promised my grandchildren, I promised my son, his blood, and all of our children's blood, I promise I will not stop. I will make sure everybody know about Brady, everybody knows about your organization. Everybody knows about Mothers in Charge and Healing 4 Our Families and Our Nation because this nation needs healing. It is, it is bankrupt when it comes to justice, it is bankrupt when it comes to treatment of people of color. It is bankrupt and humanity, you know. So I think I said a lot. So, you know, and I'm also here because my nephew also was murdered. My nephew was murdered in 2007, because he was in the car with a person who was going to kill somebody that he didn't even know, at a party. And he jumped in the car with him and didn't know that the guy was going to do what he did. Then when he got in the car with the guy. He stayed in the car, the guy ran the car to get back in the car with him to take him home. He tells the guy, what did you just do? I don't want anything to do with this. I just got myself clean and got my situation, he shoots my nephew and throws him out on the, on the street. So my nephew, and the mother of the young man, he shot all wind up in ER at the same time, you know, because he got in the car with the wrong person that he knew and didn't know what the person was going to do. And then I lost my niece to cyberbullying, she was bullied on the internet by her ex boyfriend, you know. So

like I said, I'm in this because the pain is, is outrageous. We got to get our children, we got to get to our youth, we got to get to our leaders in this nation about this epidemic. And this pandemic of gun violence and all violence in our nation, we've become a violent nation, and we're not looking at it. We need to take a good look at ourselves.



JJ Janflone 26:52

In some ways doing this podcast, it makes me feel really hopeful, right? Because I do see things happening in a positive way. And I see fantastic folks like yourself working in this area and all the great people that I get to meet through Brady, but I worry so much about young people, because for me, it seems like a completely different world that they're growing up in. And I can say this because you know, growing up in the same town that, that Suzanne's working in, I don't remember hearing about people getting shot regularly when I was in middle school. By the time I was in high school, I remember hearing about it. But it was still something that felt fairly rare. And I'm an elder millennial, I'm in my 30s, now, I can say that. But now that I live away, I don't think a month goes by that I don't get a text message from somebody from back home saying didn't we go to school? Like isn't? Didn't we go to school with his older brother? Or didn't we go to school with her younger cousin? Like it's again, it's a smaller area, but it's just, it's so I worry about them? Because it's a completely different experience of childhood. Yeah. Because again, these are folks that I know, but it's, there's a distance there. But you're right. It's the same names again and again and again. It's the same neighborhoods. And it seems like Mattie too that's like what you're articulating is that like, you know, everybody.



Suzanne Kelley 28:05

Yeah, I think that the young people are missing the message like, I don't know, they think it's a big party after like, that's how they show their respect to have a big party and pop molly and smoke, smoke weed. And that's not it, you're missing the whole point of what is going on. We're burying loved ones over senseless acts of violence, gun violence, you know what I mean? You need to figure out what, what, what is going to stop it, what do you have to do to make it stop? I just don't, they don't get it. They don't. And it's sad, because it's going to happen again, I told him that. I said, if things don't stop, if you don't change your mindset, if you don't do stuff in the community to change what's going on, we will keep doing this every year, every month. However, many times it happens, we're gonna keep doing this. You're gonna keep burying your loved ones until there's not, there's not gonna be nobody to bury because everybody's going to be getting killed ever senseless acts of violence. The drug use here is, is the drug overdose, the drug overdose in Washington is, I've never seen it like this before. It's crazy. In these last eight years, I've never seen drug use drug overdoses, murders, domestic violence, child abuse, as bad as it

has been the last eight years I've been doing this.

K

Kelly Sampson 29:14

And I think like something you were getting at Suzanne about, you know, maybe younger people at memorials, you know, smoking weed or drinking. It's interesting, because a couple, I don't even remember, I think it was last, it was pre-pandemic, I was at a conference about trauma in our community. And one of the things that came up from some of the psychologists is that some of that behavior is just having these unimaginable losses in a teenage brain and then not not having access to counseling, not having access to anything and so self medicating. So it's interesting to see how that can play out and then of course, that sort of, can lead to more behavior and just get that another way that there's, it's really unfair to kind of ask for society to put children in the equivalent of a war zone and have them seeing things and facing things that soldiers are facing, and then give them the resources and, you know, ask them to then, pay attention in school kids. It's, it's so unfair. And that's one of the things that I find really frustrating looking at this area. And I kind of wanted to pivot a little bit to both of you, this is kind of for both of you to chime in, about why it is so important for survivors like yourselves to be present and leading in this work, and in organizations and sort of crafting legislation and policies. Because to JJ's point, you know, I grew up in a city that was sort of beset with gun violence, but thankfully, it was more on the exterior of my life. And I think you just bring a totally different perspective, that's really, really important.

S

Suzanne Kelley 30:49

Mm hmm. I just think I did it for the healing process that because I didn't know what to do, like, I've seen my, my husband, like, like, just lay out on the, on the floor of my bedroom, in our bedroom, and just cry like a baby. And it's like, you know, what are we supposed to do now? You know what I mean? Because he was the oldest, he was the oldest brother, like, what are we supposed to do from here, and it's just like, you can't sit around and not do anything anymore. You know, but I just could not just sit around anymore. And then it just seemed like really weird because, after my brother in law was killed, my uncle was killed by gun violence. He was playing pool with with a guy one weekend. And they were cool, because I was actually there this particular day, this particular night, they were cool playing pool. The next weekend, the same guy who's playing pool with shot and killed him. So you know, and then like I said, I've met other other family members who through gun violence do the same thing. So it's like, it's a healing process. For me, I needed to do something, to raise awareness and try to be there for other families who are in the same situation that my family was in.



Mattie Scott 31:50

You know, I took my pain. Every day, I asked God to give me, what am I to do today, what? Show me what to do because I don't know what to do. I'm in so much pain with myself. And then watching my children become in pain, watching my daughter try to drink herself to death after this and watching my grandson, you know, here he is in the classroom as six years old, out of control now, because of what happened to his dad and he finally finds out from his mom that his dad was shot. And so now he's making paper guns in the classroom telling them that he's gonna go out and find who killed his dad. So now, his concentration in the class i making these paper guns and shooting the guy and drawing pictures, you know, that he's gonna kill the guy who killed his dad, so I had to get my grandson in therapy. I had to work with him. I had to tell them that, that killing is not right, it's wrong. And you are a good person, you're going to do great things in life. But killing is not one of them. So I had to do that, talking with, children are highly impacted by this, so we have to talk to them when we see them withdrawing, when we see them acting out in class. You know, I have healing, we do healing circles for the kids. We do healing circles for the adults and do healing circles for the, the young adults because you have to have a place to go to heal. So you have to have the space to talk about it, to get your feelings out so that you don't be like I, like what happened to me. I, I became an alcoholic, I started using pills and medication, I was not present. I was just tore up from the floor up when this happened to me. So I know what this does to mothers and fathers when this happens because there's no outlet. And then the majority of us at that time, we were not into mental health, we were not into therapists. I got a therapist, thank God and back then we weren't so leading people to the path of therapy, therapeutic services, healing services, so they can breathe, get them out of their environment, take the young people away to have conversations with them so that they, because they can't have it in their own community. The suit's already too stressful, too traumatizing. They've already gone to ten funerals, okay. So, how can they function in the classroom? How can they function in school? How can they function on the job, you know? And then you don't understand where they're, what they're, how they're hurting your boss don't understand how they're hurting and what they've going through. So he cussed you out. He didn't mean to cuss you out. But you don't know what this young man's gone through. He just witnessed his friend getting murdered, you know, so we have to go to bat for our young people in school, on their jobs, for their families, because they are so traumatized that it comes out. And then everybody's looking at them like they're the criminal or they're the beast, you know. And so you look at all these things that happen. So we, they're our future, we have to find ways to reach them.



JJ Janflone 34:42

And Suzanne, I think one of the things that's so great about some of the work that you do is that, it's also in creating these actual physical spaces. So I wonder if you could tell us about the Crime Victims Garden.

S

Suzanne Kelley 34:52

It's called the Crime Victims Memorial Garden. And what it is is your loved one gets put on this rock and it's placed in the garden, and since I've been doing this, we've placed a lot of rocks there, anywhere from whatever violent crime happened to your loved one goes in the garden. And every year there's a new, there's a new rock, or rocks. Yeah, it's, it's a beautiful place, yeah.

K

Kelly Sampson 35:19

One of the things that this conversation is revealing is just why it is so important for survivors because of the fact that you two just looking at what's going on in the Zoom, I can tell like there's just an empathy and an understanding there. So I was just wondering, kind of as we close out, you know, what is one thing that you would want everyone listening to this to know about surviving gun violence.

M

Mattie Scott 35:41

Surviving gun violence is an everyday challenge. However, I, my spirituality helps me learn how to breathe again. I've learned in my, a lot of this stuff, we had to learn on our own because there was no map or manual or, or script to go by back then. Nothing, we had to create all this stuff on our own, particularly in communities of color. Because, you know, most people didn't, as I said, did not utilize therapeutic services, but they do now. But learning to take care of yourself is really crucial because I know as I say, for me, I became an alcoholic and a drug user because I wanted to just blank out and drugs were never my forte. You know, I mean except for smoking weed back in the 70s as a, growing up in a, you know, here in San Francisco with the hippies and all that in the 70s. But it was peaceful, nobody killed you. No one, you know, but yeah, I became a severe alcoholic and went to the doctors and lied to get pills just to medicate myself. Because I wanted to be numb. I didn't want to feel. And now I had to get in this work. I had to get into this work. I had to do something and get active and get up off the couch. So being active has helped me tremendously. Getting involved right now legislators, I have a big mouth. So now I'll use my big mouth, like, like John Lewis told me to, you know. He said, no, we need your mouth. We need your mouth in Congress, we need your mouth in DC. Your mouth, you know, so that's what I do. I use my mouth and the weapons to say what we need and what we're lacking, you know, encouraging people to vote encouraging people to show up to get bills

passed in California, you know, last year we got because I know Gavin Newsom it was because he was mayor first and then he became the governor. I said, I'm, I'm gonna hold you even more accountable now because you're our governor. So he signed almost 25 or six of our bills for Brady last year. You know, last year, any youngster could go into the store and buy a gun without a background check or anything without his parents even knowing and now that can't happen anymore. You have to be 21 years old to purchase a gun just like you have to be 21 years old to drink, and you will have a background check. And it will be a 10 day waiting period before to make sure you clear that background check. That didn't happen, that wasn't before and and that, that, some of these Brady laws that were, legislation that we're passing we want it nationwide, it should be nationwide. You know, that's why it's gang violence cuz this kid can go out to Chicago, go to Jackson and buy all the guns they want to come back to Chicago and kill up everybody. You know, it's not the guns in Chicago. They can't get a gun in Chicago, but they can go to Jackson and get one. So we got to hold these straw and straw purchases. We gotta hold these, these gun dealerships accountable. We got to make some loud noise against the NRA and their, and all that they're after. That's how we fight. We have to make some noise. Okay, let's, Kamala my good friend, Vice President Kamala Harris, she was the first district attorney to open up her doors to us mothers who lost our children to gun violence. She made sure that there was a DA at every one of our healing circles. Do you hear me? She's the one that opened up the doors for us. She's the one that we were, that came to meet us and heard us mothers. And that's why I love her to this day. Okay. And her, with her leadership in the White House and with President Joe Biden to help sign the original Brady bills with Sarah and Jim Brady. Oh God, we have the best people in the White House right now to support us. So now, you can tell people that. You can go on the Brady website, get this information, share it with your organization, get young people involved and getting involved with Brady, get them involved with become an own Team Enough. You know, the Team Enough leadership, which is young folks at Brady doing great things, get folks involved with Brady, but get folks involved with the Brady Campaign. Brady United Against Gun Violence because you will become educated and knowledgeable. Get on those links. Look at what they have to offer. Hey, get in the trenches and learn all that you can because they're there to support victims of violence and gun violence.



JJ Janflone 40:06

Well, and we love you both so much and are so thankful for everything that you do.



Suzanne Kelley 40:12

Actually, before we got on here, when you when you first asked me about it, the last

couple of days, I've been praying and asking God, don't, don't please don't let me have a meltdown on this podcast.



Mattie Scott 40:22

And it's okay, if you do. You know, it's okay if you do, I've learned that it's okay. It's something I have my days, you know, and it's all right. Yes, those, those tears, they have to come forward. You know, I don't stop people from crying, I don't stop people from holding back their pain. You know, I'm just there to hug them and hold them and do what I can because I'm gonna have my day and I need you to be there for me, you know, so we don't stop people from from experiencing and breaking down when they need to. You know, I broke down in Congress, when we were at the, you know, Congressional Hearing, you know, I broke down. I broke down when I was, I was one of the 55 electors chosen by Pelosi to give them my vote for California for both Biden and Harris to win. That was a very emotional moment for me, you know, you know, a black mother who lost a ton of gun violence, but then thinking about all of the other people that went before me, John Lewis and others, who died in this, you know, movement, you know, and passed the torch on to us to continue it. You know, so, I just think, thank God that I'm able to now take my pain and turn it into purpose. You know, that's going to help. Yep, that's going to help save lives and hopefully help some young man to put that gun down. You know?



Suzanne Kelley 41:41

You're right.



JJ Janflone 41:43

Thank you all. The biggest hugs possible through through Zoom.



Suzanne Kelley 41:48

Thank you.



JJ Janflone 41:51

Kelly. Unbelievable But Time.



Kelly Sampson 41:54

Oh, yay.



JJ Janflone 41:57

Time when I just abuse you for our listeners' enjoyment. Well, so this week, we're talking about guns in government offices. Not the first time this has been Unbelievable But but hopefully the last.



Suzanne Kelley 42:09

What could possibly go wrong?



JJ Janflone 42:13

So much, as it turns out. So a man in Humboldt County, California, was caught trying to bring a loaded gun with an additional loaded magazine into the county courthouse.



Kelly Sampson 42:22

So considering that we just experienced an attempted insurrection last month, that is pretty chilling.



JJ Janflone 42:28

Yep. He, according to the press, he was not there for insurrection though. He was just there to file paperwork.



Kelly Sampson 42:33

And he needed to bring a loaded gun with extra ammunition? I mean, I guess that's less chilling that he didn't intend anything nefarious per se, but I'm still pretty uncomfortable with it.



JJ Janflone 42:43

Yeah, he, I think hearing the rest of the story isn't going to make you feel much better. So because security found the weapons inside the men's backpack when he put it through

the courthouse X-Ray machine.



Kelly Sampson 42:52

I mean, okay, so considering he put it through security, I guess he really did just forget because, if he was planning to insurrect, I don't know what the right verb for that would be, he probably wouldn't have done that. But it's still ridiculous, because as you know and we've talked about, I'm really uncomfortable with stories of people forgetting that they're carrying a lethal weapon, because that's the sort of thing you should remember, be aware of, and take precautions about.



JJ Janflone 43:13

Yeah, see, because I was looking at this as being like, ah, this is actually worse than him, like, trying to bring it in, because he just forgot it. But you're right. It's good that he, you know, it's very clearly this was just a mistake. But this is a really serious mistake. You know, and because California does not allow for the carrying of firearms into government buildings, even if you have a concealed weapons permit, which he did. You're not allowed to do that. So his permit has been suspended, and he's been arrested, so.



Kelly Sampson 43:39

And just going back to the California not allowing firearms and government buildings. I think the event that we saw in Virginia and Michigan and other places over the past month have shown that this is very wise policy, and I can't leave Capitol out of that obviously.



Kelly Sampson 43:58

I'm so excited to start this week's News Wrap Up with some good news. So in Virginia, the General Assembly passed three common sense gun violence prevention bills: HB 2081 and HB 1992 which prohibit firearms at polling places and prohibit domestic abusers from possessing or purchasing a firearm for three years respectively. All great stuff. And HB 2128 would increase the number of days that Virginia State Police have to complete a background check for gun sales. For more information on these bills, you can check out [Bradyunited.org](https://bradyunited.org).



JJ Janflone 44:31

And it's, it's nice to see some forward momentum because I was shocked. It's been a year already Kelly, I don't know about you, but it has been exactly one year since the killing of Ahmaud Arbery. The 25 year-old was shot while he was jogging in a Georgia neighborhood on February 23 in 2020. This killing of the young, unarmed black man by two armed white men claiming self defense sparked national outrage that in many ways has continued on to today. The two men charged in the shooting are still awaiting trial on charges of murder and aggravated assault.

K

Kelly Sampson 45:09

And I mean, you're right. I can't believe it's been a year but I can imagine for his family, they felt every single day. And you know, unfortunately, we also have to mark that this week is the shooting death of 17 year-old Trayvon Martin, who was shot and killed on February 26, 2012. Trayvon was walking home ready to watch the NBA All Star game. He just picked up a bag of Skittles and a can of Arizona iced tea for his little brother from a local 7/11 when he was confronted by an adult male, who was a self-appointed neighborhood watch volunteer, and the shooter contacted 911 and reported Trayvon as suspicious, but was told not to follow or confront the young man. Nevertheless, he did and ultimately he shot and killed Trayvon claiming self defense. And this incident is just another example of an unarmed black boy. And we should know that, even if he was armed, it's still not an excuse to kill him. But anyway, an unarmed black boy or young man being killed and claims of self defense under Stand Your Ground-type laws. And I know I can speak for both of us when I say we are sick of having to have these sorts of stories and sick of seeing people cut down just for running or going to 7/11. So anyway, we just want to send our condolences to both of these families.



JJ Janflone 46:36

Hey, want to share with the podcast? Listeners can now 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. Kelly and I are standing by.

K

Kelly Sampson 46:50

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](https://bradyunited.org) or on social at [Bradybuzz](https://bradybuzz.com). Be brave and remember, take action not sides.

