

# Episode 144-- Kayla Hicks on Community Solutions and Sisters...

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

JJ Janflone, Kelly Sampson, Kayla Hicks



JJ Janflone 00:08

This is the legal disclaimer where I tell you that the views thoughts and opinions shared in 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 another episode of red blue. And Brady,



Kelly Sampson 00:41

I'm one of your hosts, Kelly.



JJ Janflone 00:42

And I am another one of your hosts, JJ. We're so glad to be back together with you today. This is one of the things where it's like really comforting, you know, to know that even when times are rough, we have this community of you know, Red Blue and Brady-ers out there that are actually fighting for positive change.



Kelly Sampson 01:01

Yeah, and I mean, it can be super overwhelming and hard in this environment, let alone working in the field of gun violence prevention. And so I'm just really, really thankful for all the amazing people out there who listen every single week, and then go out into their communities and try and make change.



JJ Janflone 01:18

It makes me feel a lot better about the world, and what also makes me feel much better are our guests who do the same thing. And this week's guest in particular, the great Kayla Hicks.



Kelly Sampson 01:30

Yes, Kayla is truly an inspiration and a powerhouse in terms of activism. She spent over two decades working to support the development and advancement of black women as leaders in gun violence prevention efforts.



JJ Janflone 01:45

We're really lucky to be able to at least hang out with her for an hour. Absolutely. Hey Kayla, Can you please introduce yourself?



Kayla Hicks 01:54

Well, my name is Kayla Hicks, and I am the president and CEO of Sustain Equity group.



Kelly Sampson 01:59

Can you tell us a little about your work with Sustain Equity and what prompted you to begin to work in the gun violence prevention movement in first place?



Kayla Hicks 02:07

So the work that I'm doing with Sustain Equity Group is centering the voices of those impacted by violence through a trauma informed training program to support leadership by women, particularly black females. And doing that work it's just an extension of over 30 years plus worth for the advocacy work that I've been doing. And so the core of my work

has been working with communities and individuals that are impacted by violence. And or, I guess the easier way to say the underdog, because that that was me, growing up in the circumstances that I did, gave me the heart and the will to win. And I started off in life early in a very critical situation where my twin sister passed away and I was put into foster care and foster care was not my friend as a brown skinned girl. It never took care of me. As matter of fact, it lost me and never came to look for me. And then when it did find me and put me back to the same home It took me out of. And so most of my life begin with beating the odds. And as I grew up, in well off neighborhoods and areas in the suburbs of Jersey, and sometimes out in the country, I was not exposed to violence and a bunch of trauma experiences that many kids that I encountered women that I encounter, I was experiencing a different type of trauma, that'll be another podcast. But you know, there's a lot of neglect and abuse and a lot of terrible things happening there. And so I ran away at 15. And that's when I began to understand violence and guns and the nature of what the lack of can do for families and communities. And so I have just embraced my life as an advocate. And I desire to help women, particularly black women, to find their voice and to find their way because we need to value black women's work and voices. And that's really where I'm at, I've done things with bviously politics and unions and being in those spaces, as well as leadership coaching and mentoring is quite a bit in there and I will I will leave with this little soundbite of being a black woman that is retired, bail enforcement agent, also known as a bounty hunter, was the highlight of my career a little fun there and still a licensed detective.

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Kelly Sampson 04:49

Wow, first and foremost, and secondly, thank you for sharing your story and being so vulnerable with everything that you've gone through and helping us kind of understand a little bit more about what led you to this. One of the things that you've done a lot of work around is engaging gun owners. And I was wondering if you could share a little bit about why that's been important to your work, and also what impact you've been able to have by engaging with responsible gun owners as well.

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Kayla Hicks 05:17

So it's important to me because I'm a gun owner, and when I first got into this movement, there would be people that would come up to me, they would typically be older white women that would just out of nowhere, randomly say something like, what do you need a gun for? Why do you have a gun and I'm not built for that, like, I'm not built for the disrespect in the first place. But the way they would approach me and start questioning me, I mean, I didn't answer them, but it still be like, you know, very just uncomfortable, like what, hey, I'm on the same team, don't roll up on me with your aggression. And what

you're trying to communicate to me is not being received, because you're coming to me in a disrespectful manner. So it's kind of like use some intelligence here. And so I think it's important to include gun owners, because we are going to be the ones that would be a trusted ally and a voice to help move gun violence prevention efforts, whether it's going to be talking about background checks, or whether it's in communities that are impacted by firearm violence. What I've come to experience is that most gun owners know that, you know, I spent time last week with a retired Marine that said that, you know, he's obviously a gun owner, and he said, there's more guns and ammo in this world, that if you stop selling it, all right, now, you still have enough to still have a full fledged war. And so that's how gun owners are thinking. But on the other side, you're not thinking that way. So it's really how you approach people and what you share with them. And when you share the fact that gun violence prevention has to stop being associated with gun control. Gun Violence Prevention is about looking at socio economics, looking at the Public Health Net like narrative, understanding where policy comes in, and how it impacts what's preventing and reducing violence in these highly concentrated areas of violence. How do we how do we get to that? So I just think that wholeheartedly, if you want to see huge advancements in the work on the ground, you've got to include gun owners, because there's more black gun owners than people could ever imagine, hunters, some people do as for sports, some people have it for protection. But there are a lot of gun owners that are of color. But in general, I think that gun owners are going to be key. And I'm not talking about having a surface relationship. But having a relationship that is strengthened by trust and influence from within the GVP movement with gun owners is going to be the key to pushing policies, especially when it comes to many of the retired military gun owners who often tell me that the reason why they don't say or share much is because they often feel attacked, or they feel like we meaning gun violence prevention advocates or gun control advocates don't listen, we just need to be taught but don't listen.

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Kelly Sampson 08:23

And one thing I was curious about is, you know, what does it mean to work on a community level for gun violence prevention? Because I feel like so often, we can kind of think about gun violence prevention as something we're doing in legislatures or something we're doing in Congress. And so I was wondering, what does it mean to work at a community level?

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Kayla Hicks 08:42

What that means for me, and my experience is, is that if you're working at a community level, you must work with the community. It doesn't lend any forgiveness when individuals or organizations come into communities, and they bring in their ideals to implement. And

so working at a community level is to allow the community to work with the community where they're at, and to have resources and funding and access given to these communities where they can work in the way that they need to, being guided where it's necessary to get through the terrible navigation of politics and guns. Because we know that at a community level, we're trying to improve quality of life. We're looking at poverty, we're looking at, you know, issues with education, we're looking at over policing, there's just a lot of things are happening there. So working at the community level is meaning don't just say you're going to meet people where they're at, you just really have to literally meet people where they're at and let the community lead and there's going to have to be some Emotional Intelligence used in doing that, because at that point, you're building trust and influence. And if you want to strengthen that relationship, you don't need to teach people that are in communities that need advocacy, how to lead with resilience, I'm pretty sure that they got a handle on that, because they're surviving. With situations that they're in, they just need support. In sometimes you might have to give a little more, and that might be training, it might be directing counseling, but working at the community level means to allow the community to work with you, and don't show up to implement your ideas show up to share them.



JJ Janflone 10:39

Yeah, communities know what they need, they just need to be able to get access to those things. I was wondering if you could share what you think that, you know, Americans, and I mean that like, broadly, everybody, from scholars, politicians, just like people on the street, what they get wrong about gun violence, particularly at the community level.



Kayla Hicks 11:00

What I think that people tend to get wrong in society, about communities that are experiencing levels of high levels of violence, crime, poverty, is that that's normal, that we believe it's normal, it's normalized, it's not. And I also believe what they get wrong is that black people don't care about the community or about the crimes or about the conditions that they're in. And I know that I often run into this myself. So I say this with clear competence. What they also get wrong is that they believe that every black person represents every black person, and I can assure you with full confidence, there are people that look like me, that do not represent me on any level. And it doesn't necessarily mean they have to be from a different political party, it could literally mean that that person works side by side with me, and they do not represent me, they do not carry my voice. And anybody that knows me, knows if someone ever walked into a room, bearing my name, that that person is definitely someone I didn't send because I don't send people anywhere. And I definitely know that I cannot represent all black voices, because we all

have different experiences, different environments, we all have our own individual-ness that needs to be represented. So I think there's some crucial conversations that have to be had around how society gets it wrong when it comes to black and brown communities carrying the same voice because we don't. I will also say, another controversial conversation and we're seeing more data about this come out and I'm still you know, waiting for for that one report that makes me believe, but a lot of the conversations we have here for me is is that black people don't want police in our communities. It's not that, we don't want racists, we don't want thugs, we don't want violence in our communities, whether it be from the community or whether it be from law enforcement. We don't want that. But we do want to have a better quality life, we want to have safe, beautiful communities, we want to have the same access that everyone else wants to live the American dream, you know, we want to be valued, and we want to be able to provide that for our families.

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Kelly Sampson 13:21

You can't see I'm off camera, so we can't see each other. But I've been nodding the whole time even talking because as a black woman, too. I also feel like people sometimes think, well, if you got one, you got them all. And you know, one person can kind of represent all black people. And that's just completely unfair. So I'm so glad you raised that and kind of are getting at the diversity of experiences and diversity of viewpoints within the black community. I wholeheartedly feel you and one thing not, you know, obviously, as we said, you are one person, but you have experience in, you know, gun violence. And so one of the things I would love to hear you talk about is to kind of unpack the high rates of gun homicide that black men and women experience and face and kind of unpack why those rates are, what they are and where they're coming from. Because, as you alluded to, a lot of times people think, "Oh, it's just natural." That's just the way things are. So a lot of you could talk a little bit about why it's not natural, and what is kind of driving these high rates of homicide.

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Kayla Hicks 14:29

So the saying that comes to mind a quote that comes to mind to me, and it's a walk away as an economist. And he said this back and in 1975 I remember it because it was on my brother's birthday, March 3rd 1975. And it says that "sometimes it's a very lonely struggle trying to help our people, particularly the ones who don't realize that help is needed." And so when we start talking about high rates of homicide with black men, men, and especially our young people, we have to look at what are the root causes? What are we talking about? Because it's the history and it's in our DNA to experience the narratives that have been, you know, written about us and, and what you see on television or in

music videos or news reports. It's very, it's very unhealthy, right. But so I think this public health, public policy, public safety, and mental health issues that are not being addressed properly for black women and black men, and in this conversation about homicides, and how we can start unpacking why this is, I mean, it's simple, if you start looking at lack of opportunity, right? That's, that's, that's it, that's all we need. If we just stop there, if people don't have an opportunity, or if they don't believe if there's no reason to trust to believe that there is going to be an opportunity, and they become hopeless, then we've lost you. There's nothing you can do to change the trajectory of what violence looks like in these communities, because they have no reason to think that there's going to be anything different. And so when we start looking at the income inequality we just saw, I mean, I you know Kelly, listen, I know that we don't all black people don't think the same but celebrating black woman's payday, so that's not a celebration, right? To me. I don't- let me just say for, for Kayla Hicks, I am saying, don't celebrate me, give me the money, you, you have the party, I'll take the check. I'm better off with cash than to celebrate a day, right? So we got to look at the income inequality. And I know that -pin kormos- does a lot of amazing work over there. And making sure that we're looking at what income equality can do. And Jocelyn Fryer is a perfect example she put out an article years ago that's still very, very, very relevant to right now. And it was about valuing black women's work. And the reason why I'm saying that is because when I was speaking with the founder of -pink rose- recently, we talked about how many of the homes right now, when we look at homes that have a single parent, Guardian, or caretaker, it's usually a woman. And then a lot of that is women that are middle income poverty. And so now we're looking at the data, right? So we tie this right into data, how many of these homes or communities have high rates of violence and homicide? And then what what are those intersections? What is the intersection telling us? Is it telling us that where there is high poverty, there is high crime? And if it's telling us that and it's been telling us that for decades, what are we doing to address the economic inequality that are the root causes of gun violence? in black and brown communities? There's so many more, obviously, conversations we can have, whether it be you know, underperforming schools or underfunded public housing, or the resources from public services, health and human services and social services like this, that in itself, they're constantly being underfunded or defunded, and the programs and things that are necessary, are the first things to be taken away. How do you put together in some cities, they will have a multi million dollar project to put a pool in or you know, some type of recreational attraction, when they're saying we don't know what to do with the violence in our city. And we know studies show us that it's less than 1% of the individuals that are committing these violent crimes. And so it's this concentrated poverty. So how could you avoid not asking your legislators or the decision makers? Why are you putting all this money into a recreation to attract more people and grow the economy when we're stable when there is no reason to ignore the concentration of poverty in your cities in your state? Invest in the community and your economy will grow.

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**Kelly Sampson 19:24**

You know, one of the things that has been great about your work, and especially the Op-Ed, is that you always sort of mentioned how important it is that women and young people are at the forefront of the gun violence prevention movement. And I was wondering if you could share a little bit about why it's so important to raise up those specific groups in making change.

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**Kayla Hicks 19:44**

I think that it's important one because we know that this is the leading cause of death for black males under 55, the younger age group is a firearm homicide. So it's very relevant to make sure that we're having more conversations with with young folks, this is intergenerational work. But black women, like, I don't know how I know that I've been in this work since 2013. And when I started sustain equity group, I started sustain equity group, and independently. And it's a 501 C3, I don't have a fiscal sponsor, I don't have a team of people overseeing me telling me what to do. So it was very challenging to get into this space and be a black woman standing on my own, even with other black organizations and individuals there to this day, is no individual that or person that I could say, that has come to support the work that I'm doing. And sometimes I think that just is going to be, there's a small pool of money, it may seem like a big pool, but it's just a small pool of money for all of these organizations. So everybody becomes competition instead of compliments. But I do think that because black women typically are going to be seen as the help there our role has always been to bring us in to get it done. Right? Whether it's dealing with our democracy, or whether it's families or, you know, we can date it back and to slavery and understand the reality that we basically have been building for others, all of our lives, through our ancestors to current. And so we've got to pull black women from behind the scenes and put them in front you can't see a black woman anymore. Black women at this point, our studies are showing the most educated group of women in the country. And but yet we're still being paid the least. And then also we have the largest amount of debt, but yet still being paid the least like the student loans. How can we get anything done If we don't value the black woman? The reality of it is is that where I go, I can go into the halls of Congress, or in the corner in the hood, it is what it is. I'm going wherever because I stay consistently the same. I stayed for the same position. And that is, it's about saving life. It's about the quality of life. And black women are tasked with being made responsible for everything that goes wrong in the black community because we baby mamas, we must be all you know, all on welfare, or we're doing something when someone is harmed or injured. The first thing is to that Mom, what did they do? What happened? Right, and most of these women and mothers that I'm with there, they did it all right. They did it all right, and their children have just been the unfortunate circumstances of what happens when society turns a blind eye to a public health issue or public safety,



public policy, mental health issue that's impacting a group of people that is still being looked upon, as less than we are still considered less than I don't care how much money you got, I think -bakari sellers- talks about it with with with his mother, and the unfortunate situation he experienced, it's like, no matter how much money you have, we're still looked upon in a way, that is not good unless we are being used for our greatness for our buildings for the value that we bring. So we've got to make sure that we're valuing black women because the black woman, she's going to raise the next police chief or the next police officer, the next judge, like what we need is in our communities. And so if you want to see change, then you've got to change how we are including black women and young folks in this movement. You can't even take young people and throw them in the midst and say, okay, so you all do a great job at this. So you know what I'm talking about, you've got to not only work with youth, and share, building the infrastructure, so that what they don't know, you know, what that wisdom is going to meet the creativity, that you can build something that is realistic, sustainable, and that you can implement it. And people understand what the learning objectives are, because that's the big thing that we don't do is we know, what are the learning objectives here? What do we want to get out of this more, so let's just get in here and show that we have a presence is you need to do more than that, right? It's a combination of things, but black women are going to be the center of it all. And if you can't respect and value us, then you're going to keep getting the same results. And it's insane, right? Doing the same thing, expecting a different result. So stop doing the same thing and expecting a different result. Because for one, I'm not gonna let anybody use my voice. You're not I don't you don't see me popping up and showing up all over the place. And I get invited places all the time. But if there's no real value, if what we're doing is not going to trickle down and trickle up into the spaces that it needs to be I'm not doing it for what? My voice is important and I know who I am.



JJ Janflone 25:02

And for me, it just seems like there's, there's so much pressure, especially on, you know, impacted communities or just like black women more broadly that, like perfection is required? And I'm thinking even if people like Simone Biles, who has just been like, so attacked for being open about the need to prioritize her mental health,



Kayla Hicks 25:22

Forgive me on this too. We're here because what I've got to say about Simone Biles and all of the other beautiful brown skinned girls around the world, and especially where we're shining the light on the Olympics, you know, as we continue to lift up our black and brown sisters that are emerging from these silent struggles, that are under the scrutiny clearly of

the media and public eye. Because they're in the thickest, let us be mindful that the ones who did it first, the ones that understand that there are lots of black women that are aware, we know we are we know that we're magical. We know that we're innovative, we know who we are. But the first to do it are amongst the icons such as Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Tubman and Claudet Colvin who many people, you know, don't talk a lot about because Rosa Parks is is the iconic figure that we we think of when we hear about not giving up a seat. Well, that was Claudet Clovin, along with other women that had done that before, just to name a few. But most black women and girls that are changing the world. You know, these are normally your everyday, extraordinary females, they're headed down doing the work. They don't have access to resource or funding to share their work, or someone else is taking credit for their work. And, and these everyday females are the ones that we need to be lifting up because they're the ones that when you go and this is no offense, clearly to anyone. But when it's my experiences that I've had plenty of stakeholders, or sororities or fraternities that would come to me and ask me to go garner the support that they needed, organizations do it as well, so that they can be in touch with the community. And then they'll go in and they'll participate with that community. But they have no real ties, they build no relationship, there is no trust or influence there that comes from, from me that came from this girl who wasn't supposed to be here. But here I am helping organizations and individuals raise their game, so that they can appear to be doing the work, and then they're not. And so I feel like it's these everyday black women and girls that people just don't recognize, have done this, Simone and the rest of the women that we are referring to, are incredibly important, and we want to support them. But you know, I just tell people don't, don't get messed up. There's people that came along before us because even for me, I stand on the shoulders of giants. And I can assure you that there are some people standing on my shoulders. Some didn't get permission, but I'm allowing it. I understand, okay, well, let's do we'll let some people get by. But for the most part, just like let's not forget the Kelly's of the world, right without the voice of Kelly without this specific space. And then even without the space that you're creating, being here with us, to black women. It's about, you know, coming together, and making sure that we're changing the narrative in a helpful and effective way, and making sure that we're listening better to those who are serving.

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Kelly Sampson 28:37

I mean, I think that's all directly on point when we're talking about gun violence and the condition that, you know, lead to the disparate rates and kind of continuing on this thread. I was wondering if you were if you had any thoughts about what communities are doing to stop gun violence that maybe we don't see in the mainstream media, and what it looks like when communities are working every single day to sort of intervene to build up to create peace and how people may not get to see that.



Kayla Hicks 29:07

Okay, Kelly, I'm trying to remain- those that know me know me for- Well, I'm trying to keep my, my thoughts and my mouth in order. So because I respect you two so much I'm gonna stay focused.



JJ Janflone 29:18

You can be you can be free with your statements.



Kayla Hicks 29:22

No. You don't want this moment. No, no, no, not today. But what I will say is that, you know, what people are doing in the community at the ground level that people don't see every day. It's like the most. I think the most painful thing that I experienced here most recently, is that we all know about wear orange day, and how important that day is right? Hadiya Pendleton and what that story has done to change gun violence conversations and what we do and how we do things. And so, you know, one thing that I can say for certain that probably is not public or people didn't really realize is that sort of everybody gets ready for for wear orange day, every single year, it's been changed from where the family has it to a weekend so that they're more activities can happen and more awareness, I'm thinking that awareness, visibility, and education should be what the goal is right? However, what people do on the ground is, is that they still have to live in these conditions and with the consequences of beyond the bullet. So here recently, Hadiya Pendleton family had to go to court for the last sentencing of the individual that was charged with her death. And I went out to be with the family. And to my surprise, I've been working with Brady here for a year and a half, specifically, with Sustain Equity Group and building out the you know, this this relationship that we have, and especially with Kris Brown, it's just been phenomenal. And here I show up. And the only people that are there is myself and Brady go with me, where I sat. And so that was very hard for me to see that no one has really taken the time to see where is Hadiya's family now? Are they Okay? What are they doing right now? And what they were doing was sitting in court, almost eight years later waiting for the last sentence and they had to they did their impact statements. And so the point is, is that they're still working and still going in, it was just very traumatic for me to watch that family have to be there and alone in that mannerism, when there was such a big multimillion dollar investment in Wear Orange Day weekend and then when she's tragically sitting there alone by herself, but she's never alone, because there's always going to be women like myself, that are going to be on the ground and seamlessly, you know, in the backgrounds or in the front, whatever is necessary. So when you don't see news reports about the black men that are in the communities, being

mentors, and that are giving back or black women, that who often are bearing the burden of burying that loved one, taking care of that child, also looking at the offender who now may be incarcerated for life, and that black woman has to now take care of that person that's committed this awful crime and also bear the burden of dealing with the stigmatism that comes along with black males in the first place. And then you know, a black woman God knows that we got I don't know how many disrespectful comments or expectations people have of us, but instead of that black mother, getting support, oh, she's, you know, she's gonna be crucified. Now she's got to worry about retaliation for her family. And there's constant movement on the ground, the experts of the movement are on the ground. And I will say this with again, full confidence that there are a lot of people, whether they are black or white, that come in and say that they are survivor led, or have survivors leading the work and they don't. The solutions are going to be in the work. And the work is going to be done by the people that have to live there. And when they have to live there, they need sustainable opportunities. What can they do without having a big grant or a small one? What can they do to self sustain and all these things can be taught very easily, but there's constantly people on the ground that are making this world continue to move and they are actually protecting many people from what could potentially be their last day on earth or potentially injured, because they are constantly working with at risk individuals that need help and, you know, it's just not there, they don't have the access or the resource to it. So black women and girls have become counselors, they've become social workers, they become law enforcement, which is doing it all and I'm not saying to exclude any other individual or groups, but I am certainly saying that people for some reason think that we still are just "the help," and that we are truly Hidden Figures and that's our only value, but I'm here to tell you, we are more than our trauma. And we are not going to keep pushing, you know other people's agendas and and sustain equity group right now we have this IOU new ground initiative, which is where influence and opportunity meet and unify black women and girls and women in general across the country. And you know, we are paving out some new ground for ourselves and focusing on how can we get more of the good stuff in the dark spaces and do that together? It's a sistership.



JJ Janflone 34:52

No, I think that that's it's super important for you to raise because that's sort of the whole idea to have like doing trauma informed care. Is that survivors have agency and survivors have control. But it's also not on survivors to have to do all of the work on their own or to only have to somehow solve a problem that's bigger than themselves and like "solve."

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Kayla Hicks 35:17

You can't set them up for failure. I agree. And Brady does a great job at centering survivors leading on the side in front behind and, you know, when I don't know that anybody else even recognized it but I do know that Brady was right there for Hadiya Pendleton's family and put a statement out a strong statement of support. And those are the small things that matter. You know, I mean, you have to make sure that if you're going to be in, be in, can't go celebrate progress that had nothing to do with.



JJ Janflone 35:49

But I wonder if I can, if I can put on my my little, my little like, podcaster hat here. I wonder too, if you have any thoughts on like how people can do better ally-ship, like, if they're not necessarily a member of a community that is being impacted, like directly by gun violence?

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Kayla Hicks 36:09

I will say this, you don't have to be black to help and you don't have to, you don't have to quit your job and give up all your savings to a black person to show that you're committed. I think, here's what I would say. It always bothers me. When someone says to me, Kayla, I want to help but I just don't know what to say, I don't know how to talk, I don't know how to talk to the community, or I don't know what to say to them. You know, I don't speak monkey. I don't speak plant. I don't speak anything other than the English language. And then where there is another language, you know, I've got Google translator, so I can really get into any kind of conversation because I can learn anything from there. So if you treat people, like people, like humans, like, I have never in my life encountered a moment where I walked to a white person said, I don't really know how to talk to you white people, you know, because you got more access and more wealth than I do. But I don't know how to talk to them, I really want to talk to you. I just literally go talk to people. And so I think white people have to stop having the excuse of I don't know how, and you know, if you if you are a good person, and a healthy person, let me just let me just pre reference that you must be healthy and understand what it means to take care of yourself and others, right? The big mistake that people make is thinking that anybody with a voice can have a conversation out of the question, not acceptable, got to be healthy. But iif it was your kid, if it was someone you cared about you love, or if it's your money, treat people the same way with the same respect and value. And if you want to go all in, then go all in, just go to the community and say, "Listen, I don't know what I'm doing here. I've never done this before. But I care about this, and I want to be a part of it. Where can I fit in?" It doesn't mean that you have to take everything that someone says to heart and say,

okay, that's exactly what I'm going to do. Because you still need to make sure you do your due diligence and make sure that that is this individual, or is this group, the right person or the right people? You know, are they doing what you know, I need to get done? And how would they carry it out? How can I, you still want to understand who you're dealing with? Because not all you know, people are going to be the right people. So you want to make sure you have the right people, but no excuses. I mean, I don't have any soft spot for someone that doesn't know how to have a conversation because like I said, I don't speak monkey, I don't know what you would expect for me to say. And if you feel like you're going to say something offensive, then that's what you share. I don't I'm not familiar in this space. That's it. You just be honest, lead with honesty. And you'll be okay.

K

Kelly Sampson 38:55

I mean, Kayla, what you just said is so profound and brilliant. And I just want to like, make sure listeners caught it when you were saying, I don't speak monkey, I'm a human being. And I think, you know, that's something that often comes up and it's implicit. And people don't recognize it. But in saying like, "I don't know how to talk to these people." It's almost like it's othering. And it's saying like, "oh, you're not a human like me. I don't know how to talk to you." And I think what you said is so important, like, we are people. If you speak English, and I speak English, we can we can work it out. I'm not some alien being that's present. You know, respond. So I just wanted to lift that up.



JJ Janflone 39:35

Along those lines then Kayla, how do we take policies that then we know work or that the community has put forth and said, hey, these work, how do we get them to actually move national?

K


Kayla Hicks 39:46


Well, you know, so I often use acronyms because people that are living in high functioning areas of trauma, violence and all those things that help you to to lose focus, as well as long and short term memory issues, and just all these things that come along with complex PTSD and poly victimization are things that are plaguing communities that are dealing with violence. And let me just mention this, I have a lot of white women and more particularly Greek and Indian, and just different levels of women that I work with that suffer greatly. They've been brought up in, you know, the same projects or herds or been brought up in conditions just like I had, and others have, and they don't get a lot of help. And then there's also interracial children and adults that still, you know, we always talk


about black or white, but we're never really talking about the full picture. So I just want to mention that when I think valuing women and me, particularly as a black woman, it's my fight for black woman, but I'm working with black women all over the place, but I use acronyms a lot. And the two of the acronyms that you'll see for me is always going to be PIE and AVE. So the the Avenue is the awareness, the visibility and education, right. So these are how we get things done is to focus on that. But when we start talking about how do we actually get things done, it's like, what do we want to get done? The first thing that we have to get done is making sure that we're talking about power. Who has that? You know, where's that power line? Who makes the decisions? and inclusion? Right, so are we ensuring that the perspective and lived experience of black women are included? Is it trauma informed? Are we incorporating into the violence prevention and the programs and initiatives that we have? at any level? Are we incorporating full, being inclusive in the work that we're doing? And I don't mean by saying, Kayla, I need you to go do ABC and 123 this way. Well, you know, that's not gonna work for me anyway, but just as an example, you can't tell people what to do, and not listen to what they're asking for, right, these crucial conversations and the tools that are needed to have conversations but equity. And I will say one of the things of policy is that what I support is promoting equal pay and workplace equality for black women that are working in meeting in violence prevention organizations, pay black women what they're worth, don't hire someone that you're not going to pay them to do the work that you hired him for, you can't pay to hire someone, and give them four titles and pay them for one and expect them to do 10 of the titles. And that's what constantly happens is, is that you're not understanding what equity is, and people constantly talk about, you know, what equity looks like, you can't just put someone, it's not okay to just put, if you want to get something done, don't just put people in places because they're black. And I'm not saying that you shouldn't hire black people. Obviously, clearly, I'm not saying that. But stop- this applies to anyone, when I take it personal, great, I hope you do, stop hiring black people just because you want to put a black person in place to say that you checked off your diversity box. And if you have someone that's capable, and that's doing the work, and then you don't give them the power, or you're not including them in the decisions that are being made, you're still not being equitable. So if you want to learn how to put policies in place, first, understand what is the community that you're in lacking, because every community is not lacking the same thing. Some communities have no issues with law enforcement, others are playing with issues with law enforcement. And so some people show up and let's defund the police. And they're like, "well, why we don't have problem with police" so really understand what the needs are in the community that you're working in, because you want to start at the local level, then the state level, and then the federal level, you've got to show people how to expand, it's like a seed, you put it in the ground and you take care of it and it grows, I don't mess around in dirt. So I don't really know how to plant anything. I know how to go buy from the store, my friends do all this planting and all this stuff for self care. And so it's




supposed to be great. I just have not gotten used to missing in dirt yet. So forgive me, but it's like planting a seed, you plant it and it grows. But if you don't take care of what happens to it, it either dies or it just doesn't grow properly. And it just, you know, you just you have to identify for vulnerable communities, what policies they're lacking, and then start talking about what's realistic, right? What can we do that's realistic, it's not can we do it? Is it worth doing? and do the things of value and assist people with the infrastructure of understanding that providing equal pay, and an equitable workplace right to work in providing economic stability is violence prevention, and it you know, I mean, I'd love to hear what you and Kelly how I have to say about that. Do you really? Do you think that economic stability is a part of violence prevention?


 Kelly Sampson 45:06  
Yes, absolutely.

 JJ Janflone 45:08  
Yeah. No. 100% I think anything that perpetuates inequality inherently makes gun violence worse. Right?. I just want to thank you so much, Kayla, I want to thank you so much for joining us today.

 Kayla Hicks 45:24  
Thank you guys, again, keep doing what you're doing. And all I could say is keep doing well.

 Kelly Sampson 45:29  
Seriously I mean, this has been amazing.

 JJ Janflone 45:35  
So Kelly, last week, you got a little break from our moment of levity.

 Kelly Sampson 45:38  
But, I mean, you know what, I missed it.





JJ Janflone 45:42

Oh, did you really? Well, good, because we're back.



Kelly Sampson 45:46

All right. All right. I'm buckling up. So what do you have for me this week?



JJ Janflone 45:51

So if you know me, you know that I would say I have a teensy tiny little obsession with cats, especially with my own cats. But this is a story that itself is a cat-astrophe, if you will.



Kelly Sampson 46:04

I can't hate because I love a good pun.



JJ Janflone 46:07

I couldn't help it. So we go to Kenosha, Wisconsin, where a 19 year old woman accidentally shot her friend while she was using the laser sight on a handgun to play with her cat.



Kelly Sampson 46:19

Sorry, it's just so awful. And it's like, Why? Because I mean, I feel like gun safety rule one on one is don't aim at things that you don't intend to hit.



JJ Janflone 46:29

Well, yeah, and the story is pretty much exactly what it says on the tin, right? The young lady was in an apartment visiting her people when she picked up a handgun that had been left there by another friend. She then turned on the handgun's laser sight and was pointing it at the floor to get the cats chase it.



Kelly Sampson 46:45

I mean, this story is just, it's just everything is wrong. Like, first of all, why the gun owner just leave their gun lying around unsecured? That's point number one. And then also, guns

are not toys. Guns are not cat toys. They're not people toys. Guns are not toys. You know, just, everything's wrong in this story. I have to ask though, what happened next?



JJ Janflone 47:08

Yeah, well, yeah, because it wouldn't be here, if that was- the gun was unintentionally discharged. And another young man ended up getting shot in the thigh. 911 was called he was taken to a local hospital where he's okay. And the woman said that she thought the gun was unloaded. But,



Kelly Sampson 47:26

I mean, it doesn't matter. You know, guns aren't toys. And so you got to assume that they're loaded and act accordingly. And I hope that both victims make full physical and mental recovery.



JJ Janflone 47:43

So a story from this week that just wrecked me is this. For over a year, a researcher named Daniel Kelly, with the Anti Defamation League has been finding and studying recreations of horrific mass shootings on Roblox. Now Roblox is for those of you unaware, an online platform in a storefront for user made games, it's super popular. By 2020, over half of kids in the US under 16 had played and it currently has over 40 million daily users. So sadly, somehow recreations of mass shootings, like the Christchurch shooting had been both created and published on this platform. Now Roblox does monitor for content like racism, discriminatory speech, or content related to tragic events. But like just the sheer size of this platform, and the nature of it, make it very hard, obviously, to moderate. And I'm so saddened that even in these primarily kid focused spaces, there's no break from gun violence, you know, to the point where it's something that can be studied by, you know, an outside observer.



Kelly Sampson 48:47

Yeah. And I mean, when I really take a step back and process what this is, it's absolutely disgusting. Because basically what they're saying is some person or people out there are taking people's murders, and making games out of them. Like that's disgusting. And I mean, kind of, you know, to move to our next story, which also focuses on youth and went viral this past week was a piece written by a high school senior named the Ladica Jawa from Fremont, California, and it was published in The Atlantic. And in the piece, Java said,

"but as the first day of school approaches, I can't help being a little hesitant and not because of the Coronavirus. I'm worried that once we all start going back to class, mass shootings will return to our schools." In her heartbreaking article, she details mass shootings that have defined her childhood and her recurring fear that returning to school means returning to a possibility of gun violence and that's just absolutely devastating.



JJ Janflone 49:55

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. If your thoughts, questions, concerns, ideas, whatever! Kelly and I are standing by.



Kelly Sampson 50:10

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