

Brady music: [00:08](#) \*\*\*music plays\*\*\*

Christian: [00:08](#) Hey everybody, this is the legal disclaimer where we tell you that the views, thoughts, and opinions shared on this podcast belong solely to us, the people talking and not necessarily Brady or Brady's affiliates. Please note that this podcast does contain discussions of violence that some people may find disturbing. It's okay. We find them disturbing too.

Brady music: [00:29](#) \*\*\*music plays\*\*\*

JJ: [00:42](#) Welcome back to Red, Blue, and Brady. As always, it is JJ here, hoping that you're not sick of me or my voice yet. And that the voice in my head that says that you are is just the anxiety talking. So I'm here with Christian.

Christian: [01:00](#) Hey everybody. I'm Christian, VP of policy here at Brady.

JJ: [01:04](#) And yes, yet again, we have no JP, but we do have a VP and I was very proud of myself for coming up with that earlier this morning.

Christian: [01:11](#) That's good.

JJ: [01:11](#) Thank you. I know it's not, but thank you for lying to me. Today we're talking with Gregory Jackson, a survivor and a community activist. We're also talking about the dangerous nature of golden retrievers with guns and honoring a deeply loved and now missed GVP hero. Okay. And so let's jump right into it. Let's turn things to our guest. It's Greg! Greg, welcome to the podcast.

Greg Jackson: [01:34](#) Thanks for having me.

JJ: [01:34](#) Thank you for coming in and for coming in so quickly. I know that we made this happen really fast,

Christian: [01:38](#) No problem, no problem.

JJ: [01:39](#) So do you want to just introduce yourself really quickly to our audience?

Greg Jackson: [01:43](#) Yes. I'm Greg Jackson. I'm the national advocacy director with the Community Justice Action Fund. I'm also a survivor of gun violence and I'm from a small place called Fluvanna County, Virginia with two stop lights, more cattle than people. Yeah,

now I live in Washington DC. I've been here for about 11 years.  
Go Nats.

- JJ: [02:02](#) And then Christian, we have, so we have another voice in the room.
- Christian: [02:05](#) Yes. Again, I'm Christian, VP of policy.
- Greg Jackson: [02:07](#) of the LA Dodgers.
- Christian: [02:12](#) Come on man.
- Christian: [02:12](#) Painful at this point, so, all right, well now this has set me up for a really awkward transition because I'm going to say, can you tell us about what happened on April 21st, 2013, while we all laugh at Christian's pain?
- Greg Jackson: [02:27](#) It actually started a lot like this joking with some of my friends. Actually that day was my, one of my best cousin's named Cora Carrington from, from Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina. He was his bachelor party, so they're from North Carolina and I brought him in a few months, cousins up, my brother up, and my brother's friends. Yeah, we had a great night. Went to a Moroccan restaurant. Some of the guys are under 21, so we sent them to the club to the 18 and up club. We wound up at a 18 and up club, just to make sure it's very inclusive, night but we had a really good time, but there was about, I think there was nine of us total. So as we were leaving, didn't really get a cab. It was a really frustrating experience before Uber, before Uber was a thing. So we were able to get the four of the younger guys in a cab to get back, and then I found myself and four others, we were just trying to walk home because couldn't get a cab. There's no Uber. So you know how else to get back. So we were walking home and we were walking through the Shaw neighborhood of Washington DC, and I'll never forget, there was a older gentleman that saw us and he said, "Hey, y'all walking kind of late, y'all need a ride." But you know, an inner city. He's like, Oh, you know, you don't take last from strangers, so you know, "we're good, don't worry about it". And literally the next block we took, a left came around the corner and these two guys were arguing and when they saw us, one of them pulled out a gun and started shooting at the other guy and us kind of sporadically. So obviously we took off running and as we were running, I felt kind of almost a sharp pain on my right calf, but he was still shooting. So it's like, you can't just stop. So I just tried to keep running. I couldn't run. So it kind of turned to limp to crawling. And I saw like this, this concrete column. And so I was able to slide behind the column as he was still shooting.

And luckily the shooting stopped. I remember this feeling of just waiting, waiting for him to come, come get me cause we were only, you know, half a block away. I know he saw where I was hiding at, but luckily he didn't come. And then there was this big fear and anxiety of not knowing where my cousins were, knowing that they were coming to DC because I brought 'em up here for this great moment and this great night and just not, not knowing if they survive or not. Luckily I heard them in the distance and they came back, and as I heard them jogging that I was like, okay well hopefully they're safe. And then I looked down and there was just huge pool of blood. And I remember in that moment getting really lightheaded and starting to really think about life. And frankly I think what was the darkest part about it to me, was just feeling like this might be the end of my life and not being ready to go. And not necessarily like, like I had, like I wanted to get married and all that stuff obviously, but it was more like not feeling like I had done the most with my life for God, you know? And now I was about to meet him and really check in and turn over my life and, and, and show him what I did or didn't do. And I felt really uncomfortable with that and really just angry that I didn't have more time. I feeling like I didn't have more time. So luckily my cousin came back to us, he grabbed his, grabbed his, took his shirt off, which was actually my shirt and took out of my closet, was my favorite shirt and he tied a tourniquet on me, which is great. And then we called the ambulance. The ambulance came eventually and got to the hospital. When I first got to the ER, I was met with three investigators, which was really confusing at first and they were just questioning me about, you know, "why was I there? Who was I talking to? Who was the altercation with? Did I have anything illegal on me?" and really questioned me like I was, you know, being interrogated for some type of court case. But I'm literally, you know, in the gurney in the, you know, in the ER, haven't talked to the doctor yet. And so I answered the first guy's question. Then the second one came and I was asking very similar questions and when the third one came I was so frustrated. I literally cussed him out and I was like, I'm not, I'm not answering anything. I'm not talking to you guys anymore. Like I need to talk to my doctor. And I remember him taking some notes and kind of moving on. And then my doctor came and he shared that, uh, I had about 26 minutes left before I would have bled out cause I was bleeding at such a major rate. And when I went into the, he also shared it, they were going to have to do surgery, but there's a strong chance, I might not make it because of the blood loss, but if I do make it, I may be amputated, and sign here if you're okay with that. And he handed me a clipboard and I remember that feeling like, well you don't sign, I'm just gonna, you know, bleed out here and

granted. So, uh, so I signed it obviously, and I remember just kind of going into the, into the surgery. And so yeah, I went through surgery. I remember coming out of surgery, then they put an officer outside of my hospital room and they basically, you know, said that until I signed some paperwork, they weren't allowed, they weren't allowing me to have any visitors and they wouldn't let anybody know where I was, which kind of created this whole panic in my family and my friends because they,

JJ: [06:49](#)

They saw you drive off, driven off in an ambulance.

Greg Jackson: [06:53](#)

No. And then my cousin's like, yeah, Greg's been shot, you know, and that's the call. And then everybody has in my family's literally rushing into town via car and however they can get there. So eventually I signed the paperwork and stuff and found out that the, uh, I wasn't, luckily I wasn't, uh, I survived or didn't have to be amputated, but the bullet had damaged two arteries. So I went through about 21 days of recovery in the hospital, which was spread out over six months. I had a couple of relapses where I had internal bleeding and had to go back in. And that was probably one of the most frustrating parts, was like you get to a certain point in recovery and you have a complication, you have to start all the way over. And that happened twice.

JJ: [07:30](#)

Which is so weird to me because I feel like people think "I get shot in the leg. It's not that serious of an injury."

Greg Jackson: [07:37](#)

Yeah.

JJ: [07:37](#)

Like after say like a mass shooting when there's reports like someone was shot in the leg or someone was shot in the arm, I think the inclination is people go, "Oh, like it's fine. They're going to like, like breaking, it's like breaking your leg."

Christian: [07:47](#)

You watch movies. And they say aim for the legs.

JJ: [07:50](#)

Yeah. I feel like John McClane's been shot in the leg or Liam Neeson, 900 times and he's good. He just pops right up like a daisy. And

Greg Jackson: [07:57](#)

So what I thought too, I watched a lot of movies too and I thought, "okay, you know, this is small." But yeah, artery damage is crazy. I mean a lot of people have died from that. Watch the Redskins player Sean Taylor, he died from an artery gun wound. A lot of people die from just basically,, blood loss. And that's what I was suffering through. So it was, it was pretty

intense because a lot of friends and family, if you listen to this, thank you so much, but a lot of people came and supported me and was there for me and brought music and bears and food and all this great stuff and flowers and posters and it was awesome. But as I was leaving, that nurse shared that, you know, every day young men and women come through this hospital and suffer similar wounds and gunshots and then no one visits them and no one's there for them. And they go right back into the same neighborhoods. And those same communities with that pain, with the trauma that I went through, but without the support network. And that, that really stuck with me because I'll never forget that. And everyday I think about this work, I think about who else is sitting in the bed similar in a similar place that I am but doesn't have the support and is still dealing with that same, same type of trauma. So long story kind of short.

Christian: [08:59](#)

ss to touch on your recovery, we often talk about the people who have been taken from us, but we don't talk enough about those who are traumatized or physically injured, uh, and their recovery, which is often a long process. Can you tell us about your rehab?

Greg Jackson: [09:17](#)

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Um, so as I was gonna cover, I remember I was on crutches at the time. And it's tough when you, when you survive acts of violence. And I guess most things, dramatic folks always say, "Oh well, you know, it could, it could've been worse" or "you're so lucky to be here," but there wasn't much comforting about that. You know, it doesn't really make you feel better cause you're still going through the same pain and frustration. You don't, you don't feel lucky. Like there's nothing positive about recovery. Until I met with Colin Goddard in Colorado was one of the survivors of the Virginia Tech mass shooting, and if he's listening, thank you so much for everything. But we have brunch and we have a couple of mimosas, that was nice but it was awesome was just me and him and we had never met but we kind of exchanged stories and he shared about, he shared where everything happened in Virginia Tech, which was, which was really, really, um, terrible, terrible story to hear. But he was also shot multiple times and he was someone who was a big soccer player and very athletic before he was shot. And he talked about his journey, recovery. And a big thing he shared with me is that, you know, like you'll never be the same. There's no way. You're not going to get back to where you were on April 20th of 2013. That, that person died when you were shot. You know, so don't, don't strive towards that. Just realize that your, there's a new future and you're living in a new reality now and decide, you know, how are you

going to live in new reality? Are you going to take this trauma and turn into something that, that weighs you down and drags you into a darker place? Or are you going to turn it into something that's powerful and that can help change the lives for others. And that's, and that's what he was doing at the time as advocating for gun violence prevention. Um, at the time. And he shared his work and some of the things he'd been doing and how challenging it was, but how he kinda took that moment and really ran with it to make a difference in the world. And that inspired me, one to be a little bit more aggressive in my recovery, but two, to also be more vocal about my story and realizing that, you know, this happened to me for a positive reason, even though it didn't feel very positive.

JJ: [11:10](#) But you - you were working there like, in gun violence prevention before you got shot, like that's one of the reasons you were in DC right, right. In the first place

Greg Jackson: [11:17](#) I was on, um, I was part of Organizing for Action. I was also a big part of the 2012 Obama reelection campaign. And so when that ended, he started Organizing for Action to start organizing around different issues and empowering the volunteers, the Obama campaign to do more on the work on the issues. And I think I was the second employee hired. So we were just building everything from scratch and when we were building it, we just, we kind of laid out the issues and kind of picked like who wants to tackle what? And I remember losing a childhood friend from gun violence and just knowing, you know, offhand how, how much gun violence hits, impacts black communities. So I just jumped in and started working on that issue specifically. So yeah, the only when I was shot was when I would just started getting into the issue advocacy work in to gun prevention here in DC.

Christian: [12:01](#) So it was right after everything changed, right?

Greg Jackson: [12:04](#) Yeah.

Christian: [12:05](#) Obama had just taken office. And because you mentioned Colin and what had happened at Virginia Tech, you were shot on the 21st, when Virginia Tech happened on the 16th I mean, six years apart. But we see these coincidences and remembrances come up across this field and it's strange how these survivor relationships form.

Greg Jackson: [12:27](#) Yeah. Essentially like even you and I, like we have a really good bond and, and I've become good friends over the years, and I've met a lot of great friends through this, but it's always sad

because you don't, you don't want them, you want to be friends with them, but you don't want to know them.

Christian: [12:39](#) What's been interesting in working with you and getting to know you is you are in this working for Obama with Organizing for Action. You then go work for the DNC than the mayor's office with the Office of Neighborhood Engagement working directly on the ground. What inspired this? This progression.

Greg Jackson: [12:57](#) So when I was in recovery, actually had to move home with my parents and my dad was nice enough to put, put a little TV right in front of my couch where I was laid every day for like five months. And so I read a lot of books and I watch a lot TV and I watched the violence, interrupted them, this movie called the Interrupters and I saw all these amazing people in Chicago, like intervening, interrupting violence in the streets and like turning the tide. And then I was reading books like Gunfight and Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun, which were two really good books. Yeah, they were talking about solutions and how they're dealing with this. And then you turn on the news and you see Sandy Hook in Newtown, all the tragedy there, and all the news stirring about it. And then you hear everybody in the world making this a huge issue, especially with background checks. And Congress was just silent. And that drove me nuts to see all these solutions that exist and all these people that are working hard and passionate about it. And then you see Congress just kind of sitting on the sideline.

Christian: [13:48](#) And our family of survivors are growing every day,

Greg Jackson: [13:51](#) Every day. And, and that was just watching Congress. And that's actually why I went to work with D triple C. that's cause I was like, man, I gotta get in here and you know, take my campaign experience and hopefully, you know, find a way to like figure out how we can elect more Democrats. Cause I thought it was just a Democrat-Republican problem. It was, it was actually eye opening to get into the, into the, into that space at that time to see how people were just shying away from this issue. Everyone just didn't want to touch it cause it was so hot and they weren't thinking about, "Hey, there are lives being lost here." Like this isn't about winning or losing or you know, red or blue as, especially as Brady would say. It's about like lives are being lost and you're fighting over second amendment and this comma versus how are we saving these lives? And they weren't even pursuing, you know, alternative options or alternative solutions.

- Christian: [14:37](#) It was just like, "how do we wait this out?" Was the way that it felt kind of had this shake America awake and say we're not going anywhere.
- Greg Jackson: [14:45](#) No, I'm glad we did because I remember that time I would literally get like sick to my stomach every time I saw the Capitol building. Cause it was just, it was just like that is the problem. And so that's, I mean that's, and honestly that's why I pivoted to doing more local work too, cause I just couldn't, I couldn't stomach it for awhile and I'm, I'm thankful for everyone who kept advocating in that window. But for me it was like kind of run into a wall here. Is there more we can do locally, you know, are there alternative solutions to, to reduce violence. And that, Interrupters, the documentary kinda light a little fire in me that hey, there are other ways to get to this. Even if Congress and the elected officials won't touch it, you know?
- Christian: [15:22](#) So let's dig in on that. The gun violence movement is expanding out of necessity, and no one can ignore it. But still what gains that media and political attention are mass shootings, not everyday gun violence. I'm curious what you think we should be doing better.
- Greg Jackson: [15:38](#) I think at its core, I think the entire movement needs to make sure that we thinking about; How are we preventing and reducing violence? and really helping focusing on the root causes that prevent someone from picking up a gun in the first place. I mean, the reality is there's what, 393 millions, million guns in America and 360 million people. So no matter how hard our politicians get on guns, they are in our ecosystem, right? And so to end gun violence, to truly end it, we have to first make sure we put in the measures to better manage the the guns that are floating through our community. But then we need to figure out how do we make those cultural changes? How do we deal with the people and deal with the root causes to avoid them from even picking up those guns in the first place. And that's, and that, that actually, that was something that kind of evolved inside of me, from working locally because DC is a city that is really tough on guns, right? And we have a mayor who's really tough on guns, but you also see a surge of guns being trafficked into the city, which is a whole nother problem. But even when they're there, you know, there's gotta be some way to stop it, you know, knowing that the gun is already in people's hands, in their houses, in their, in their homes. And so I think that's, that's something that we as a movement have got to keep focused on because the majority of gun violence is happening in communities where there are a lot of guns and they aren't necessarily legally there. And so how are we dealing

with illegal gun usage? And sadly, our movement, we're a little bit behind, you know, I mean, the gun industry has poured guns into our communities in the eighties and nineties right? And we're gaining momentum now, but a lot of it's already there, unfortunately. And so I, I think in order to do this, we do have to be comprehensive. Like we got to catch up on the policy, but then we got to figure out, okay, how do we make sure that the people are in a better place and aren't resort, resorting the guns to, to handle their conflicts. And that's, that's where I'm excited to know and see that a lot of movements are growing kind of under the gun violence prevention umbrella that is focused on preventing gun violence.

Christian: [17:33](#)

So what does that look like?

Greg Jackson: [17:35](#)

So one thing that we realize this is, um, this, work with the mayor's office is pretty interesting. Cause again, as the city is very tough on guns, we do have a big gun trafficking problem, but you know, we can't change the policies of Virginia and Maryland from inside DC. So how else are we going to do this? So we had to kind of go back to the drawing board and we looked into a lot of these neighborhoods that are being most impacted by violence. And first, I think the first step was like, "Hey, throw police at it and deter it." And that was a very temporary deterring solution that did not work. You know, it only works, you know, as long as that car was literally sitting there and as soon as that car pulled off, it might be chaos all over again. So then we actually went into the communities and just ask folks directly like, "Hey, what do you need? Like what's going on?" And there were some very easy solutions that, that were needed to be implemented that had a big difference. So one I'll never forget, one was like, "Hey man, it's dark." "What do you mean?" He's like, "yeah, all the stuff goes down. Like all the, all the drama happens over here cause it's dark and it's light on that side of, you know, the neighborhoods. So people don't want to get caught. So they bring all the drama over here." "Alright, why is it dark? And he's like, "well the street lights been broke and, ah, no one's ah trimmed these trees. It's like, oh, I mean that's easy. Right? So we called and was like, "can y'all replace the lights?" And they're like, "sure." And then we're like, "why didn't you replace the lights ahead of time? It's like, Oh, we only replace lights when they are reported broken." And it's like, Oh, so light repair is a reactive thing. So that means neighborhoods that are most neglected or maybe struggling with oppression or unemployment or maybe are just focusing on other things, are probably not reporting it as likely. So a lot of these neighborhoods probably aren't getting their lights repaired. Then we looked at, okay, what other reactive services

are they missing? And it's the same thing for potholes. It was the same thing for alley repair. It was the same thing for tree trimming. Like, a lot of the government services were very reactive, reporting based services and these neighborhoods will literally just be overlooked, and it was feeding a lot of the, the, the violent crime and illegal activity. So we started to attack it that way. Started, uh, an initiative called the Results Campaign. That was a while ago, but that was just focused on how do we make sure that the conditions of each of these neighborhoods are better. Then we looked at, "okay, what do you need as a human, like as a person, like what have you guys need and why is this conflict happening?" And a lot of it says jobs. They'll say, "Hey, we need jobs." Well, okay, okay. It's not just jobs. Cause if we give you any type of job, that's not gonna necessarily help. We need to figure out, how do we put you in a position to have the right type of job or a job that you're prepared for? And so the mayor created this thing called the Infrastructure Academy and planted it right in the middle of a lot of neighborhoods that were dealing with violent crime. And there you could learn about every infrastructure job you can imagine from street repair, power company to electric. You can do DC water, you could be trained on the spot and get paid to learn about all these infrastructure jobs and really stepping in without a college degree, without a high school degree a lot of times, as long as you were of age and just could pass the drug test. And so we saw they made lines down, the block of people come in for these infrastructure jobs and positions. And we've seen a big change and a lot of these neighborhoods where we were able to employ folks. Then we learned, okay, once we get past that layer and then what's next? And then we say, well, where is the, you know, where is like everybody's not out here shooting and stuff. So what's going on? And so we looked at a model in Richmond, California where they realize that when they did a study on the gun violence, what's happening in their city, a small percentage of the people were doing about 80% of the gun violence in the city of Richmond, California. You know, and the folks that were there, we met with them and they shared like this is something that we believe is the same in every city. And so we started looking at data and other cities. And in DC, it was just like that. So we created a program called the Pathways Program, which was focused on finding those people who are most at risk to being that small percentage that either you know, to encourages or conducts violent crime and said, how do we focus in on them and give them all the resources and support they needed. And the Pathways Program is doing that every day and basically that you go through about two and a half weeks of classroom based instruction where they learn about everything from childcare, conflict resolution,

fatherhood, being a good friend, housing, rent, everything, you know, substance abuse, and they go through their own therapy too.

JJ: [21:36](#) Can I ask what's, what's sort of the age breakdown? What was the demographics

Greg Jackson: [21:42](#) Typically? I will say they are about 18 to 36 and very diverse and it was cool because I was able to interact a lot with the guys in that program. And you, you know, oddly when you think about inner city gun violence, a lot of folks who maybe have this stereotype in their head, but when you meet these guys, man, they are charismatic, super smart, you know, and they're like, they're leaders. Like they are just born leaders and, and they have dreams and passions, but they're also the ones that are passionate enough to do maybe even the worst at times. And so when you can kind of redirect that passion and show them, Hey, here's the way you can channel that, here's something that you can do to help you feed your family. Or here's something you can do to can build that legacy or build your reputation. That's positive. They latch onto it. And so since the program started, I think they're in year two now and 90% are fully employed, um only one person has had any type of criminal interaction. I think that was for parking tickets.

JJ: [22:36](#) Oh, that doesn't count. Who doesn't have parking tickets in DC? I am pretty sure that I know nuns with tickets.

Greg Jackson: [22:43](#) Oh, I mean they're, they're doing amazing stuff. One has a reclaimed custody of his kids. Julius. Really proud of him. Um, a lot of them have like, um, identified health conditions that they've been able to address physically and mentally, that have helped them be on a better path. One of them got his credit score. We were talking about his credit score together and I'm sad to report his credit score was way better than mine and I helped him get his first car. He got an Affinity man, got a nice car. I'm like, you know, you're like, you're way further along, you know, you know, but like when you invest in these guys, you really learn how big, how big of an impact they can have as well. So, um, one of the guys, which I hope you will get a chance to interview at some points named Robert Butler. He did five years in prison for armed robbery. But then now that he's went through the program, he's got his full time job. He has his own first apartment ever in life. You know, like I said, he bought a car,, and now I'm watching him go into his neighborhood. And literally bring those guys out that he influenced in a negative way in the past, but now taking them to get their GED or taking them to get the program. Yeah, he's like literally like guiding

them out of this dark place. And so it's been, it's been awesome. And I think that's just a couple examples, but here in DC that's kind of the, the strategy is like how do we really look at each neighborhood that's being impacted and figure out how do we holistically turn it around? And yes, the guns are a problem, but people still go to guns as the last resort in those communities is just what they see as the last resort is very different from what we may see as the last resort. And so just trying to figure out how do we get to them ahead of that. And, and unfortunately, you know, you won't reach everybody. You won't save everybody, but, but you can have a huge, huge impact with not a lot of money, to be honest. If it's really more about the attention.

- JJ: [24:22](#) It does seem though to me, like you get a lot of joy from interacting at this ground level. I mean, we're not a visual medium, but you, you, you seem very happy about doing this work and talking about this work.
- Christian: [24:34](#) It's a hard field though. And you've been doing it for a long time. How do you, you know, stay healthy?
- JJ: [24:41](#) Yeah. And also what I guess inspiring for you, what do you feel in addition to keeping you healthy, keeps you going and doing this work?
- Greg Jackson: [24:49](#) I'll tell you the, the, the tougher side of being closer to the work is, or close to the communities, is you do lose people, and you do learn and you get to meet people that you lose along the way. But even their stories kind of help you feed ideas around how do we, how do we solve this problem? Um, holistically. And so I'm excited to have that, that lived experience as being a survivor, but also someone who's been working closely on a gun violence prevention. I, I'm not a violence interrupter. Never say I would be, but I, but I've been able to work alongside some really amazing, amazing people doing that. And it's really inspiring.
- Christian: [25:23](#) When you get to look at somebody like Robert and see the impact that you've had on his life, but a better credit score than you.
- Christian: [25:31](#) Yeah, yeah.
- JJ: [25:35](#) What he's doing here, he has a better car than you.

- Greg Jackson: [25:38](#) Ee does. He does have his own business evolution of Kings. I'm gonna give him a shout out Evolution of Kings clothing, pulling them up on Instagram @EvolutionofKings
- JJ: [25:46](#) that, I mean that leads me into one of the questions that I even wrote down cause I really wanted to ask you this, which is that there was a survey from Lake Research partners, I don't know if you're familiar with them, but they found that 70% of Latinx adults and 63% of African American adults that were surveyed said that they think that there are effective solutions to community gun violence that exist, but that elected leaders just don't care enough to help implement them. And I was wondering, have you encountered that sentiment or or feelings like it when you're in the streets when you're doing community engagement, when you're in these impacted communities?
- Greg Jackson: [26:20](#) Yeah, yeah. I mean we, we do, I mean I think there's a lot of elected officials who know about these solutions, who neglect them and I'm still trying to figure out exactly why that is. You know what I think part of it is, is that to start to implement some of these solutions kind of, peels back the onion if you will, or opens the hood, on some of the oppressive structures systems that are operating in most of our cities. So like if you're going into a community, you want to deal with the root causes of gun violence and let's say you take my neighborhood, Anacostia in Washington DC, you go there and you say, "okay, you know, we're going to clean the streets, we're going to work with the guys, get 'em employed." And you realize a lot of them don't have a high school degree. And you ask why and it's Anacostia high school has, you know, 46% dropout rate. And you're like, "Oh my God, we need to work on the schools." And then once you get to the schools, you realize, "Oh, we got to go work on housing". Because a lot of the reason they're struggling in school is because their housing situation is bad. Then you have to invest in the house and you realize that housing is bad because of, you know, this dependency program or this, you know, and I think, I think maybe, and I don't know, I have, no one's ever said this to me, but I wonder sometimes if politicians shy away from these solutions because they know it will, it will kind of, like I said, open the hood up of their car and show all that all the maintenance that needs to get done in order to get the car running the right way. And so,
- JJ: [27:38](#) Yeah, like just put duct tape on the pipe, put it, put a hanger on the muffler, hold it up, it'll be fine.
- Greg Jackson: [27:44](#) Just put the duct tape. All right. And I think a lot of, especially the local level, people throw police at it, that's the duct tape.

Right? And police make you feel better and they make the, not the neighborhood feel better, but it makes the broader community feel better and it makes people on social media and in email, okay, great. You know, extra a hundred police officers on the street. But that's not necessarily solving the problem of why gun violence happening. That's just, that's just deterring and creating the ability to minimize the damage from gun violence, but not necessarily addressing it head on.

Christian: [28:13](#) And yeah, we see people almost being reactive, not proactive, right?

JJ: [28:17](#) Right. Up until the point the hanger comes up on the freeway and now your car is on fire.

Greg Jackson: [28:22](#) And that's what's happening, I think, and a lot of cities are seeing these huge spikes in gun violence and they're saying, well, "what's the problem? What can we do?" , it's like, well, the problem is maybe the same problem it was in 1990. You know? But you know, luckily you've been avoiding it with that hanger on your muffler, but now you on the highway, right?

Christian: [28:40](#) Can't slow down, now.

Greg Jackson: [28:42](#) Now, what I will say from experience too is that what's a little, uh, what's important for people to know that it's not enough to just throw money at these community groups too. And maybe that's also why people shy away from it because investing in community based solutions is not a line item on the budget. You know, you can't just say, all right, we're going to get some grants. You know, you have to say, all right, we're going to make sure that we spell out what these grants look like, what these programs look like. We need to make sure that we're training the organizations to be effective. Making sure there's some clear accountability processes in place so the money's not being misused or abused because unfortunately, a lot of that does happen. And when you do see that all it takes is like one violence intervention group to have some crazy scandal of how they blew a million of city money. And the quick response is, well that's why we should put it in the police and let's not do this again. And that's happened in multiple cities, that happened in Chicago, was happening in DC where one scandal with one of these groups has like disrupted resources and funding for decades. Yeah. So you have to build the, you know, the government in order to, to be, to really invest in it, has to build some really strong accountability processes, some real training and development of the groups that they want to invest in, and a very clear understanding of what the results they want

to get out of these types of programs are. And there are a lot of cities that just don't know how to do that and just haven't figured that out yet. And we'll see CJAF that's a lot of what we're doing too is working with different cities that have not been exposed to this or don't feel confident in it and showing them like, Hey here, here's some ways you can advocate. Here are some solutions. Here are examples like the life camp in New York, this is doing a great job and has it well oiled and refined so that you can know what you're striving towards when you're investing in it." And not just taking the easy route of police. Right.

JJ: [30:25](#) So not to, not to pump you up too much cause I don't wanna make you uncomfortable with, with our fawning, but you're so good at this. Um, do you, do you feel like this is your life's calling? Do you think that this is your life's calling or

Greg Jackson: [30:39](#) I hope it's not my life's calling. Hopefully. Hopefully this is a, we're done with this, you know, retire age 45 and that's also, we figured it out, you know, fixing the environment. I love the environment. I don't know about all that guys. No, no, no. I think, you know, it's funny bro. Today I was watching, I don't know, is once you kind of opened your eyes to like the trauma that gun violence is causing our country it's hard not to see it. And it is everywhere. I was watching this show with Rhythm and Flow or something new. Netflix shows about the young rappers or Cardi B and TI and Fat Joe, and Snoop Dogg and all of them. And they're like judging these up and coming rappers and everyone's kind of telling their story before they go up, kind of like the, the voice or whatever. And almost all of them have some type of trauma from gun violence. And it's like, I'm literally watching 20-30 people share their stories around gun violence on a show that's about music and entertainment, you know, and it's, you turn on a radio and I listen to like Tupac and Nipsey Hussle and it's like, Oh man, these guys were shot. Right. You know. So I say all that to say, I just feel like the, the, the, the impact of gun violence in America is so much bigger than we know. We've, we've taken note of that. I really see my job, if nothing else, just to inspire more people that are impacted in these creative, or I'm sorry, different unique ways to be more vocal and to be advocates. And I think if all the folks impacted, but actually, you know, stepped forward and kind of start being the voice of solution and change, then yeah, I could definitely retire age 40, cause it's just so many people from so many different walks of life. And so that's what attracted me to Community Justice Fiction funds. That's exactly what our mission is, is to uplift the voices of those impacted and encouraged them to be the leaders and to be the advocates and be the

policymakers and be the elected officials and not just be that victim that people perceive them as, but be that fighting survivor.

- JJ: [32:34](#) So what I've been dying to ask this entire time is do you have Obama's phone number?
- Greg Jackson: [32:40](#) No. No. Yeah. Can I talk about that? Okay.
- JJ: [32:48](#) How about like an email, a pager, I'd take a Snapchat code, you know, anything.
- Greg Jackson: [32:54](#) All right. All right. So this is my first time getting out of the house and then recovery my dad was, took me to is like a treat thing. That's his visit, the OFA staff. And I got there and I saw a call come through my phone and we were like on some like little ranch or something somewhere and I look a call, my phone is blocked. And I was like, Oh, stupid. Ignore. And uh, and then somebody called again, it was the number was blocked and I was like, whatever, whoever's trying to call me without, ignore. Yeah, I'm pretty bad at screening calls. Everybody knows me, I screen everything. I'm like, you gotta text me first. So I know I'm going into, so now I'm like, Oh, they called the third time, I'm like, okay, maybe it's an emergency or something and answer the phone. And it's like, this is air force one. And I was like, what? And it was, we have the president on the line, I'm like, Oh my God. And I looked down at my phone and I have one bar of a service and I'm like, Oh shit. So I like, I literally, I have one leg, so I'm just, I'm hobbling and I literally like go hopping across the conference room and my dad and everybody's like panicking, like, what's wrong, what's wrong? And I was just like "Obama!" And I'm like sweet with the phone and like jumping across, didn't have my , and I like hopped outside, and I pick the phone up and all hear is, hello? Hello, hello. And I was like, Oh, hello, hello. Hello Mr. President. And he's like, are you there? Cause I guess he was on hold and he heard all this commotion. So yeah, I finally got off this. So sorry. I try to explain to him I didn't have service and he obviously didn't have time for that, so, but he pivoted, which is great. Right. And um, you know, it was really inspiring. I mean he just shared that, you know, he had heard about what happened to me and um, he was, he kind of shared his, his frustration and sadness that so many people were being impacted by gun violence and thanked me for all of my work with him and working for him over the years and just reminded me that like the White House is praying for me and that know he's praying for me and Michelle is praying for me and then he went into, like, this little like uncle tone and started lecturing me about "listening to my doctor and don't be pushing yourself

too hard" and I'm standing here thinking, I just hopped across this conference room.

Greg Jackson: [34:48](#) Yeah. I was like, I did the exact opposite of what you told me to do Mr. President, but I will do that moving forward. You know? And then, I don't know, I think I kind of got like star studded and said something like, thank you for all you done and done. And so yeah, so that was it man. He said, thank you know, hang in there. And he said he looks forward to meeting me in better condition, which was really inspiring. So I hung up the phone and I was like, and then I had to come back and explain to everybody why like sprinted off on one foot. But yeah, it was pretty cool. It's pretty cool. But his number is blocked so I don't have his number. I don't have it. No.

Christian: [35:21](#) That note, so going into 2020, what do you think? I mean I'm pretty pumped about how uh, how America politically is addressing guns and gun violence, cause we're seeing like every candidate has to have, not just, you know, "I'm against gun violence," but they have to give you like a thorough plan and there's differences between each plan and how much we want to know. How much have you invested in violence intervention versus, yeah. It's like it's a whole new era versus we couldn't even get a member of Congress to mention it. And when we first started organizing, that's when we first started looking at the grades and we were like, Hmm, this person has an A from the NRA. That's a problem.

Christian: [35:58](#) Or even that like that I can remember before, before 2013 any room I would go in half, half of the time that I would spend speaking, I would just be talking about what our gun violence looked like. Right, right. People didn't know that you could buy a gun without a background check. Right. You could do sort of a majority of States. So like there has been this wave of education that's occurred. Yeah, you can't bullshit on this anymore. Right. You have to be real.

Greg Jackson: [36:26](#) And, and you have every candidate sitting down for 30 minutes. You being drilled on gun violence, eight hours in Las Vegas, hearing from every candidate, tryin to out do each other. Try not out calling each other out on their, on their policies to weak, too. You know, I was like, wow, wow, this is serious. It is. It is. And that's really, really inspiring. And even, even on the other side too, I mean we're seeing like Republicans saying, well we do have to do something about this, you know, and it's like, okay, well that's, that's a good place to start. You know, we need to do something. So what do you want to do? I mean, it's a pretty inspiring era. I think that, I don't know. I feel like we're

going to see some really big changes in movement. My, my only fear is that like background checks is so important and we've been so focused on it. I don't want people to think that's the victory. Like I think that that's the beginning. That's the foundation. It's the foundation, right?

JJ: [37:20](#) It's not like we get it and everything is fixed forever.

Greg Jackson: [37:22](#) They all, like universal background checks is not the same thing as universal healthcare. It doesn't solve everything. And so, but I do think a lot of folks are kind of tempted by that. So I'm hoping that we, and I think we're getting there, we're starting about assault weapons. We're starting talking about violence intervention and different, different, uh, school safety. And so I think we're starting to open up and say, okay, there's a lot we can do to solve this. But if we make universal background checks the only thing, and we still have mass shootings and we still have violence. I don't want folks to say, well that didn't work, you know. So we've got gotta make sure we're educating the broader movement and the people of the comprehensive needs to address gun violence.

Greg Jackson: [37:56](#) Thank you so much for coming on. Yeah, no problem. I'll be back.

JJ: [38:00](#) So it looks like we're ending right on time, which is perfect. But now Christian and Greg, you guys get to listen to me do a shoehorn that, we definitely believe that you will be back. But things that we can't believe, da da DA! It's our, "I can't believe it" segment. So Christian, this story is almost exactly like what it says on the tin. Lab shoots owner. And what makes it crazy, we thought is it's not because a dog shot its owner and it's because a lab shot it's owner. And I know you have a dog.

Christian: [38:34](#) I do.

JJ: [38:34](#) Do you have a lab?

Christian: [38:35](#) Irish terrier.

JJ: [38:37](#) Yeah. I think maybe, maybe an Irish terrier would. Yeah, totally.

Christian: [38:42](#) Yeah. But it's labs are like the most chill dog.

JJ: [38:45](#) They are notorious for being chilled.

Christian: [38:47](#) They are the Hufflepuff.

JJ: [38:50](#) Oh, they definitely are. As a Hufflepuff herself. I'm more, yeah they went, cause I feel like a lab would like let a burglar right into your house and be like, let me help you carry all this stuff out.

Christian: [39:02](#) There's more expensive stuff in that cabinet.

JJ: [39:03](#) Exactly. Like a lab would be very helpful. Whereas like a Chihuahua or something would be very, or, and just before I get angry notes, you know, no Chihuahua owners write me any angry tweets. Like don't be offended, you know the deep down, You like that your dog is spunky and like, shakes, and you know. But really what this is, this is a story about safe gun storage because we actually get these stories, a lot of dogs shooting owners. And what generally ends up happening is that there is an unsecured loaded gun safety off and a dog will step on it or think that it's a toy and go to bite it. And then man's best friend shoots him and we, you know, even labs can help end family fire. And so I was just wondering, Christian, as someone who's worked in this field for so long and sees more of, often the tragic side of this, how you feel about the fact that people just have sort of guns around willy nilly to where a lab can shoot you.

Christian: [39:56](#) Right, right. Because we often hear from the other side, you know, guns don't go off and and shoot people themselves or guns don't kill people. Right? Yeah, exactly. Like you. The only way to stop a, a bad guy with a gun is a good lab with a gun. Right? Yeah. No, I mean, you know, gun response, the responsibility of gun ownership is something that no gun owners should take lightly. And when you talk to gun owners, most of them don't. Um, and it's this, that comes up time and time again. We need to promote these practices to make sure that we're keeping people safe, that we're keeping pets safe. But that, you know, when you bring a gun into your home the same way that you are trying to have agency in your own self protection, that you're trying to protect your family, it's important that you also know the inherent risk of having a gun in the home. And so, you know, doing everything we can to prevent and to end family fire is really important. And safe gun storage is such a key part of that.

JJ: [40:54](#) Yeah. And so if you're interested in keeping your family and your pets safe or your family safe from your pets, please go to [Bradyunited.org/endifamilyfire](http://Bradyunited.org/endifamilyfire) or [Bradyunited.org/podcast](http://Bradyunited.org/podcast), or basically [Bradyunited.org](http://Bradyunited.org) and all associated linkages to get more information on end family fire. Now, despite the jokes, this can be a rough space. You know, we talked about our

friends getting shot, our pets shooting our friends, sometimes. And so what makes it better though is that there are amazing people in it and that gives us a lot of hope. And this week, our GVP hero is actually someone who I know Christian sort of, loved and respected an awful lot.

Christian:

[41:34](#)

Yeah. You know, Congressman Cummings, Congressman Elijah Cummings was a remarkable man. You know, we get to interact with a lot of legislators and a lot of important people. And Elijah Cummings is one of those people who really straddle the line of, of he could really feel like a best friend as well as like one of these most prolific legislators that you see. I can remember when I first moved to Washington DC and I was just starting to lobby on Capitol Hill. I can remember being on the phone with my girlfriend at the time. She's now my wife and talking to her and, and, and coming down the hall seeing "Oh man, that's Elijah Cummings," you know, and, and he, he's floating to me. He's levitating towards me, you know, because of, of how much I revere him. And I hung up on her. And said "I gotta go, I gotta go talk to Elijah Cummings." She thought, she's like, man, your job is so much cooler than mine is. And I uh, but I walked up to him and I just said, Hey, you know, uh, Congressman, it's such an honor to meet you. I just want to thank you wholeheartedly. This is like 2011, 2012 so this is before Sandy Hook. I want to wholeheartedly thank you for all that you do for our movement. It's really important to have champions like you out here speaking for us and I'm a survivor and, and I know you talk about your story with your nephew and how much that means to me, and in our survivor family that to have somebody here who understands the pain and tragedy of, of what we're going through and why we do what we do. And he ended up walking with me for 10 or 15 minutes and we just talked about everything. He told me about his nephew. He told me about, you know, how important it is to have our voices in this, how important it is to keep fighting for this every day. Because everyday that we don't, more families go through what his family's gone through. More families going through what my family has gone through. And, and I'll always remember that moment mainly because I was still, you know, green and hadn't figured things out, but he took the time, this giant, this guy that I idolized, just to talk to me like a human being, and to really get in the weeds on why this work is important before I think a lot of the right,

JJ:

[43:26](#)

Before the rest of the world seemed to wise up to it.

Christian:

[43:26](#)

Right, right. So it was a really meaningful moment for me and I'm, I'm gonna miss him a lot.

JJ: [43:30](#) And he had worked in this field for so long and then continued to work in this field long after you first saw him and fanned over him.

Christian: [43:38](#) It only got stronger. I mean, it only, it only got stronger. And he went on to introduce a lot of bills and you know, after Sandy Hook, he introduced one of the bills that had the most bipartisan support to try to combat illegal trafficking across state lines. He, he is just a constant voice or his community. But for gun violence survivors across this country and, and he will be sorely, sorely missed for a lot of reasons, but um, in particular for our space

JJ: [44:02](#) And for a very sort of special Brady tribute to him, if you want to check out the descriptor of this particular episode, we actually have a link for a press release that Brady put out. So, and please do. He was phenomenal.

Christian: [44:13](#) He was the best.

Christian: [44:16](#) So if you have someone that we need to know about, like an organization that's knocking it out of the park or work that you're doing, if there's someone in your community that's just crushing it, you know, let us know. Send us a message [bradyunited.org/podcast](http://bradyunited.org/podcast) and they, or even you, can win our gun violence prevention hero of the week.

Christian: [44:37](#) Yeah, we want to hear about it. Come on, come on, shout out.

Christian: [44:39](#) Thanks for listening. As always, Brady's lifesaving 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. New full length episodes. Drop every Monday weekly wrap-ups drop on Fridays and minisodes come whenever we can fit them in. You can also get in touch with us@bradyunited.org or on social at Brady buzz. Be brave and remember, take action, not sides.

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