

Episode 180-- The Power of Harm Reduction to Prevent Gun Vio...

Fri, 4/15 2:29PM 37:57

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, guns, gun violence, harm reduction, season, mass shootings, hear, communities, podcast, talk, brady, death, suicide, montana, advocate, america, atlanta, lost, day, listen

SPEAKERS

Stephanie Wittels Wachs, JJ Janflone, Kelly Sampson



JJ Janflone 00:08

This is the legal disclaimer where I tell you that the views thoughts and opinions shared on this podcast belongs 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.



JJ Janflone 00:37

Hey everybody, welcome back to another episode of Red Blue and Brady. I'm one of your hosts JJ,



Kelly Sampson 00:42

and I'm your other host Kelly,



JJ Janflone 00:44

As we continue to talk about the intersectional nature of gun violence, which is to say parts of gun violence that you may not immediately think of when you hear the phrase gun violence. We have the immense honor of sitting down with a fellow podcaster who knows all about talking about complex often fatal intersections, Stephanie Wittels Wachs.



Kelly Sampson 01:04

Stephanie is the co-founder and chief creative officer of Lemonada. Media, a podcast network that aims to make life suck less. And she also created, co-created and host "Last Day," a

podcast devoted to talking about massive epidemics from the opioid epidemic to the gun violence epidemic from a humorous, harm reduction perspective.

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 01:28

My name is Stephanie Wittels Wachs. I host a show called "Last day," we just launched our third season on gun violence, fun stuff. Not really, but those that's kind of stuff we tackle on "Last Day," and I'm also the co-founder and chief creative officer of Lemonada Media.



JJ Janflone 01:46

Well, thank you. And I think you set me up beautifully for something, you know, the Kelly and I end up having to talk to folks a lot about when they ask this, what do you do for a living? Like I talk about hard things that tend to make a lot of folks uncomfortable. And as much as you are comfortable, I'd really appreciate it if you could share what brought you into harm reduction work more broadly. But then specifically, sort of doing this harm reduction work via a podcast?

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 02:09

Yeah, my eight year old says that my podcast is about death. That's her very short elevator pitch for what we do. So extremely sad story alert, I did not want to do this podcast, I did not want to make this podcast. The entire reason that I do the show is because I lost my little brother to an opioid overdose in 2015. He was Harris Wittels, who Sarah Silverman called the funniest person that ever lived. And that's fact, that's an objective statement. Aside from being the funniest person that ever lived, he was my only brother, my only sibling, my best friend, my lifelong sidekick. And I was tremendously devastated by his death, as was my family. It left us asking a million questions that everyone does in the wake of an unexpected loss. What did we miss? What did we not do? How could we have done it better? How could we have done it differently? Would he have survived if if if if if. We thought we had followed all of the quote unquote, rules of recovery. We did the 30 day programs, he went to a you know, sort of at his leisure, but he was in and out. And as he was going through the cycle of addiction, I just kept thinking, like, this isn't working. This isn't right. And clearly something is, is missing here. We loved him tremendously. We still lost him.

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 03:36

And you know, I hooked up with my business partner, Jess Cordova Kramer, who lost her brother the same way in 2017. Same sort of story, charming, successful, wonderful brother, her only brother, her only sibling. And both of us were sort of going like, what what do we do? Like, can we do something here? And so we created this show called Last Day. It was so funny, we shopped it around, when we first had the idea. And we got a lot of feedback that it was really niche that you know, not a lot of people are gonna want to listen to this. And we had done the research, we were like, "Listen, everyone is losing people to overdose right now everyone is losing people to addiction, or somebody in their family is struggling in silence or they're struggling in silence. These are things we don't want to talk about. And if we're not talking about them, we can't grapple with them, and we can't make any progress." So that took us on

this journey of starting season one which was all about opioids and addiction more broadly. And it took a few episodes for me to sort of start to understand that my hunch was right. We were giving, we were doing it wrong. We were being given information that wasn't effective. And really when we talk about addiction in America, we talk about abstinence, we talk about getting people sober, and it is not working. When we started the show, I always used to say we lost 72,000 people to overdoses in 2017, which was the the most recent data we had on hand. And that is the capacity of an NFL stadium. So a stadiums worth of people we are losing unnecessarily. This past year, that number skyrocketed to 100,000. So we're not getting any better. It's getting worse. The despair is broader, the hopelessness is broader. I'll get to that in a little bit when we talk about this season as well.

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 05:26

But what we need to be doing here is not getting people off drugs, we need to decrease death, we need to decrease loss of life. And the way that we do that is with long term recovery, medication assisted treatment, doctors who specialize in addiction medicine, no treatment program is going to begin to scratch the surface at 30 days, it's just not going to work. You know, I remember this amazing "a-ha" moment with Dr. Nzinga Harrison, who was a shining star, she was the MVP of season one. She was like recovery takes five years. And I was like What sorry, what? What I thought we were talking about 30 days, you know, no, no, no. And it's a multifactorial issue. It's like, you've got to have community support and therapy and recovery resources and medication assisted treatment, and a good job, and a place to live. And all of these sort of like systemic things that we hate to grapple with in America. It's all part of the same issue. So anyway, I'm getting on my soapbox now. But I've become a very passionate advocate, you know, for harm reduction, and I wish we would do it here.

K

Kelly Sampson 06:35

Please stay on the box as long as you like, I mean, and you know, thank you very, very much for sharing your brother with us. We really appreciate you doing that and your openness. But before we move forward, could you just define what harm reduction is?

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 06:51

Hmm, good question. Very simply harm reduction is reducing harm. It is keeping people safe, it is keeping people from from dying. So we advocate carrying Narcan, we advocate, you know, any life saving treatment any I mean, seatbelts are harm reduction, condoms are harm reduction. It's it's, it's putting putting some some safety precautions in between something that could be fatal, or, you know, preventing sickness or death.

K

Kelly Sampson 07:21

You know, this season, the third season, Last Day is focusing on gun violence. And we're wondering what made you turn to gun violence as an issue that you wanted to focus on?

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 07:34

It's so funny, Kelly, I didn't want to do this, again. The theme of Last Day is me kicking and screaming, I didn't want to do gun violence. Because it's extremely polarizing. It's deeply political. I didn't want anyone to scream at me on Twitter or elsewhere. And, you know, I have a very specific point of view about guns, that is straight down the party lines. And I was I was afraid, I was afraid to dive in, I was afraid to grapple with it, my position has always been let's get rid of all of them, which is not a harm reduction approach, hint hint, we'll get there in a little bit. And I had to really grapple with that, as we started doing this season. But how we got to guns is that when we started doing Last Day, we were saying that we wanted to tackle mass epidemics in America that are hard to comprehend and getting worse every day. That was like our talking point. And at some point along the way, talking to experts and thought leaders and hearing people's personal stories, it was very clear that that really what we're talking about are deaths of despair. And when you dig into this issue of gun violence in America, particularly when you look at the rise of crime that we've seen across the country, during the pandemic, it is really hard not to categorize these losses as deaths of despair.

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 08:45

As hopelessness rises, gun violence rises, as hopelessness rises, suicide rates rise, opioid overdose rates rise, it's all inextricably linked, and they all have the same root causes. So, you know, we, we tackle very sad things on Last Day, but we have the funniest team of makers in the world. So we like talk about what would be on our Last Day bingo card, and like trauma, you know, generational trauma, it's, it's all in there, mental health, lack of mental health resources, systemic poverty, systemic racism, institutional racism, all of these all of these things that are big and dark and ugly, and kind of like looming in everyone's DNA here, that's the kind of it's it's the same issues. We talked to this incredible ER doctor in Atlanta, who I absolutely love. And she, she said, "Listen, it's the same causes of poverty and homelessness and overdose, you're going to find when you look at the trauma bay in this hospital, it's all it's all the same stuff." And then I think why gun specifically now, we did suicide for season two, and honestly, we didn't we didn't tackle firearms in season two, because again, it's just too big a beast tackle like in, you know, one act of an episode. But we did this story on suicide clusters, we met a woman who worked as a suicide prevention advocate in Wyoming for many years. And she introduced us to this idea of cowboy culture and guns, and we weren't ready or brave enough to tackle it, you know, at the time, but we couldn't stop thinking about it. And so we knew that season three had to be about guns. And if we were diving into firearms, we needed to learn more about the Mountain West. You know, listen, where there's a lot of guns, there's a lot of gun related deaths. And when it comes to suicide, and the Mountain West 86% of firearm deaths in that state are suicides. It is a staggering statistic. So the seasons have presented themselves pretty organically. So season one was opioids, which led to season two, which was suicide and mental health, which organically led to season three, which was firearm deaths, and suicide and homicide and all that, all that stuff.

**JJ Janflone 10:56**

I think it's so interesting, because if Kelly and I have also talked about doing, you know, the Brady bingo card for this podcast, and it's the exact same things that we would see on yours, because it's an even as you're tracing sort of out those kind of, you know, those widening circles, of addiction issues, of suicidality of firearm violence, we see those circles kind of sliding

in for us, as well as all causes of firearm violence as all reactions to firearm violence. So I think it points out that, you know, there are so many trauma related things in the US that may get viewed as niche topics. But in fact, are not, especially when we think about the folks who are impacted and who, like it many times as communities, if you're impacted by one, you're impacted by all these other ones.

 Stephanie Wittels Wachs 11:40

Well, often it's like marginalized communities, which we, you know, have a really easy time in America just kind of like looking the other way there. Right. Like, well, if you know, I heard this so much in season one, if you want to use drugs, like then you're you might die and that's what you deserve. Right? If you want to have guns, if you want to do this, then that's what you get. And it's like, what, what what that is crazy town. So yeah, lots of lots of stigma, lots of overlapping kind of judgment and bias and turning our faces away from things that we need to be looking at, and that aren't pretty but need our attention.

 Kelly Sampson 12:14

That's also something that could be on our bingo card, too, you know, a lack of good information or the widespread of misinformation.

 Stephanie Wittels Wachs 12:22

Oh, yeah, I have so much to say about that. But yes, yes.

 Kelly Sampson 12:26

And kind of continuing on the theme of overlaps. We've talked about the lack of information being one commonality between gun violence prevention and fighting the opioid epidemic. And I'm wondering, what other overlaps, do you see even in terms of coverage, the way that the media talks about these, these topics?

 Stephanie Wittels Wachs 12:47

I'm gonna throw out some wild and crazy numbers for you, if you if you



JJ Janflone 12:51

We love that.

 Stephanie Wittels Wachs 12:52

Great, great, I can tell you are you are sisters in data. So I have children. And we were just

writing a monologue about this, like right before this, so it's fresh on my brain. You know, my kid had to do all the active shooter drills and hide in the bathroom with all the other kids and I used to be a teacher. My first career was a teacher, I had to do active shooter drills with my own students and mass shootings are terrifying, terrifying to me. I am so afraid that my children are going to die in their classrooms. And a lot of like minded liberals, dare I say, like myself have the same fear. You know, we need to get rid of all the guns because our children are going to die at school. And that is because the reporting of mass shootings in America is staggering, right? It's like if you look at the at the headlines, everyone is dying this way. Right? This is the primary cause, this is a leading cause of gun violence in America. Here are the numbers. In 2019, the gun violence archive reported that 465 deaths were from mass shootings 465 people, okay. By contrast, 14,000 people were killed in a homicide, and 24,000 died by suicide, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, so every year homicides make up 35% of gun deaths. 60% are suicides.

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 14:27

And so collectively 95% of gun related deaths are homicide or suicide, leaving only sort of a fraction being mass shootings. Blew me, blew me away. Absolutely blew me away when we when we, when we partnered with the Kendeda Foundation, the Kendeda Fund was our first editorial partner and he was, David our partner, was really clear. He was like, Listen, you can't do this season on on mass shootings because that's not that's not how we're losing folks here. So I'm still like astonished by that when I tell people we list that you know, right. At the outset of of episode one people are just stunned, you know, and so really, your children are in danger, they are certainly in danger, but they're in danger because you have guns in your house that are unsecured. That's where they're gonna get access to them. And we have tons of statistics, you know, and tons of data that suggests that, you know, if you have a gun in the house, you're three times more likely to have somebody die in the house of a gun related death.



JJ Janflone 15:23

It's so hard, though, even with those stats that are so powerful, because then when you think about them a little bit more. Well, we do talk about mass shootings in the US so often, it's only particular types of mass shootings. But there are so many shootings in the US that aren't that are classified as those mass shootings that don't even, you know, go beyond their local news affiliate. And and I don't know if this is the case for you, but I know it's the case for Kelly and I working in this field is that I can see right away now, which ones are going to trend on Twitter and get attention, and which ones are just going to be their world ending tragedies for the folks that they are involved in, but the rest of the nation isn't going to be aware that this sort of bomb has gone off.

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 16:03

Absolutely. And this is like we are so immune to, to any headlines, right? Like, this is the entire reason we started Last Day was because I was scrolling and scrolling and scrolling and found an article that said, you know, "Opioids are killing more people than car accidents." You know, and I'm like, my brother is one of those people, can we please report on these things with humanity that, and that's really our goal here is like, we have to approach this with, with humanity with

compassion, with empathy with a true desire to find solutions. And this is I think one of the issues that I am I'm guilty of, and both sides are guilty of. And part of my big sort of task for this season was like, I had to get rid of my own biases and walk into people's homes and meet them where they're at, which is a principal tenet of harm reduction, and really try to listen to where they were coming from, and, and like use that to start to try to figure out like, how do we get somewhere with this?

K

Kelly Sampson 17:03

I love what you said about getting to harm reduction and how some of that involves this sort of open minded posture to kind of follow where the evidence takes you. And you alluded to, you came into this process thinking, let's just take all the guns away. And learning and realizing actually, that's not harm reduction. I'm fascinated by that. And I think our listeners would be too. So could you walk us through what you mean by that? And what that look like

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 17:30

It this was one of my biggest "a-ha" was this season. So I was talking to this very brilliant expert. Her name is Emmy Betz, she, I don't know if y'all talked to Emmy, but you should if you have not, she's an emergency physician at the University of Colorado, she created Colorado's gun storage map. So she gave us some insights about harm reduction, she said, One, we're probably not going to get rid of all the guns anytime soon. So that's a bad place to start just like period and the end of end of subject. Two, she strongly advocates for voluntary storage. So she calls it a critical first step. She's really the first one that framed it in terms of harm reduction for me, she she sort of equated it to teens having sex, right? Would you tell a teen like, just don't, just don't do it? Or would you give them a condom? You know, like, like, obviously, they're going to do that. We know they're going to do that. So how can we make that more safe, right? Same thing with cars, if we look at guns like cars, they can be deadly. But there are lots of ways to make them safer. So at first people said, you know, safety updates, like seatbelts would bankrupt the auto industry. But, you know, now people make car purchases on safety features, like based on safety features. So definitely didn't bankrupt anybody. And it took a very gradual public health campaign plus legislative initiatives, you know, public health is a big, another big theme that comes up a lot in this season, which is an interesting thing to explore during COVID; will not take us on that tangent yet. She really advocates for avoiding phrases like common sense gun laws, because it suggests that gun owners don't have common sense. Don't practice common sense.

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 17:38

That's like, immediately kind of judgmental. So coming into the room with like, you're not smart. You're not, you know, like, you wouldn't even think about that. But she just sort of like started bringing us to my consciousness. And then really, she advocates for taking people at their word when they say they want to keep their family safe. So this came up so much when we were in Montana, self-defense, and Atlanta, both Montana and Atlanta. I, its kill or be killed, right. And I need this gun in my house. Because if somebody breaks in if somebody threatens me and my family, I need to keep them safe. Well, the same exact moment we were sort of dealing with all of this in Montana and Atlanta. We were in the midst of COVID. The Delta surge

like I remember very clearly had just they had just announced that people who are vaccinated could carry the disease to unvaccinated people. And I had an unvaccinated seven and three year old in my home. And I canceled my trip to Atlanta. I was like not going, you know, even though the data suggested to me that they would be fine, like seven and three year olds are not at high risk of death. If it's my kids, I don't care if it's two kids. In my mind, they're my kids, right? So like, it started to really like, I don't know, I just started understand, Okay, wait a minute, I actually do have something in common.

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 20:33

My common ground here is fear. I'm afraid, I'm afraid of my kids being hurt, I'm afraid of my family being hurt my family being safe is my top priority. So I wear a mask, I don't go into public spaces. I stand six feet apart. I didn't leave my house for two years. It's the same thing on the other side. It just, it just presents differently, right? So that was like a huge aha. So if we can talk to people about safe storage, about putting pictures of your families on your gun safe putting a picture of your family on your on the gun itself, or your kid, removing guns from houses temporarily when people are struggling with something and having a moment of crisis. You know, these are like actual things we can do to make change that are not just shouting into the void. The other thing, and this is like I took the long way to get back to your question, because I like to make everything really complicated is that I had to grapple with the fact that I have this like fundamental perspective, that is like, harm reduction is my Northstar. Right. I believe it could have saved my brother, I believe it could, it could save so many lives. And yet, and I'm so anti-just say no, I'm just say no as trash, right? I'm like, that's not gonna work. No one's gonna say no. But with guns. I'm like, get rid of all of them. abstinence only. So I had to kind of confront, I believe in needle exchanges, and I believe in safe injection sites. But I don't believe in having any guns in the world. I don't know if that's not really meeting people where they're at. So there's a lot of like, big philosophical questions that arise this season that I'm really struggling with actively right now, this moment.



JJ Janflone 22:18

Well, that's the first episode that is out for the season that folks can access. There's a let's go to the range sort of moment. And I'm wondering if you can maybe walk our listeners through that. I mean, obviously, go listen to it. This is one of the few times I will tell people to pause my podcast, put another one in their subscribe button and then come back. But if you can kind of walk them through what that would be like for coming from this perspective as well. Obviously, the guns are kind of this taboo,

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 22:45

Absolutely. So the very first gun I ever shot was an AR-15. You can just let that sink in. Again, a person who has called for their eradication hundreds of times on Twitter, I equate them with mass shootings. I equate them with senseless death. Well, we went into somebody's home, he happened to be a gunsmith, he happened to make custom AR-15s. He and I are not alike, not alike. He and I had so much fun together. We were like, I mean two peas in a pod, right? I mean, just I just kind of tried to come in and meet him and listen. And I didn't even mean to talk to him. I came to talk to his wife. I was gonna hear her story. He happened to be there. And

he turned out to be like the most sort of staunch to a defender. His machine shop is quite a sight. But he offered to take me out shooting and he said I have two, I have two new guns that need to be taken out. And we can go up the road and and shoot them. You know, you want to do it. I was like, Yeah, I mean, no, but yeah, I definitely I need to do it. If I'm gonna do a season about guns. I need to experience what it's like to shoot one. And like the big spoiler. I'm like, spoiling what happens in minute two is that like, I loved it. It was so much fun. shooting guns is so much fun.

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 24:12

And I finally understood why people do it for sport. You know, we we'd like shot them. And then we did like the ding thing where you hit the iron thing and you hear the ding and you feel like this tremendous sense of accomplishment. Like if you like shoot a basket or like hit the ball. Like with the baseball bat. It's that same feeling of like, Yes, I did it. And then I won. I'm like an A plus plus grade grubber. I'm like a super type A lady so so you know, it was a really fun way to spend an afternoon. The most shocking part about it though, is that we left their house we drove to another family's house and then sat in somebody's living room for three hours and heard about how their son killed himself with a hunting rifle. And in the same day, we had so much fun shooting and I heard the saddest story I think I've ever heard doing Last Day. So it's tough. There's a lot, there's a lot in there y'all a lot in there.



JJ Janflone 25:09

And I think that sort of leads us into something that you've done with with the two seasons that have been fully published of Last Day. And then this new season, which is you're talking about, fundamentally at the heart, things that really scare people to talk about, because you're talking about something that's fatal, something that's political. And then something that within families is alone is generally not something that is talked about openly, say at the dinner table. And I'm wondering if you've learned anything about the ways that you know that Americans discuss these hard topics, or the way that we sort of tried to, like, solve the fear problem.

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 25:44

Fear is so powerful, it is just so so powerful. And I mean, you look at something like COVID, right? You look at masks, masks, masks are harm reduction, masks are something that we could wear to keep people safe. And they were deeply politicized, like you just said, because it is a now political issue. And it's it's it's honestly, it's a public health issue. Unfortunately, we have we have politicized public health, and that is terrifying to me. Yeah. I mean, I have a lot of fear around that, actually. Because these things don't have to be treated that way. Right. It's like, if we accept that people are going to engage in risky behavior that is human that is that is innate, especially young people, we do not have prefrontal cortex is formed, fully formed. There's a reason why we are honing in on, you know, stories of young people who have died by suicide, stories of young people who are dying by homicide this season, because there's less space between that impulse and that desire to do something that can be deadly. And so when you say, and we have people say it the season, not my family, not my children. It is a very powerful form of denial.

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 27:05

And if my if, you know, if my mother had said about my brother, that's never gonna happen. He's extremely successful. Right? People looked at his life, and they were like, that looks like a perfect life. He is He writes, for Parks and Recreation. He is a stand up comedian, he's best friends with all these cool, funny people. And he's addicted to heroin, right? Because there's some unresolved trauma in him, because he's a fallible human being highly sensitive, lots of stuff coursing through those veins. It's like, we don't want to accept the full scope of humanity. And I think that if we keep doing that, if we keep refusing to look at things that are hard to discuss, we will keep losing people to deaths of despair. People are in pain. People are suffering in a variety of ways. We don't do mental health in this country in a way that needs to be done. I mean, that's a huge part of it. We don't give people health insurance. We don't give people living wages, we don't give people places, you know, stable places to live, we have kids that are hungry, have families that are suffering, we're going to keep seeing this. So it's it's our own kind of like, I don't know, there's, there's all this other themes that come up like this rugged individualism, you know, of America, it's really killing us guys. It's a really, it's a problem.



JJ Janflone 28:25

Well, and I'm so glad you brought it up. And I'm so glad that with the Last Day, sort of it seems like with this season, you're really honing in as you put it on the American West, and sort of this, at least for this myth of of the cowboy mentality sort of in toxic masculinity more broadly, that's tied to it came up. Because we had a grief specialist on this podcast, Megan Devine, who did an amazing job laying out for us, you know, that in the US, we use this idea that success is armor. And so if I am successful in any particular way, monetarily, professionally, whatever, nothing bad will happen. And that when something bad happens, I need to somehow turn it into a success, right? To be a best seller. It's got to be a special, it's got to be something out of that grief, right? And it all comes back to this bootstrap mentality of "well, if I'm doing this, then I won't get hurt." And it leaves no space for the as you pointed out, the football fields, the stadiums full of people who have been hurt and who have been lost. So I just I think I want to appreciate you bringing it up.

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 29:23

Absolutely. And I also want to point out the the cowboy stuff. It's not just meant for Montana, it is America. I mean, this theme of self preservation and an isolated landscape. We heard in Montana and we heard in Atlanta, nobody in either of those communities thought that the guns were the issue, right? Nobody blames the guns. We thought it was going to be like obviously, this is the case of Montana. No, no, there was a lot of similarities. The Self Reliance, the self defense ethos, it is strong across the country, the pulling yourself by the by the bootstraps, and I think unfortunately because we don't invest. You know, like many European countries in many countries that are older, in like wellness of our citizens, in collective wellness collective, and I'm not talking about wellness like woowoo wellness, I'm talking about like, feeding your family and paying for health care and, you know, getting people out of poverty, those kinds of things, social services, you know, build back better is dead. And that is a problem. That's a

problem, that we're going to keep having these deaths of despair until we start sort of treating people in a in a community lens and a community landscape. If my neighbors are okay, I will be better. We don't have that right now in America, and it's detrimental.

K

Kelly Sampson 30:48

I'm so glad for the way that you've tied these things together. Because I think so much of what you're saying does resonate across and maybe people haven't necessarily connected those dots before. But I think it does a lot of good, because we're not going to be able to solve things in a vacuum. It's a whole tapestry.

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 31:05

Yeah, we can't, we can't do it. We can't do it alone. And also, the last thing I'll say is that we have to deal with this in communities with credible messengers. That's the other thing that's been massively important this season. I am not going to solve gun violence in Montana, or in Atlanta, I, the people who are going to solve gun violence in those communities are people from those communities. So like Joe Biden, for the first time in the State of the Union speech mentioned, violence interruption, right, he mentioned, getting into communities. That's huge. The president saying that. So I what's happening, and this is, this is something that gives me hope, we always try to find hope and solutions and a very seemingly hopeless landscape on Last Day. But there's like 48 offices of violence prevention that have popped up across the country, you know, governors or municipalities are figuring out like, we need to handle this within our communities. And we need people who are focusing on what is going to work here, right? What works here, where I live in California, is not going to work in Montana, and it's not going to work in Atlanta. And it's not going to work in New York, right? Every community has different needs. And we have to be going to the community leaders in those organizations, the community leaders in those communities, who can be credible messengers, who can speak the language who can come at it from an authentic place, if we want to start making any sort of impact. So I encourage anyone who's listening to find your local community, violence prevention, effort, the grassroots efforts in your community and invest in those, because it's really important, those people are doing incredible work.

K

Kelly Sampson 32:50

I'm super excited to listen. And I know so many listeners are probably, you know, ready, as JJ said, come back to us, but to you know, get into all of your episodes. So, could you kind of you've already talked about going to the gun range, and sitting down with family. So what do folks have to look forward to hearing about, look forward, maybe the wrong way of saying it, you're amazing, even if the subject matter is hard. So what do you what are some of the episodes that listeners can hear for season three?

S

Stephanie Wittels Wachs 33:20

I mean, one thing I promise you is that I love making jokes. I always try to make them when I can, I have a very foul mouth. If you don't like profanity, you probably are gonna have a hard time with my show. So I try to make it like extremely accessible, right? You're going to see me

time with my show. So I try to make it like extremely accessible, right? You're going to see me talking, like I said to people who you would never pair me with in real life, people who I would block on Twitter. Lots of like, trying to, like, understand, I've had so many of my friends actually text me over the last few days, like, "Hey, man, you, you really challenged me, like I really had to kind of look at my own bias and, and I felt, I felt really, I felt real compassion for these people." And I'm like, Yeah, that's great. When did not having compassion for people ever pay off? So you're gonna hear lots of that. You're gonna hear lots of like, solutions that we are trying to uncover hope, hope, hope, places where there is hope places where we need to invest to create more hope. You'll hear a lot about violence interruption, you're going to hear from Carol Anderson, who was my absolute favorite person I interviewed. I want to give her a show. I think I plan on giving her a show.

 Kelly Sampson 34:42

Yes. We had her on episode 140. And she was so amazing.

 Stephanie Wittels Wachs 34:48

I mean, it's not it doesn't take a lot for me to cry, but I typically don't cry when I talk to experts. I cry when I listen to people's stories. I was like crying because I was so blown away and I was so sorry. over over by what she was saying. So you're gonna hear the smartest people in the space on the show. Yeah, and just it's 10 episodes and they're packed. Each episode is around, you know, an hour. And we're covering a lot of ground, you're gonna hear me going hunting. I went on the seven hour elk hunting trip, I thought my feet were gonna freeze off. It was four degrees. It was insane. I again, I'm from Houston, and I live in California. I'm not I don't do well on the cold. It's not where I thrive. But yeah, just a lot of like me in places I would never expect to be learning things that I never thought I would be learning.

 JJ Janflone 35:39

We're enjoying learning right along with you. So thank you. So, so much Stephanie for coming on. And I highly encourage everyone, go to the links in the description of this episode, check Stephanie, and all of her work out. And yeah, let's just keep learning everybody.

 JJ Janflone 35:57

Well, now, we have to go and make actual bingo cards.

 Kelly Sampson 36:03

Bingo: featuring underlining factors that cause deaths of despair. Pretty dark.

 JJ Janflone 36:11

Okay, not everyone would want them, Kelly. But we appreciate them. But what I appreciate

even more than that, and what I'm taking away from this conversation is really, you know, to solve the public health epidemic of gun violence, we need to make sure we're talking to people where they are in a non judgmental way that does acknowledge these really common fears.

K

Kelly Sampson 36:33

Yeah, I mean, sadly, it's true fear drives a lot of our behavior. And it's a commonality that exists across all of humanity. You know, whether you own a gun or not, it's something that we all kind of have in common, but we cannot let it hold us back from ending this epidemic.



JJ Janflone 36:51

Hey! Want to share with the podcast? Listeners can now get in touch with us here at Red Blue and Brady via phone or text message. Simply call or text us at 480-744-3452 with your thoughts, questions, concerns, ideas, whatever! Kelly and I are standing by.

K

Kelly Sampson 37:06

Thanks for listening. As always, Brady's life saving work in Congress, the courts and communities across the country is made possible thanks to you. For more information on Brady or how to get involved in the fight against gun violence. Please like and subscribe to the podcast. Get in touch with us at Bradyunited.org or on social [@bradybuzz](https://twitter.com/bradybuzz). Be brave. And remember, take action, not sides.