

S01E04 Prison Reform

SPEAKERS

Ray Abel, Caitlin Werth, Gretchen Hurd

Ray Abel 00:00

Hello, and welcome to research the News. This week, as always, we have a fake sponsor, since we're not large enough to have real sponsors yet. And this week, we are brought to you by the revolutions podcast by Mike Duncan. He's the host of the show. If you've never heard the podcast before, it's really good. It goes through the history of some of the big historical revolutions, the American Revolution, French Revolution, the last season is this season, and he's going through a two part series on the Russian Revolution. But also he goes through some of the historical revolutions that are not as well known, the Haitian Revolution is one that I highly recommend. One of the great things about it is that I know that, personally, when I look at his Twitter feed, Mike Duncan, and I probably have very opposite political views. But those political views, don't make it into the show. It's all about the historical side of it, which I really appreciate. So check it out. He's also the host of the history of Rome if you listened to that, but revolutions podcast.com And this week, we're back with research the news. Alright, we're bringing Gretchen on Gretchen, welcome. How's it going? It is good. I think, well, it is well, well, I'm trying to be more now that I'm a podcast mogul. I am trying to get better with my grammar. And we are both trying to get better with not saying which word Gretchen. Like, like. So if you hear us say like on the show,

Gretchen Hurd 01:28

feel free. We want to know, we want to know there

Ray Abel 01:31

was too many likes, we apologize for all of those in the preview. And I don't want to say the word anymore. It's the L word. I think that's what we're gonna say from now on. But last week, we actually talked about bad decisions and the repercussions from them. And we started something new on the Facebook page for research news facebook.com/research. The news, we're doing a little clips, one of the things I really appreciated last week was hearing Gretchen's explanation about why when one woman comes forward, then it seems like a bunch tend to come afterwards when there's harassment allegations. And so I always was a little bit confused about that as to the reasoning behind it. And I think you summed it up really well. So thank you for that. Gretchen. Thank you. And check out our Facebook page for a clip on that. You can also check out research the news.com that has a link to all of our former videos, our podcast links, and all kinds of other stuff information about us. And it links to our Wikipedia page, which is research the news.org, which has episode notes, and every article we talked about today is posted there. So you can verify us because we are researching the news. And you should be researching videos. And you can check all of these articles out. We also have research the news button research the dot news, we have all kinds we again, as a podcast mogul with dozens and dozens of listeners we have, you know, all kinds of pages. And sometimes we're actually gonna bring

on a guest this week. Caitlyn is now joining us. Hello, Caitlin. Hi, everyone. So some weeks we're gonna have disagreements. And I actually have mentioned this before, I want to have more hardcore disagreements where we really get into some battles, but still in a loving way. This week it we're probably going to learn something from Caitlin. So to give you a little background, we're talking about prison reform this week. And Caitlin and I actually spent some time in a Mexican prison together. So Caitlin, do you want to tell that story about how we spent time in a Mexican prison? Or would you like me to tell it?

Caitlin Werth 03:26

I don't know. Are you ready to divulge why what we did end up in a Mexican prison.

Ray Abel 03:31

And I will say there's there's a question on dating profiles you threw up there that you were in a Mexican prison, you get a lot of questions. It's a great conversation. Sorry. I think it's probably in hindsight, probably a lot of people swiped left on me from that, but it's a good opening line. We actually were in and Mexico to build a medical center. And there was what about 30 of us on the trip total? Yeah, I'd say so. Yeah. And they asked us for wanting to go to our prison and three of us went, everyone else was kind of afraid to go and I ended up playing some basketball there with the inmates and we had a really good time. I loved it. I thought it was a really cool experience.

Caitlin Werth 04:04

Yeah, it was great. And we were just in an open area with them, too. It wasn't Yeah, we didn't see them in their cells. I think we were just sitting outside and talking and learning Spanish. I think we're trying to prove our Spanish Yeah, well, I

Ray Abel 04:17

was trying to learn Spanish you actually knew some I knew not I took two years of French in high school. And I was still no no French. So yeah, that was it was a very interesting experience. We got to learn more about what Mexican prisons were like. And I'm not sure if that led into your choice of careers. But every week we play what's your bias, we talk about some of the biases we have going into a conversation. And I think that's a good time for you to explain to the listeners why we talk to you about being on the show this week. What your experience in the prison system

Caitlin Werth 04:45

it's Yeah, great. Thank you. So I my background. My undergrad was in sociology and so I did some studying about prisons and always found them interesting, but did not at the time think that that was going to be my career. I did some other social work for a while and then ended up going to seminary, which is a different story in itself. But it was through my time at seminary that I had the opportunity to go visit a jail. And this was after we had gone to the Mexican prison, but this was our local jail. And on the same day, I was interviewing for potential field education experiences, and one of those was in the jail as well. And I will tell you that the moment I stepped into the jail, I thought, This is why I'm in seminary. I, I can't explain it except it just felt the plate like it was the place I was meant to be. So not also something you hear from people a lot. I stepped into a jail. And that's where I wanted to be. I had a job that I want them to no longer need, you know, a job that I loved, but which did not exist. So I served, I

started as an intern with a foundation of hope. And I was a volunteer there for three years. And then I became the director of the pre release program, which is a rehabilitative program within Allegheny County Jail, and just left there this past summer to take on a call as a solo pastor. So my bias is that I am certainly liberal leaning, although I tend to tell people that I'm sort of conservative in my own personal views, and liberal in my social views, my what I want for others in the government. But I will say that working in the jail, instead of pushing me further in one direction, I think it opened up to me a lot more of the concept of nuance, and how, how much more complicated every issue really is. And that was something that was surprising to me. So maybe my problem being on your show, is that my biases, I'm gonna see too many sides.

Ray Abel 06:51

Well, I think I think this is a good episode to learn something. And I think, going into my bias, I tend to be a conservative person when it comes to fiscal things. And when it comes to social things, I tend to be more libertarian, I've we've talked about this before, I just I as long as your brother and other people, I tend to want to be hands off. But I feel like the expectation when someone says they tend to be conservative is we want more people in prison, and it's all the prisoners fault. And so when I look at this specific issue, you know, I take a conservative viewpoint on some things like the Constitution and how that's involved with prisons, and why people are in prisons, I look at finances, how much money we're spending. And so I think if you looked at from the scale of what people typically think are liberal, conservative, a lot of people just kind of ignore the issue in prisons, I think there are some solutions that we should be working towards. And although I do think there are some people that, you know, maybe can't be rehabilitated, and that's sad for me to hear, I think there's some people that just are beyond that, I think there are way too many people in prisons to begin with, and we can talk about why that's happening and the history behind it, but I have some what I think our talking points for conservatives as to why people who are conservative and identify as conservative might want to get behind prison reform to help everyone. So that's my bias gretchin

Gretchen Hurd 08:08

I tend to live in the liberal place a lot across the board. And when I think about prison reform, I don't have a lot of people close to me that have been in prison, I, there's probably gonna be a handful. I think my larger group base of friends and family are more wealthy. I don't have a lot of friends that are in poverty. Those that are i i think I've listened more to their friends so and their experiences so that has kind of informed my way of thinking in terms of mass incarceration, their family members who have gone through the prison system and what it's been like. But personally, I don't have a lot of people in my personal life that have gone through it. And I think especially where I grew up, a lot of us don't and I I'm really looking forward today just learning more about it. Even just looking at stats and things that I wanted to find out which will probably end up answering all my questions before I even have a chance to ask them while we talk. Lots of pressure and Caitlin you have free talking before he even came on. I was like, Oh my gosh, she's totally as your questions right now. Um, but I think my I want my eyes to be further open. And I hope that that's how a lot of people will come into looking about just general in things in general, going forward. But I think this is something that really impacts people's lives on such a huge scale and one little thing can just demolish someone's life. So yeah, so I just I I'm coming from that place so naturally, I'm I want people able to have the best outcome that they could possibly have,

even if like, we were saying they are not being able to be rehabilitated, but looking at even that, like, and what are the ways that we can exhaust that before we we write somebody off,

Ray Abel 10:15

I will say. So we're going to start with some definitions. And I would just like to point out that I have learned everything I know about prison reform by the all time great social justice leader, Kim Kardashian, so everything is coming from. But I did a lot of articles again, at research that news.org It's our Wikipedia page, things that Gretchen had research and things that I had researched, you can go there and some of the stats will be saying we're not just pulling them out of the air, we actually have some reasoning as to where they came from. So check that out. Caitlin, I think a good start is to define jails versus prisons, because I think it's one of the basic things that a lot of people don't understand, and what is the difference between a jail and a prison?

Caitlin Werth 10:56

Yeah, absolutely. So you'll hear different terms, and sometimes they're used interchangeably. But typically, jails are where you are going to go if you are arrested. So if you have an incident with a police officer pulls you over takes you when you're going to go to the jail. Now, some people will not make it, what they call upstairs, you just get a you know, get released, don't actually get processed. But if you do get processed and stay in the facility, that is where you are going to wait until you have your court date or until you clean out or until you're able to post bail. So there are many things that can happen once you're in the jail. But you are not guilty. For the most part, at least yet. I would say it's typically about 10 to 20% of people in jails that have been found guilty and are serving a sentence, which would be considered a county sense. So all jails are run by county. So the other main thing to know there is that they are all run differently. Every county has its own way of running its facility. And there's not really any consistency across the board on that. So if you Yeah, if you're serving a county sentence, it's going to be less than two years. So people that are there typically are not there for more than two years, people that are waiting to be sentenced. Many do plea out, that's what it's called when you say you're guilty and take some kind of plea deal. They are typically still there for about three months, it usually takes about three months to see a judge, just to get to the plea, if you decide that you want to actually go to trial, it's going to take at least six months to be able to see a judge for trial. And it's gonna take at least a year to see jury to have a trial by jury. And I say at least but it's usually a lot longer than that we had a guy who was in for three years before his trial even occurred, which is not how it is supposed to happen. But it does, it does happen. So that's jails. And then the prisons are either state or federal, and sometimes are called state correctional institutions are federal institutions. Those are run more consistently, for the most part, Pennsylvania oversees all the state facilities, federal oversees that, and that would be anywhere over two years. Where you go, though, is not necessarily based on where you're from. So somebody from Pittsburgh is not going to go to a prison that is close. They go based on numbers, type of offense, classification, all kinds of different things. And then we also have the federal immigration facilities, which are a whole different story.

Ray Abel 13:36

Well, there's a lot to unpack just from that, including I just, I think something in the first step back tried to address the distance that was involved. But I was thinking that too, I think there's there's there's so much to unpack, but I want to start out by talking about something that's important to me. My depth, my

definition is risk recidivism, and basically that is a person's relapse back into criminal behavior. And that most often references going back to jail for a new crime after your release. So you get out of jail, and then you go right back to prison. And that's something when you look at those rates, there are some countries who do it better than others, there are some cities and states and other all kinds of different rates of recidivism. And I think that's an important number to drop down. And I will say something going back to something that Gretchen brought up, I know, you had said, you know, from a liberal perspective, like I want people to have the best outcomes. And I think that's something that just is, as someone who does tend to come from a conservative background, even times where people have messed up in the prison system. I think there are some people who did it on purpose. And we'll talk about sure some of those issues where people were using the prison system for their personal benefit. But I think there's an interesting story to look at. Ben Franklin is one of my all time favorite people and history and he's a weird dude in some ways, and he's a really brilliant guy and others. But when you look at the first penitentiary in the US, it was Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia. And it was the first time they had basically people confined individually, and it was basically solitary confinement every day and you can actually still tour the prison and they have even Halloween horrors there. But it's a really cool place to check out. But they call it a penitentiary because the Quaker view was do your penance and learn and grow. Now, putting someone in solitary confinement for basically 23 hours a day, I think it was, you know, in hindsight with it with history behind us, we go, okay, that's, that's not really a great way to make people change their ways. But the intent was actually good. Not all intent is good when it comes to the prison system. Not all of the intent is good, and a lot of things but, but I think that's something to look through the lens of, not everything that's bad in this system was done purposely wrong, but we have to look at okay, is it time to change it? That's something I'm big on. And I think, again, from a conservative perspective, we should be saying, Okay, if it doesn't work, let's just not keep doing it. Let's reassess and see if it's beneficial. And if not, let's change it and make it better so. And the goal is to get people who leave prison to be able to be beneficial members of society and have the opportunity to change or at in the first place, not actually going to prison to begin with. So now that we have that down, Caitlin, correction, oh, yes, go ahead. Hit me a quick

Caitlin Werth 16:11

correction. So are maybe more clarification. But when you talk about recidivism, I think it's important for people to know that that does not necessarily mean that someone has gone back to criminal behavior. Recidivism can be measured by Re incarceration, which means they were going back to jail, it could be reoffending, which means they did commit another offense. But more often than not, it is parole violations. Yeah, there's something in Allegheny County Jail, almost half of the people that were there, at least pre COVID, when COVID came, they released a lot of people with more minor things. So that may have changed the numbers, but at least pre COVID, about half of the people were there for parole violations. And that could be not reporting, just you know, and sometimes that's purposeful, but again, talking about intense, sometimes it's you can't get a bus where you need to go or you can't get away from your job. Maybe people didn't send in their new address. So a lot of times, it is not necessarily that someone has gone back to crime, it is that they're back in a system. Gotcha. All right.

Ray Abel 17:11

Well, good clarification. I, when we talked before the show, we went over some topics we thought be interesting and something you brought up, we talked about corporate prison system. And I actually

want to talk more about that. Because I think it's something a lot of people just see prison, as you know, here's a government institution that when you're bad, you go to it and you pay your crime, and then you leave. That's not actually the case. They're not always run by the government. Do you know that? And I'm, I don't want to challenge not challenge but throw stats on you. But do you know, like an estimate of how many prisons are actually run by states versus private institutions?

Caitlin Werth 17:47

So I did look that up, and I am just trying to find the number. So I know that that's changing because of Biden's recent executive order. He wants to phase out all federal contracts, it's going to take some time. But it's said that about 77% Oh, no. That's the increase. Hold on.

Ray Abel 18:10

Do you want to play some music in the background?

Caitlin Werth 18:15

Yes, I should have put this this tells people not numbers of facilities. So basically, yeah, it's saying that it was about. And since 2000, they increased the use of private prison contracts by 77%. So that tells how much I don't have the numbers of how many there are, but quite a few. And I do you think it's also important to note that even prisons and jails that are not privately funded, still use private dollars. It is a big, big, industrial complex.

Ray Abel 18:48

So talk a little bit about that, because one of the things you brought up was the Starbucks aprons. And I feel like there's little anecdotes from someone who's been in the clink as Michael Scott would call it. But I feel like that's something that I wouldn't have known about Starbucks. And again, it goes back to intent. It looks good on the in the corporate paperwork, we're helping prisons by paying prisoners to make aprons. But tell me a little bit about what happens with the Starbucks aprons in a prison system.

Caitlin Werth 19:13

Yes, and I want to confirm that this Starbucks apron is an example I had that I saw in their stores years ago. So I cannot confirm that they still use it but I do know many other groups I can tell you that definitely do something along these lines. Basically, what it is, is that a company if they purchase a lot of equipment, so for Starbucks, their aprons that their barista is where they can set up a contract with one of these private prisons where they are purchasing their aprons at very low cost that are made by inmates and they sell it as a positive within their company. So when I saw it, it was on a pretty little brochure. This is how we help fight recidivism. We offer a our aprons are made from prisoners who are going through a program to learn job training. What is not shared is that is that those inmates are making sometimes as low as just a few cents an hour. Sometimes it's just I mean, at best, it's usually a couple dollars an hour if that. For some places, it's you work to get better food. in Allegheny County Jail, our workers get a different housing unit and they get extra food trays. So that's about it, you're not getting money. And then the other problem with that is that these private prisons are run like businesses. And so in order to meet their demands, they need to have workers. And so there is no incentive for them to be rehabilitating people, they want more people and they will sell that, you know, in their languages online, they'll say, you know, we're hoping to increase beds by 20,020 22 and use

that language. But those beds mean people, we are hoping to put more people into our facilities so that we can increase our profits. Essentially, what's really shocking is how many companies do this. And I when I first learned that, the big names that you hear are CCA and Geo, so you can look up the GEO Group or CCA, which is I think it's a oh gosh, something of America, I can't remember now, but see CCA and GEO, and you would be shocked by how many people use McDonald's Chevron, excellent. Banks that you've heard of Blue Cross and Blue Shield has used things for them pretty much any major company that you can think of, you would probably find Fruit of the Loom, at&t, Mary Kay. All kinds

Ray Abel 21:55

feel like they're part of the whole pyramid scheme thing. So it seems like it would be the perfect fit for being involved.

Gretchen Hurd 22:01

Somebody we don't have to pay

Ray Abel 22:04

things that it's interesting to me. So if I, if you look at this, I love I love the Constitution and the history of it. And there's a great podcast that's also linked to the website called constitutional from the Washington Post. And there was an episode there about the 13th amendment. And I'm just gonna read this real quick here, the 13th Amendment said neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except but just to be clear, this is the one that freed the slaves, except as a punishment for crime where of the party shall have been duly convicted shall exist within the United States or any place subject to their jurisdiction. And so basically, that's saying no slaves unless you've been incarcerated and convicted. Now, I think that initially, there was a lot worse things happening than just Starbucks, that is not minimizing Starbucks at all. But when you look at things like the Parchman farm, it's also linked on our webpage. It's actually they tell the story in this constitutional podcast. Parchman farm was basically a plantation that once the 13th Amendment was ratified, started using convict lease systems, so they would lease convicts bring them to a plantation, make them pick cotton, give them whatever food that they would have had, if they were slaves, and kept people there. Now, it did expand beyond just black Americans that eventually when they started running low, they started adding white Americans as well. But they're often people who, you know, were accused of minor crimes and thrown in here because the government was not losing money, by having convicts, but they were gaining money by sending them to plantation. So it was really an it was a way to get around it. And when I see things like Starbucks, I mean, I actually would be all for a system like Starbucks and then making money and helping prisoners, if they were doing it in a way that led to something that was worthwhile after after presenting something that actually changed lives. And is there anything that you know, of that you've seen, that's a program in our prisons in the US, that has been something that's helped that whether it's with a corporate partner, or otherwise, just something that's helped learn life skills, or job skills or something that can get people out of that cycle? Yeah, it's

Caitlin Werth 24:04

tough because I agree with you. I think that the reason it works, and so many companies are sold by it, not just for saving money, but those that really, I think, have good intentions. As you mentioned earlier,

we want to be able to help and make a difference. And it sounds like you are, but even inmates who have learned the skill of sewing while in jail are really hesitant to put that on applications. You know, a job in a jail doesn't translate quite the same way out. Sometimes that's us as a society that needs to change. We need to be willing to actually see that as a skill. But there are places that do it better. In Allegheny County Jail, they're part of their reentry program works with what they call the machine shop, and they work with a organization that teaches machining. And so that is something where they can actually get certified and actually get well paying jobs. So you know, we knew some people that went through the facility when they got out they were making more than they had ever made, you know, and Those are the kind of things I think work. Often though, that is nonprofit organizations that are doing that I'm sure it could happen with private, you know, funded organizations, but I have not seen that. Although I am just here at Allegheny County, what is surprising to me and was surprising to me when I first got in is how little rehabilitation there is, I had the wrong assumption, you go into prison, and people are hopefully doing things to try to make them change, you know, learn some good skills, learn whatever. And in Allegheny County jail when I started, really the only program was the foundation of hope, which had one designated pod out of 32. A pod is a housing unit. So out of 32, there was one that was meant to be helping rebuild, rehabilitate people, and another that was for drug and alcohol, we now have four because there's a veterans pod. And there's also the reentry program, but four out of 32 is still a pretty bad number. And you most people are in there, playing cards watching TV, not a lot else.

Ray Abel 26:05

Yeah. And I think that's something I mean, we look at a place. One thing that I have a problem with, when we look at politics in general is often we compare ourselves to places like, you know, Denmark for healthcare, and it's like, okay, well, when you're comparing healthcare, you're comparing 330 million people who are widely varying the demographics of the country with like, 2 million people. So when I make this assessment, just know that when it's, it's a country that's a lot smaller than us, and they don't have as much of an highest incarceration rate. But Norway has the Norwegian model, and I watched a documentary about how they really spend time to rehabilitate it, what do you think? I mean, it's tough, because as someone I think, when you look at our prison system, when I again, talking about fiscal conservatism we spend anywhere estimates are 80 to \$182 billion dollars a year, on prisons throughout the US. So my mindset goes to, I think we can probably spend that more wisely, and hopefully cut down the incarceration or the recidivism rate, which on a side note, is one of the hardest words I've ever tried to pronounce. I feel like every time I say, I'm about to

Gretchen Hurd 27:03

mess it up, but I read it, my brain does cartels, it's

Ray Abel 27:06

really it's difficult. I'm so glad I've got through it so far. But about half of that money goes to staff. So it's really a giant lobby as well with this prison system. So it's not just the corporations making money, but half of that money is estimated to go to staff. And on top of that, I mean, that doesn't include things like I think we spend \$50 billion a year on the war on drugs. And if you're a longtime listener, you know, my love for Tupac. And what he says in his song is, you got a war on poverty, instead of a war on poverty of a war on drugs. So the police can bother me. And I feel like we've been spending \$50 billion a year for 3040 years now on the war on drugs. And again, it's one of the things that in initially, it had good

intent, let's get drugs off the street. But clearly, it's become now this whole giant, like most government things becomes a giant ball of money that just keeps getting thrown into problem and not really solving it. So all of that being said, I think from a conservative standpoint, here, I think, if you talk often about not like in public welfare and health care, I don't think lock them up should be a rallying cry. And I think we should be kind of switching back to how do we help people avoid prison? And how do we help people once they're in prison? So what I'm asking you, Caitlin, with that intro is, what can we do as a side? It's all on you. I told you, there's high pressure areas, such expectations for you. If there was something and we'll talk, we'll talk at the end of every episode about something we can do moving forward. But do you have any? What have you seen that's worked? Well, even from those nonprofit organizations where you've seen some kind of benefit? What would be something if you were president of the prison systems, all of them and you could do whatever you want? It will be your what would be your first move to try to change?

Caitlin Werth 28:40

How much of it you don't know how much of a dream that is? Ray, my co workers, and I would frequently say, Well, if we ran the place. No, no disrespect to those who run, run our county jail. I will say that in Allegheny County, they have made huge strides, even in the time that I was there. And some things that I think have worked is the dedicated court systems. So they set up mental health court, a veterans court, what they call pride court, which deals primarily with sex workers, they have dual diagnosis, which is people with mental health and addiction issues. And those really do make a difference. Because what happens is when people go before courts that are set up to their needs, so a veteran is going to go before a judge that understands what the veteran's needs are and instead of saying you're going to be sentenced for two years, and they'll say, Okay, we're going to have you go through this counseling at the VA, we're going to make sure that you do have to report but that we're going to have someone with you who can help you find the employment that you need, so forth. So specialized courts, I think are a big deal. I also think that we need to do really one of those issues that you have to hit at all sides. So I will take my bias here and plug my old foundation because I do think that they are Not only think it is true, they are pretty much the agency in Pittsburgh to deal with rehab, rehabilitation and just any kind of jail prison ministry. So foundation of hope, a lot of great work. But I think why they are so impactful is because they are working in the jails. And they are working after people leave. And they're also working with a new program called diversion, which has been around just for a couple years. But it's really exciting. And what that is doing is looking for alternatives to incarceration in the first place. Because we fall Oh, my gosh, yeah. When you mentioned, Ray is so true that the war on drugs really just completely changed our prison system hugely. And even if you look at it cost, if you want to take it from the conservative point of view, if I found a statistic that if only 10% of drug addicted offenders got drug rehab, instead of jail time, the criminal justice system would save \$4.8 billion. If 40% of addicted offenders, it rises to 12.9. And two thirds of people that are incarcerated are there for some sort of addiction issue, whether they're selling narcotics, or it's their addiction that led them to whatever crime it was, whether it's assault or robbery or prostitution, it really is behind a lot of the behaviors that you would see in the criminal justice field. So that is a huge thing. I think that we really have to target. What are we trying to do? We are retraced trying to lock people away. Because that doesn't last forever, either people getting released and there are neighbors, there are people that we go to work with that we see in schools. And so do we actually want people to have an opportunity to grow and change and address the things that have gone on for them. And then it's

how we perceive people in society when they have been incarcerated in their past. That is another huge thing. There's so much shame. And there are so many barriers for people that are coming out of incarceration. We that thankfully, Pennsylvania passed a ban the box that a while ago, which was you had to check a box on your application, you know, have you ever been not just incarcerated, but have you ever committed a felony. And some people would just see that and not even interview. But often, when you go to the interview stage with someone, they can tell you their story of how they have changed and why they were there and what they've learned and how long ago it was, and all of those different things. People lose their driver's license when they've been in there that prohibits people from going to work. So there are all these barriers that we need to be able to address as well. I'll save my one for the end. But that's gonna be a start for you. Some of the things to change.

Ray Abel 32:37

I think this is something I want to I want to talk to you about a little bit deeper, because I have some conflicted feelings about what you said, I think in general, I agree. But when it talks about even the ban the box, I think that really helps people who are in jail. But knowing from personal experience, good friends of mine, who were in jail, and were addicted, and things that happened to both myself and friends of mine, seeing firsthand what happens when they relapse. I had family members that have gone through this. And so it's tough, because I think there are a lot of people who wouldn't get an opportunity, because they were in jail, and they deserve it. And and at the same time as an employer, I have a small business and every employee, it costs a lot of money to hire and get them up to speed. And it's something that it's a tough line. So how do you balance? I agree that that helps the felons, and it's good. But also, how do you balance the needs of people to know who they're hiring? Because is, is there a system where maybe it's certain degrees of crimes that you have to announce because felonies could be all? I don't know. I don't know how you handle this. But that's something where I go, Okay, I hear the motivation behind it is good. But then on the opposite side, what happens those employers, if if the relapse happens, and you don't want to assume the worst, but from personal experience, it's the worst has happened several times with people in my life.

Caitlin Werth 34:03

Yeah, I completely understand that too. Because being in the system, and knowing and loving a great number of people who are in the system, I saw wonderful success. And I also saw some heartbreaking things where people did not end up succeeding the way that we hoped or, you know, even hurt themselves or others. And that is a tough challenge. Because there's so much going on in someone's live life when they're leaving, you know, for a lot of people that are in jail. They have mental health issues that they really need to address, that they don't have relationships that we have to rely on to build social skills, that kind of thing. But my question for you, it doesn't answer your question, really. But it's a push back to your

Ray Abel 34:41

politician we have we're answering. The question is how do you

Caitlin Werth 34:45

know with anyone what you're answering who you are hiring, I mean, we're judging based on an interview and a piece of paper and some people have had years of education to be able to sell

themselves as a good employee, but that person could rob your company of all kinds. Some money, you know, as I mean, it's really hard to say. And so I think that delves into a bigger issue of how do we better understand each other? How do we do test to see what we really need? Maybe we need to change our interview system in some ways, also, because there are things that we don't have to divulge, you know, you might not ask, you couldn't ask in an interview. Are you one? Are you on psychiatric medication? You know, and I'm not saying that's a bad thing. I can even tell you I, you know, I think that that can be a good thing. But it also could be a sign of something that might come up in the workplace that could be difficult to handle.

Ray Abel 35:37

True. And I will address that directly. Instead of asking you a question back, I'm trying very hard to answer directly. I think that's one of the things where I think there's some bias there. Because again, I have had family members and I've had good friends. When I say good friends, I'm not talking about tertiary friends that are in my circle. specific instances with very good friends that really hurt because people in general, I don't like when people lie. To me, that's a big thing for me personally, and seeing someone that you put a lot of hope and faith into that. Forget about a work situation, even a personal situation. That's where it gets a little tricky for me where it's it's tough. And I think that's something where I think one of the things in the show you want to do is recognizing legitimacy of the other side. And I think that is something where there's there's gotta be, there's got to be some discussion that I think most people can get behind. Yeah, we want less people in prisons, depending on it, people may disagree and how you get to less people in prisons, but the end result of having less people in prisons would be good for everyone. And I think one of the things you brought up, though, in your question to my question, the whole mentorship part of it, I think that's a big thing, where I mean, there are programs out there, one of the people I had interactions with was going through na and a after they got out, I didn't know initially that they were actually in jail when I became friends with them. But as I got to know them better, they told me more about their past, and then things just kind of went downhill. But there were those support systems there. But, you know, something happens, there's a trigger, and it just goes off a cliff. And I think that's something where there's a bigger discussion there about what what, what that actually means. And I think that's one of the things I get frustrated about in politics is when people are they're saying, you know, you got to have it on there. And we're not going to hire those felons, and they're never going to change. And that's one mindset. The other mindset is, I want I want the best for everyone. And I want to think the best of everyone. But not everyone is going to make those wise choices. And that just goes back I worked in the inner city for a while with kids who came from pretty difficult backgrounds. And I had so much I've talked about this before, but so much patience for the kids who messed up, but we're trying to get better. And I had like no patience for the kids who were just trying to pull one over on me. And unfortunately, especially when it comes to addiction, it's really hard to distinguish who's pulling one over to some people who are pulling one over on you. shores will experience do a really good job of pulling them. So

Caitlin Werth 37:49

good. No, I'm breaking the rules of research the news, I interrupted you I apologize.

Ray Abel 37:55

No interruption about correction. So I actually stopped. Sometimes that's one of my text, not only I think I've stopped saying like now but anytime there's silence instead of saying like, I'm just gonna start something new. So it's good. You interrupted me. On another side tangent. So Gretchen, do you have any Now you heard?

Gretchen Hurd 38:12

Whenever you guys were discussing that, and I, like I understand both sides of this, I understand the thought of the, you know, independent, you know, business worker or business owner that's trying to hire their employees and wanting to make sure that they have the right employees. One of the things that I had read about was expungement of their, you know, crimes after a certain period of time. So seven years or 10 years down the road, unfortunately, that doesn't help them right when they get out. And that's the really crappy part, but it could help them in the future. So if they're, if they're doing a really good job, and I think a lot of there's a lot of social groups on online that are when I was doing all my research, they're calling for these Congress and state governments to expand expungements and, and even looking at ceilings for a ceiling records, so that people aren't constantly being hurt by a bad decision that they made, especially if they're going through a good behavior, right. So they're, they've come out and they're being a productive member of society, that they're not being held responsible for something they did a long, long time ago, whenever it doesn't. Well, I

Ray Abel 39:28

think that's I'm gonna just real quick I just I that's something I can definitely get behind. I think that oftentimes, we talked about this with canceled culture episode, do you get in trouble for something you said 30 years ago? I think this was the principle is the same here if you've done your time, and that goes, I mean, we already have that for you know, credit reports. I think it's what seven or eight years then you get that expunged from your record if you did something in the past and I mean, clearly, if it's murder, I feel like that should be on there for a time or something with children. But in general, if it's a minor crime, I could definitely see an expungement That's actually I think that's a really good, very good point. And Caitlin, what do you how do you have any thoughts on that? Specifically?

Caitlin Werth 40:05

I have so many thoughts. I'm all over the place. I can talk about this stuff for days and weeks.

Ray Abel 40:11

Everyone watching a seven hour episode,

Caitlin Werth 40:15

just, you know, call me later, Flash myself? Not really. But I mean, I will. This is where I can admit my bias as well. I mean, I come from the place being a pastor also, you know, what you both said is completely true. Nobody wants to be judged for your worst moment, right? If we all had to write are the worst thing you've ever done on a job application. Imagine those interviews, so never get a job. Ray would have never hired me

Ray Abel 40:45

in my early 20s, so I was sure, that probably could get cancelled right now. So

Caitlin Werth 40:51

but, uh, you know, I think it goes even beyond that, because, you know, you've said as a caveat, Ray, you know, like, well, what if they've committed murder, then it's different, or some of the worst cases, you know, when we, when I worked in the jail, I was working with people that were sex offenders that had committed murder. I mean, we worked with people, no matter what their crime was. And the reason for that, and where I come from, is, we are all human beings. And we all have within us the capability to have done any of these same things. And if any of us think that we are above that, we're just wrong. You know, we have had different experiences and different lives, and we have not been put into that situation. Someone once said something that I love. They said, Well, if I were you, I would have done you know, how we tend to say, if I were you, I would have done it this way. Right? You know, what, if you were me, you would have done exactly what I did? Because you'd be me. Yeah. Perfect. I love thinking that because, you know, we really cannot say for other people. And so, from the pastoral perspective, you know, I think we're all we're all broken, and we all deserve to have another chance, you know, I deeply believe in second chances. Third chances, 25th chances, you know, lord knows I've been given them. So I think what is also important to remember, as I said before, is no matter who the person is, really, even sometimes for things like sex offenses, and murders, they're coming back out, we want people to come back out as healthier, more whole people. And so a big part of the work too, is not seeing it when somebody is incarcerated as you have to, you have to suffer this time. It is how can we convince you during this time that your life matters? Yeah, we can help you have that desire to love and be loved and do something, you know, positive in this world and heal from the past that you've had as well?

Gretchen Hurd 42:38

Yeah. Oh, sorry. No, God, Gretchen, I was just I was saying, I'm gonna say cuz I thought whenever you were talking about mental health, for inmates, a former student of mine, she was a dancer and theater student. When I taught her in college, she ended up going to grad school for drama therapy, and movement therapy. And so she works with incarcerated individuals. She also works in Chicago, in the cancer ward for the children's ward. So but she told me amazing stories about being in the jail and working with individuals. And I was just wondering if you could talk about anything that you've seen kind of that would that was working in the jails that you were in, or even programs that you could see being beneficial while they're incarcerated?

Caitlin Werth 43:25

Absolutely. And I will tell you that in terms of inmates and wanting programs, I mean, almost across the board, people want it again, I would say it's probably like maybe 10% of people who are incarcerated are just there, they're still fully in that criminal life, they really don't want to have something different. But other people they're in there they want. I heard all the time, I'd interview people to come to our program. And stories from I just want to be a better parent, you know, I want to learn something new, I need to get some more education, whatever it is. And so whenever we brought any program in, people just ate it up. I mean, so we didn't have dance. But we did have yoga, which was really powerful. Yeah, we also had a lot of meditation. And there's a lot of studies about how powerful meditation can be for people incarcerated. We did have art therapy with all kinds of different forms. So I think it depends on the person and what they're drawn to, in terms of what works, quote, unquote, works. And I think that's

what makes the system so difficult, because, like, all of us humans, we all have different specific needs. And so there's not always that this is the exact formula, the work is hard, because it is complicated work, you know, we really need to be looking again, in that holistic kind of view, which which I think that programs like the diversion program do they're saying somebody has been would normally be arrested for this crime, but what's behind that? What is the reason that led them to this now let's target some of those behaviors or put in some supports that can actually affect this individual. It's not just a cookie cutter. Okay.

Gretchen Hurd 44:54

Yeah. Are those similar things that a lot of local jurisdictions are trying to get what are they called bench cards where for judges so that they can ask specific questions when sentencing so that they're able to adequately look at the person that's sitting in front of them and not just have like mandatory, you know, like mandatory minimum, this is what you do for this crime. Have You Ever Have you heard anything about those are?

Caitlin Werth 45:24

So I actually haven't so you stumped me there. I believe you that it exists. But I heard about bench cards.

Gretchen Hurd 45:29

Yeah. It's an interesting concept to me, because I thought, yeah, it's like how, how, how are judges supposed to like, look at this person, and not treat them all the same, especially when you're looking at smaller areas, I grew, I lived in Morgantown, West Virginia. And it's very, very small. So I mean, it's even a big city for for West Virginia. But it was very small, I think there was probably only a handful of judges for the areas. So when they're dealing with people coming in front of them, and they are cookie cutter, offenses, but you're looking at the person rather. And when you were talking about that, I was like, This is amazing. And I thought and then I remembered the bench cards. And I didn't know if it was a thing that you

Caitlin Werth 46:10

were aware, I may just not have had heard the term.

Gretchen Hurd 46:13

That's another one was called him, I'm almost positive. Well, I might be

Caitlin Werth 46:17

completely could be. But that's another thing that can be a little bit challenging. Because, yes, we want to be able to have people tailored to their specific situation. However, when you give it completely just subjectivity of judges, what can also happen is some judges are extremely lenient, some are extremely nonlinear. They actually did studies where they looked at sentencing before judges went to lunch. And after judges had eaten much, much harsher sentences when they were approaching their lunchtime. That makes total lenient right after lunch. So yeah, it is a careful.

Gretchen Hurd 46:55

Think about something like that. Because you think you get you get hangry. And then you start taking it out on people my

Ray Abel 47:04

Well, I think that leads into something else that we had talked about before, and I did a little research on and I think I'm going to go back to the Constitution. There's, there's a sixth amendment. And in the Sixth Amendment, it talks about our right to trials. And it starts out with in all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial. And I gotta say, I gotta couches with this week, I think because we were coming up in this episode, I had a dream that I was in prison. He was horrifying, I don't have bad dreams. And I woke up like I was in a prison cell. I didn't have any contact. I think it was I don't know how long I was actually there in my dream, but it was terrible. And I woke up in actually affected by it. And when I think about what you're saying, with people being in jail for three years awaiting trial, I looked up some numbers about the average time people are in jail. And one of the things that's tricky for me is it says specifically, we need a speedy trial. But it doesn't say how long that is. And now I couldn't find your numbers. We talked about this, but Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2000, those numbers were about six months for the date of arrest to fill a felony conviction in jury cases, or nine months as an average time. So that can go a lot longer. And when I think about myself, I mean growing up, I didn't grow up with a lot of money. And even though I would be able to afford a lawyer now or afford bail and hopefully be able to get out depending on No, of course what crime I did. It's still something where even think about the money that I made. And I think as when you grew up poor, you kind of grew up with the mentality of someone who grew up in the Great Depression where you have money or like I'm afraid to spend it like that's me. I you know, I still shop at Aldi, which you could tell by our sponsorship last week, I love I love you. Agree, yeah, 100%. For my company, I have to pay lawyers, and I hate paying them because we're paying them \$300 an hour to do basic stuff that I we could probably all do ourselves. And so the thought of trying to find a good attorney is tough. And also we say that we're going to provide an attorney, but usually those aren't great attorneys. And if you look at the amount of money that's been spent on attorneys for public defenders, that's been going down over the years. So to me, that's something again, as someone who is a conservative person, and who does really enjoy the fact that we have this constitution, which gives us all these rights, it's something we should be fighting for is the fact that these trials should be speeding. And hopefully, again, I think it's it there's a balance here, if we start maybe weaning off of the war on drugs and starting to tame that monster, we can put more of that money into things like public defenders, which then keeps people out of jail, which then we have to spend money in all those expenses, and it wouldn't go in the record. So I think there's a lot of things here that can kind of come together. But you had shocked me with that. What was it three years someone waited from the time is that typically because they just can't afford bail. Is that why they're in jail? That was

Caitlin Werth 49:56

a special situation. They waited for a jury trial when lasts, you know, usually be around a year, I think there was a little longer than they ended up having a mistrial. So that's why those ended up being so long. So it was

Ray Abel 50:10

trial, they stay in jail.

Gretchen Hurd 50:12

I feel like yeah, that's where it's like totally shocking to me that there's not some kind of program.

Ray Abel 50:19

That would feel like that's something we should all know. But it's shocking to me, I find that is shocking. And then the

Caitlin Werth 50:24

other thing, the other thing you should know, and I want to share two stories about this, but the other thing you should know is when if you go to jail, and you're found not guilty, you are still going to face a lot of the same challenges. We had a guy who waited for a judge trial. So he was in for eight months, and found not guilty. It was actually a self defense situation. He's a big guy. And he had somebody come up to mug him at night. And he happened to have a knife on him. And so when this guy was trying to rob him and hurt him, he ended up stabbing this guy, not killing him, but by hurting the other guy. So he ended up being found not guilty, it was self defense, but he lost his job during that time we lost his house, you know, the county doesn't say we're so sorry that we've took this time from you. Here's some money. No, you know, people especially why so many people plea and take the plea after three months is because they have a family to support on the outside, you know, not only do they have are they missing out on their own income, but they have people who are depending on them, and they have to pay for something. That's another Yeah, surprising thing that I didn't know you get soap when you're in the county jail, but you don't get toothpaste, you don't get shampoo, you don't get conditioner, you don't get lotion, you do get feminine products, you do get razors that you have to share and check out. But anything you want no envelopes, envelopes that you send home, that all adds up. So a lot of people leave jail owing money with more and it stays on your system. So if you come back in, you owe that money. And they'll take that off your books if people put money in there. So there's a lot of reasons. And it can really mess people up. I have a I know we're low on time. So I'll just say have a very, very quick story of a guy that was in for a year was found not guilty. And the reason he was found guilty was it was a string of robberies, and the guy committed another one while he was incarcerated. So they they knew it wasn't him. Yeah, he ended up suing the county, and he lost and it ended up triggering back some of his addiction issues. And he got in a terrible car accident and actually suffered some brain damage. And he's a completely different person now, you know, and so those are the kinds of things that can happen that I don't think we think through No, but of that line, right? I mean, cash bail is the issue here. It's that people have to stay in jail. You know, for me, if I got arrested, I could wait at home. You know, I don't usually you don't post your whole bond, but you can post a percentage or you can have a bail bondsman, whatever. And hopefully found not guilty, and it didn't change my life, you know, but for people who have to be in there three months that can change your life, right?

Ray Abel 52:52

I mean, three months without a paycheck for a lot of people would just that alone would change your life. kind of understand that me as a COVID. It's like, could you imagine that that's there, there was so the first step act happened was finally some kind of prison reform bill that passed. I correct me if I'm wrong, I thought there was some things in there about feminine products. I thought there was some things in there about the distance from where you were incarcerated from where you were, where you

live, what are your thoughts on the first step act? And was it? I mean, I know it's the first step. But was it something that made a positive impact? Or was it more politician speak where it was, it sounded good, but wasn't very impactful.

Caitlin Werth 53:32

So unfortunately, that is one Ray, I did not look up before this. So it's because I'm, I'm caught up in different acts and different things. I can't say as much. But if that I mean, if small changes do make a difference. I mean, I will say that even if they are small changes, it may make a huge difference for people who are incarcerated, you know, to not have feminine products. I mean, that's something maybe only women can understand. But that's a huge Yeah,

Ray Abel 53:54

I was actually shocked by that. I did not know that. That was a thing. And I think one of the things that they talked about in the first step Act were something that was surprising to me was that they stopped shackling women who are pregnant to the table in their birth. And I mean, as a man, I'm so glad that I never have to experience that pain of childbirth, and I'm sure it's a very vulnerable moment and to be shackled by I was doing it that just, I don't and I expected women run during that time. I don't know what the motivation was. Well,

Caitlin Werth 54:21

basically, if you are if you have any medical issue while you're in jail, if it's very minor, it can be treated at clinic, but typically, they're gonna transfer you to a hospital and the entire time you're in the hospital, you will be shackled to a bed and you will have guards by your door. So that is that is typical, unfortunately, yeah, but I would say that the big thing is really to advocate for ending cash bail, and we actually in Allegheny County, so our county jail is run by what's called a jail oversight board. And this is a tip for anybody listening if you're interested in this. Anyone is allowed to attend jail oversight board meetings, any person in the world can go and attend and so you can learn about things you can To help advocate for things, that is the best place to bring concerns, if you shout outside of the jail that honestly doesn't help anybody, and sometimes it hurts the prisoners because they will get locked down during a protest. And so there'll be you know, but if you go to jail oversight board meetings, you can make a difference. And our current board present the head of the board, Kim Clark, Judge Kim Clark, she actually ordered magistrate judges to stop using cash bail in December, some have stopped but not all. And so the hope is that we can get something to really make that happen. It's an important thing, I think to advocate for.

Gretchen Hurd 55:35

Actually, one of my questions was going to be to ask like, how can how can we create change? How can we get involved? I think the cash bail and going to the bail oversight meetings is

Caitlin Werth 55:49

jail, the jail oversight board jail oversight board? Yeah. If you look up Allegheny County Jail oversight board, you'll see the information on

Ray Abel 55:55

it but jail oversight board the job? That's, that's a great actor. Yeah. So well, okay, Lewis has been really unsure. I feel like we could go on for that. Point, but

Caitlin Werth 56:07

I will say that I've turned into a dark space. For anyone listening and not seeing it's completely dark behind me, it looks like she's in her closet,

Ray Abel 56:16

it's great. Towards the end here, it's getting progressively more creepy, where you just kind of have to hold back on shipping. I

Caitlin Werth 56:23

honestly didn't know that my light was not on and I came across sunny it was and then as the podcast went on.

Ray Abel 56:32

And now you're starting to fall asleep. So we have to end the podcast. So I will say though, so I think again, just covering my talking points. I think that that's something where it is a passion. I wish I wish more people were talking about this. And I think I wish it was less politicized. Because I do think there are a lot of issues where people on the left and right can come together. And I think at the core of it, I was talking to someone today we're having an episode next week about Asian hate. And I was talking to someone who is Asian, and we were talking about the different pipes. So you get to some places. And it's like using a waterpark where you have all these different tubes that go down, but you end up in the same water pit. So we may have different ways of getting there. But I think there's really some room to come together. And I think anytime you can get Donald Trump Little Wayne and Kim Kardashian in a room and have them agree on something and pass a bill that you know that that was a bill that the Democrats tried to get through. I think that's something there's a hunger for an all sides, from a lot of people and I hope that we can look past the whole mentality that the left or the right are both evil and you know, anyone in jail was never going to be redeemed and flipside of that anyone who wants to keep jail systems are terrible, and we should abolish them all. I think all those things are the extremist views. But at the core, there's a lot of things we can come together on and what I learned this week, I think in general, we need more life skills. And I I agree, I think that's important in the school system as someone who grew up with mentors that helped keep me out of jail and get me out of poverty. I think that's so important. So I think I would I leaving here and I want to explore more options for the life skills programs, and the expungement thing we talked about I think that's also important because you got to give people a chance and I'm all for having an expungement and we may disagree on I mean murder is still one I if I'm hiring someone who's a murder no matter what the case is I still I would like to hear about it and maybe you disagree Caitlin but at the core, at least the base level the minor crimes we can agree that there should be an expungement all that being said I will say that the thing I appreciate most about the conversation here is when you said your life matters to these people that were in prison and we got to tell people your life matters I think that's so important because whether you whether they committed a terrible crime or not the hope is I think I do personally think there's some people that can't be rehabilitated for whatever reason, but every person should be treated like they can be rehabilitated and their life shouldn't matter. And I love Mr. Rogers and I feel like that was a very Mr. Rogers quote

and I'm glad you're in the pastoral mindset Mr. Rogers pastoral care so I that is what I learned. And Gretchen was there to

Gretchen Hurd 59:04

you you took all the words out of my mouth I feel like I've learned so much I could probably talk for a whole other hour I think my because I didn't have a lot of people in my life that have been through it I just My eyes are open a little bit more to what people really experienced when when when they're there and then when they get out I mean at my imagination just from watching cop dramas like I love Law and Order cannot watch SVU can't do it um, but but I mean I think my you know is the Hollywood version of but it doesn't seem like it's that far off. I feel like he probably did it justice but yeah, I keep going back to everybody does really matter and even if there are a few people who slipped through the cracks I mean, that sounds crazy to say out loud but you Giving people the benefit of the doubt and helping people as much as we can. And giving them all of the opportunities to make their lives better when they get out is really what my and that's where my bias comes in. Because I, I want it's like sunshine and rainbows, I just want everybody to have the most wonderful life they can have. Because it's so short, and we only have this short amount of time. So for people to be put away for as long as they are for the silliest and stupidest things when they shouldn't be, is really where my, my, my worry is for a lot of people so but I feel like your all of your insight has made me feel a little bit more hopeful about maybe the direction that we could be going. And I think that a lot of people are, are talking about it. I mean, the I was even talking, I didn't tell Ray this I was talking to my neighbor, she and I walked dogs together. And she's very conservative. And I was asking her how she felt about it felt about it. And we really do have the same thoughts. It's like more people are in jail that need to be and how can we how can we fix that?

Ray Abel 1:00:57

This is where the people have to come together. And I think going back to mindset there. I we I think again, as a conservative person guilty and are innocent until proven guilty. That's what we should be focused on whether that's in personal lives, whether that's tweets from 30 years ago, whatever it is innocent until proven guilty. I will say though there is something to be said about Dwight Schrute motto of I would rather 1000 men be in prison for crimes they didn't commit then 111 free man or one man go free for a crime he did commit. So I think if we want to do that. But I think I'm actually going back to the Dwight Schrute route, like let's get the 1000 innocent people in jail. Just that one. Oh, I wish I had the perfect Leslie Knope quote. She's, she's my hero. Yeah, I did not know your turn, but at some point. So I actually I love that show. And I realized that her feminism from not even 10 years ago, would not go over well with feminism today. So I think there'd be an episode to the office or Parks and Rec and go through it. So maybe just staying back on for that. One, is there anything I want? I mean, you were you were doing most of the teaching here. But did anything stick out to you from things that we said that made sense? Or were you just just teaching us?

Caitlin Werth 1:02:16

I think everything made sense. I mean, I think that you guys truly could have pushed so much more. I mean, there are people that really do believe that punishment is necessary. And you know, I don't I didn't hear that from either. Actually,

Gretchen Hurd 1:02:27

I say the whole thing of don't do the crime if you can't do the time. And I'm glad we did. That is one of the most horrible thing.

Caitlin Werth 1:02:35

Yeah, we didn't even get into that. And I think that goes to what you were saying, Gretchen that people are understanding this issue better than they did 20 years ago, even 10 years ago. And so my encouragement, if I can leave with that is just continue learning, continue exploring, and try to meet people. I mean, if you have any possibility, you said you love mentoring, right? If you can mentor with a program, like foundation of hope, or a mochi, Pittsburgher, whatever it is that you care about, if you can read to somebody in jail, go do a dance program. That is where your eyes will open to just people as they are. And that's how we change. I think

Ray Abel 1:03:09

I love it. That's wonderful. We're doing a nice wrap up here. Before we close everything down, I'm just going to talk. So we've been focused mostly on the positives. But I wanted to go over two things I saw in the news this week. And this is a way from prison reform. But we want to as the title says, We want to research the news and hold people accountable. And there is something I'm bringing up one from each side to be fair and balanced. I tend to look at Twitter now and Twitter has become anytime you see someone who has a conservative or republican interest. When you read the Twitter trending topics, it's usually they've done something racist or they're terrible or they should be canceled. And so I saw Steven Crowder, if you're not familiar with him, he actually had some very interesting things about if you see those memes about change my mind, I believe this changed my mind. And there was some good discussions that he had with people who totally disagreed with him about things like abortion, things like prison reform all this these topics. What I never want us to do and I want this is a plea to the both of you to the audience, everyone around me. I saw that he was trending This Week as a racist and my assumption is unfortunately Okay, was it like racist or was it just something that's being put on him? He basically went on they were talking about the the farm bill that was passed to help black farmers and I'm not even I'm I'm terrible at accents and I'm not even gonna repeat it. It was disgusting what he was saying about Black Farmers absolutely disgusting. And I was like, wow, that actually really is racist. And I I hope that this show is meant to hopefully bring people with different opinions together and we want to be have difficult discussions, but I never if we either Gretchen go really does go down the Antifa route or I go the hardcore far right. I'm just gonna just say things to cause trouble please call us on it because it's terrible. That is terrible. On the flip side, the liberal side of the media. This week I just saw something was really interesting. We just talked about Andrew Cuomo last week. And Joe Biden was being interviewed by George Stephanopoulos. And I want I want hard questions for all of our presidents. I wanted them for Donald Trump. I went from Barack Obama, I went under George Bush, I want people to ask difficult questions. And they were asking Biden about Andrew Cuomo, and he said that should be investigated, you should have due process, but all women should be believed. And I don't know why our news media wouldn't follow up with what about Tara Reid? And what are your thoughts? Why wasn't she believed? And why was she pushed aside because she came out with credible accusations. They were as credible as a lot of the accusations came out, we never addressed it. So I can't change that, unfortunately. But as viewers, I would challenge you to start looking into some of the things that the media doesn't cover. And if you're a Fox News viewer, and you're watching

interviews of Donald Trump, I would also encourage you to look up what he actually says behind the scenes. We there's no accountability when we tend to have politicians who are on the right go and Fox News and politicians on the left. Go on CNN, MSNBC, and there's no hard questions. And that's that's probably the thing I missed the most about journalism. So Steven Crowder, I'm saying it now you're canceled my mind. I was so disgusted by that. And Joe Biden, I hope someone asks you hard questions every now and then I just I really hope the media does that. So that's my bad, bad media of the week, and we went on a good thing. So we talked about the good thing we want to talk about, and we're gonna give this one to Gretchen. Gretchen, what's your good news? I

Gretchen Hurd 1:06:35

really sore arm yesterday, because I got to hang out. Are you? Again? I don't do that again. I don't do that hardly anymore. No, I got the COVID shot. I got my first shot. Pfizer shot on Friday, um, I am a teacher. And so I was able to get in. I had to drive an hour and a half to get the shot, but it had a little bit of pain. But I was a little tired that night. And that was about it.

Ray Abel 1:07:03

That's good. I actually I did some research on COVID shot I asked, I wonder why you need two shots. And apparently the first one is a more mild version. Yes. And if you react badly to that one, then the second one's probably gonna be a little worse. But yeah, if you don't react poorly, then you might actually be totally fine. Because you're already building up antibodies. And by the second one you should be okay. So yeah, congrats. Can we just, I mean, I feel like West Virginia is the country or the state that gets just just jumped on all the time. Yeah. And we just give a shout out to how well West Virginia is doing. Because I know you're from West Virginia.

Gretchen Hurd 1:07:35

Yeah. Virginia for about 12 years. And all of my friends like they're into like, what is it? They're 15 16% now? vaccinated? So they are Yeah, they are literally killing it, like taking care of business. And yeah, so I was really excited to get it because Pennsylvania is such a huge state. So it's it is very, very hard to get on list right now.

Ray Abel 1:08:02

Well, congratulations. Thank you. So that's the good news and good news to anyone in West Virginia, because you have a ton of vaccine available. Next week, we're going to be talking I mentioned this already about Asian hate. And it's going to be a pretty I don't want to spoil the person we have in the show. I want him to be able to talk about his background. But he has a very interesting background with some very unique perspectives on what's happening now with the Asian hate that's going on. With that being said, please feel free to share this podcast. Like I said, check out research, the news.com.org research, the dot news, Facebook research, there's so many ways to go share what we're doing here. So we can I mean, eventually, I mean, right now I'm seeing there's a few live viewers, which is nice. We have a we have a very core group of people that are following us. And we we want other people to hear Caitlyn story and see that there are still Mr. Rogers pastors out there. So I think that's a good thing for society. But um, feel free to share us. Subscribe to us on all the major podcast sites. This is going up for those watching live on the podcast tomorrow morning. And that's all I have. Do you guys.

Gretchen Hurd 1:09:08

Pleasure being here?

Caitlin Werth 1:09:10

No, I just really I just want to say I appreciate what you do. Because I think part of this work to do good in the world is to have these kinds of conversations with people that disagree. So I'm so thankful that you guys are doing that. And I think that's the kind of stuff that can hopefully lead to changes in our criminal justice system as well. Really trying to understand one another.

Ray Abel 1:09:29

Awesome. Well, I'm glad after all these years, my true conservative beliefs come out and you don't hate me and we had a good conversation. So thank you. All right. Well, we'll look forward to catching up with you next week. And we will be inviting Caitlin back on at some point. I don't know whether she'll accept but we're gonna invite her back on so play. We'll talk with her again soon. But thanks again for listening. And that was research the news