Episode 165-- the Origins, and Implications, of the Insurrec...

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Shira Goodman, JJ Janflone, Kelly Sampson, Jenna Ben-Yehuda, Kris Brown



JJ Janflone 00:08

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JJ Janflone 00:38

Hey, everybody, welcome to a very special episode of Red, Blue, and Brady.



Kelly Sampson 00:42

And that, as you guys probably know, was one of your hosts JJ, and I'm your other host, Kelly. And yeah, this is a really special episode. It's not Friday, but it's January 6th. And so unless you were living under a rock, you know that this is the one year anniversary -but anniversary sounds celebratory, maybe that's not the right word. This marks one year since there was an attempted coup at the Capitol.



JJ Janflone 01:07

And to break down, you know, why this look back is so important, particularly as we look forward, we were joined by three fantastic guests, the first longtime listener of Red, Blue, and Brady, know her and love her, Brady's President Kris Brown. We also had two first timers, Jenna Ben-Yehuda, the president and chief executive officer of the Truman National Security Project and the Truman Center for National Policy, and Shira Goodman, who is the Director of Campaigns and Outreach for the Anti-Defamation League.

Kelly Sampson 01:40

And the reason why this is so important to have Jenna and have Shira as part of this conversation is because the chaos and the melee that we saw on January 6, it is not just the result of one thing. It's not just about voter suppression. It's not just about hate. It is the result of a lot of different factors in the United States. And so, to have Jenna and Truman in their national security focus, and Shira and ADL and their focus on stopping hate, kind of combined with our focus on preventing gun violence really allows us to dig into lots of different angles of what happened on January 6th.

Kris Brown 02:21

Hi, everyone. I'm Kris Brown. I'm the president of Brady. Brady is one of the nation's oldest and we'd like to say boldest gun violence prevention organizations and we are proud to have a report that covers the insurrection that happened on January 6th, a year ago tomorrow, and the implications for that going forward and action steps we think everyone should be considering and taking to ensure that something like that never happens again.

Jenna Ben-Yehuda 02:33

Thanks for having me, JJ. I'm Jenna Ben-Yehuda. I'm the president and CEO of the Truman Center for National Policy and Truman National Security Project. We work to envision an inclusive US foreign policy that makes American lives better because it advances democracy, human rights, prosperity and security at home and abroad. It's great to be with you all.

JJ Janflone 03:12

And Shira, last but certainly not least.

Shira Goodman 03:15

Thanks for, so much for having me. My name is Shira Goodman. I am the Director of Campaigns and Outreach at the Anti-Defamation League. I started there in 2020 as a regional director in Philadelphia. Our mission is and has been for over 100 years to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all. Our Center of Extremism has been tracking, monitoring, and helping people respond to extremists for decades. And prior to joining the ADL, I worked with Kris and company leading Pennsylvania's gun violence prevention organization, Ceasefire PA.

JJ Janflone 03:48

And it's so great to have all of you with us today to talk about a topic that is super important. And I'm going to start off with actually asking y'all to articulate to our audience, you know, why it's so important for us to revisit what happened on January 6th.

Shira Goodman 04:07

We are at just a unique moment. I remember sitting there a year ago watching television, with my two teenage sons and just being in disbelief, but also not surprised that the images we were seeing at an insurrection, a violent revolt at the Congress during what should have been a very routine procedure of democracy. Certifying the Electoral College votes had always been a routine procedure, and realizing that some of our democratic norms would never be the same, right? We've always had this very peaceful transition of power. The loser leaves, even after very bitter hard fought elections that go to the Supreme Court. The, the man with the briefcase walks from one president to the other, and we were seeing something very, very different. We were seeing violence, we were seeing racism, we were seeing really very scary images. And it seems like nothing will be the same. And I think to try and sweep that away and say it was a year ago, it doesn't matter, it was just a protest, really misunderstands what it is. And it further serves the purposes of those who would subvert our democracy.

Kris Brown 05:15

I completely agree with everything Shira said. I mean, I do remember, similar to how I felt around 9/11, to be honest, exactly where I was, exactly the moment when I was looking at the speech. Of course, we were all, most of us, home, given the circumstances at the time, that continue in many respects. And it was a feeling of increasing nausea. Also, understanding as the head of a gun violence prevention organization, was very likely that DC's strong gun laws meant that this didn't look like Michigan, where there were loaded assault style weapons inside of the Capitol, but that there was always a risk that it could turn violent, and that people would disobey the law and be bringing firearms. And the scary thing for us is, this is the essence of democracy. This is a procedural move, that has to happen, that everyone understood to be something close to automatic. And the idea that there was a, an orchestrated move to undercut that, that could have been altered through violent action, should shake to the core, every American who cares about our democracy, because it's a very fragile thing. And it's up to us to think about it and to ensure that history never repeats itself.

Jenna Ben-Yehuda 06:47

Commented on with regard to 9/11, you know, we're now 20 years after the anniversary of 9/11, and have spent, you know, trillions of dollars in the name of defending the homeland, right, and the Department of Homeland Security was created to defend against terrorist attacks. And instead, what we faced almost 20 years later, were people who came to the Capitol bearing zip ties, and they walked through mostly open doors. And they weren't foreign assailants. They were us. They were our own citizens. And we had focused so much on Al-Qaeda, on ISIS, and others, while domestic extremism metastasized. And our efforts also had focused really on those of the fringes of society, when in fact, what we have before us, is a crisis of what is mainstream. And so as we think about these threats, and the accountability for them, and I think that the recent case in Charlottesville was a really important step in civil litigation towards some form of accountability, we also have to think about prevention. Because as Chris notes, it wasn't just January 6th. It was also Michigan. It was also Pittsburgh. It was also San Diego, and Texas, and all of these other kinds of attacks. This is not a fringe problem. This is, you know, the saying this is not who we are, this is absolutely who we are right now. And we

need to attack it with the same kind of resolve that other nations like Germany and others who are spending billions of dollars, throwing money at addressing this in a comprehensive way in order to fix this. And you know, this anniversary is important because it has to be a call to action so that our next election doesn't become the second and more successful version of what was attempted a year ago.

Shira Goodman 08:43

Yeah, if I can just add to what Jenna said, I think the fact that such a large percentage of the people who breached the Capitol last year were not affiliated with one of the known extremist groups. And there were extremist groups, the Proud Boys, the Oathkeepers, others, QAnon, who were there and organizing and, and working together and planning. But there were a lot of regular folks like Jenna said, people that we know who weren't really affiliated, but somehow were attracted to be there by things they were reading online, by things that they were hearing from politicians and others about the election. And we're seeing more and more of that, that hasn't dissipated. We're seeing extremist, extremist rhetoric, extremist action, violent action at school board meetings, at vaccine clinics. So we're seeing this mainstreaming of extremism and people are using, and I know we'll talk about, different gateways that they get into this and get indoctrinated in this, and we need to fight it.

Kelly Sampson 09:40

And as we sit here on this sort of anniversary of January 6th, 2021, one of the really important points to remember is that it, it didn't just start on January 5th, you know, the insurrection sort of revealed issues that have been in the country for a really long time. And so I'm wondering, for each of you and your organization, what did the insurrection highlight in terms of some underlying factors that we need to be paying attention to?

Shira Goodman 10:05

We've been talking about extremist rhetoric, anti-government rhetoric, conspiracy theories, and the power that they have, the way that people kind of can get down rabbit holes, because they're, they look up information about one thing. And again, it's kind of a gateway, sometimes people, some of these gun rights forums become a gateway to further extremism, about governmental power and the excesses of governmental power. And so these were trends that we saw. We've seen the use of these forums for people to connect. We've been seeing, you know, our, ADL's data on white supremacist propaganda and what's been happening with that, and the explosion of it. I just saw an article in our, my hometown paper today about the explosion of white supremacist propaganda on several college campuses in our area, and the numbers of hate crimes that we've been seeing and bias incidents. So I think all of those things are kind of, when you look at the images from January 6, and the, the flags that were being waved, and the shirts that are being worn, you're seeing kind of that confluence of antigovernment rhetoric, gun rights rhetoric, racism, anti-semitism, anti-immigrant, this whole, this idea that people have been, something has been taken away from people, and they're blaming others. And it kind of all came together that day. And those are really very, very dangerous and very powerful theories and narratives.

Kris Brown 11:26

But obviously, we have to understand that those words, those that inspire others to engage in these extremist tactics have to be taken very seriously. And when those kinds of beliefs are joined with easy access to firearms, we have a potentially lethal situation that could have gone very, very differently. So for our organization, really understanding and, and working, quite frankly, with groups like the ADL, with the Truman Project, with many others to show the intersections of these issues, is a critical part of our mission going forward because nothing, nothing can happen in our world if, ultimately, our democracy itself is imperiled. And that's what we jointly are fighting against.

Jenna Ben-Yehuda 12:19

You know, we have a richly financed Department of Defense, nearly 800 billion dollars of annual funding. It is postured principally to fight major conflicts overseas, right, and in very sophisticated ways, with advanced, the most advanced weaponry in the world. And what we have before us as our most urgent threat is not a would-be foreign assailant or foreign power. In fact, it's our own citizenry and our own people. The threat is coming from within. And our, we're doing our adversaries a tremendous favor by inflicting this damage upon ourselves. Because make no mistake, the pervasive nature of disinformation, the fact that two thirds of GOP respondents from the recent NPR/Ipsos poll agree with Trump's claim that Biden's election was false, and are perpetuating the big lie, folks, you know, this is the kind of stuff that tears countries apart.

Jenna Ben-Yehuda 13:24

And indeed, we have seen well-worn playbooks of authoritarians and other countries, I spent more time focused on Venezuela, on Colombia, on Central America, on Hungary, and in other places. And this is exactly the kinds of pathways to autocratic rule that we've seen, increase in political violence, closure of speech in space, right, the inability to have a national narrative that is cohesive, increased political violence. If this isn't a wake up call, we're doomed. Because the fact that this didn't succeed in a more forceful fashion to Kris's point, had folks been armed in a different way, I mean, you know, it's, it's pretty easy to imagine how this could have gone otherwise. And oftentimes, when we know from the examples around the world, that these kinds of events are dress rehearsals, that there is a second act, there's a second round, and it's more sophisticated. And that's really what we have to guard against.

Kelly Sampson 14:30

And I'm just gonna toggle between being a sort of panelist and a moderator. Just to add one more thing in terms of things at the insurrection revealed that have been issues for a long time, I think we have to also name white supremacy. And I know some of you already have, but I think in terms of the big lie in this motivating factor for a lot of people who did show up at the Capitol and maybe weren't part of extremist groups, but they really believe that the election had been stolen. And if you look at how Trump and his allies sort of perpetuated that lie, they focused a lot on cities that were pushed over to Biden through BIPOC communities. And so this idea that, you know, the votes of people who are Black or who are Native are illegitimate, and

that they're not really a part of the polity, I think is an issue that we've had from the start and it's an ongoing issue. And to the point that all of you have made about how maybe next time we don't see an insurrection, but we see laws that are designed to keep people from being able to access their vote. That's something that we know has happened. That's something that we know is actively happening right now. So as we think about what we can do to prevent another, not only January 6, but also to prevent people from being kept from exercising their right to vote, I think keeping that in mind is really important as well.

Shira Goodman 15:43

ADL Center of Extremism put out a report today tracking social media, media and elected officials' speech about #StopTheSteal and about this in the last year, leading up to, from, from November 3, 2020 until mid December of 2021. And obviously, the most intense uses of the hashtags were from November 3-4th to January 6-7th but they also, there's a lot of politicians; and elected officials' statements, Kelly, that go just to what you're speaking, if we count the real votes by real American citizens, if we only counted that, I'm certain that Trump won, right. And so there's this language about who can really vote, who's a citizen. And I think that that, again, plays into like, Confederate flags being brought to the Capitol, people wearing Camp Auschwitz shirts, Nazi flags. This is about there's people who belong, and there's people who don't. And this is, there's the sense that something is, somebody else took something from me, and those are people who look different, who pray different, who are different, and I'm going to take it back. And I think that's a really dangerous narrative. That's very powerful. And it plays to people who feel disenfranchised in some way. And it's at times like now, where we've been home for two years, and there's economic concerns, and you know, when is COVID going to end? I think those heightened times are when those narratives are most pervasive, and they're not going away. And I think some of its coded language, and some of it is straight up, no whistles, no codes, it's just right out there.

JJ Janflone 17:16

To folks who may be listening to this and say, yes, all of this is true. But on January 6th itself, there wasn't, it wasn't a mass shooting. So why are we talking about this? You know, why is Red, Blue, and Brady hosting this forum? You know, why is it so important that we dial in on the role that firearms can play in this violence and have played in the past in the US, in this violence?

Kris Brown 17:38

Because we have more than 400 million guns, firearms in this country, because the laws should be stronger than they are. And we're lucky that the District of Columbia actually has very strong laws when it comes to permits for open carry of firearms or even concealed carry of firearms. And if the laws had been different, and that was the point I was making before, as they are in Michigan, and, and many other states that basically say, simply by dint of living in the state, you have the right to carry a gun wherever you want, whenever you want, with no permit at all. I don't have all of the data, we're still getting more of it. But really, a very small proportion of the individuals who participated in the interaction on January 6, were found to have firearms on their person. I can tell you because I have seen the exchanges from many of

the sites and fora that these individuals who were planning to come were exchanging information and educating themselves before they came about DC's gun laws. If DC did not have these restrictive laws in place, we would have seen many, many more people with firearms. It's just simply a fact. As a Virginian I can say that, because up until recently, Virginia had very permissive open carry and concealed carry. And I would go out into public at events at the State Capitol in Richmond. And I would be surrounded with people who were on the other side of the issue from me, and they would all have assault style weapons on their person right next to me and we would have seen the same thing. That, I don't think we need to explain why that's so dangerous.

K

Kris Brown 19:31

In these situations, we know, even as human beings, if you are in a group, and that group becomes very hostile, we have the evidence of what happened on January 6th, simply with people who were using their bodies, who were using other forms of spray and things to, on law enforcement, etc. If they wanted to hurt someone or injure someone and they had firearms, I am very concerned that absolutely would have happened. And they were talking about going after Mike Pence, Nancy Pelosi, other members of Congress. I think we could have seen huge carnage and that is something that is not apocryphal. That is something that, because of gun laws didn't happen that day. And the stakes are very high, because the Supreme Court just heard argument on a case they will be deciding in a few months, about New York's 100 year old permitting system that restricts who can carry a gun in public. And the Supreme Court right now, with its composition as it stands, it's not a question of whether they reverse New York's law, it's a question of whether they reverse it fully, or partially. We have already heard that from the questions. And so this is very, very real and present for all Americans to pay attention to. We need to strengthen our laws. We need to protect public safety. And polls show that Americans are concerned about exercising their fundamental rights in public because we haven't done enough to protect their public safety, and ensure that our public squares, our public places are safe places to go and individuals don't have to fear being shot. That's what's at stake here. That's why it's important.

Jenna Ben-Yehuda 21:26

No, just to say, you know, in some ways, this was a success story, if you think about it through the lens of what could have been, and, and you know, very few municipalities, school boards, small towns around the country have access to anything approaching a fraction of what Capitol Police and others could not guard against. And so I think the point that I wanted to make also kind of, which is an extension of violence, is thinking about, the response to this can't just be about policing, we can't police our way out of these kinds of problems. There will be no amount of guns and weaponry and training that would make a Capitol Police or sheriff's office in a small town successful against would-be assailants. We have to think about prevention. We have to think about anti-violence campaigns. We have to treat this as a public health emergency because that's what this extremism is. And we need to think about the preventive measures to address this before it continues to metastasize because then, there's there no amount of dollars that you can throw on a security side to combat this, which also, of course, can perpetuate the discriminatory and structural challenges endemic in our law enforcement to

begin with. So I think the accountability is so important, the gun laws here, so critically important. The wrong lesson to draw from this would be to arm everybody to the teeth to keep folks out.

Shira Goodman 23:10

Like Kris, I've stood in front, you know, Pennsylvania, also very, very open carry state, very permissive to get concealed carry licenses, I've definitely stood in front of many rallies and been surrounded with people with guns who are menacing and pointing them at us, which, which is illegal but, you know, doesn't normally get enforced at that point, right. Because your, your, your, the intersection between the First and Second Amendments is really tough. And so I think we have to, to realize that, like Kris said, people on these forums are very much aware of what the laws are, and very much don't want to lose their gun rights. Now, many, many people, many more people got arrested because of January 6th, and probably expected to, and will be losing their gun rights if convicted. But a lot of them are very careful about when they're traveling. They don't want to lose their gun rights by running afoul of laws, and they're talking about it on those forums. And so those laws did keep the carnage from being much worse.

Shira Goodman 24:07

But we've seen extremist choice of weapon or firearms. We've seen it in Poway and Pittsburgh, in El Paso. We've seen it with people shooting sheriffs and other people who are serving warrants, Boogaloogers who are, you know, talking about their right to bear arms, so. And so we need to be aware of that and we need to be careful about these laws. And we also need to be really careful about the First Amendment and what are the protections where people are exercising their rights to assemble, their rights to vote, the right to petition government? Because I think what happened in Virginia a few years ago, when people wanted to have, you know, it was your regular, the regular lobby day, Kris, for, was for gun violence prevention. They were surrounded by, by gun owners, by people who really were trying to keep them from exercising that right. And we have to figure out how that interplay works, because it's again being subverted. And we shouldn't be afraid to exercise our rights to petition our government.

Kelly Sampson 25:05

You're exactly right. There has been this strand of Second Amendment extremism that's really taken prominence, especially in the 90s, where people have tried to make the case, it's a false case, it is not true historically or constitutionally. But they've tried to make the case that the Second Amendment encompasses a right to take up arms against the government if you feel that it is tyrannical. And so even though we didn't see a "mass shooting" on January 6, but we did see a lot of people who thought that they were being patriotic, that they were being lawful citizens by exercising their right to take up, maybe a flagpole, maybe a fire extinguisher, but to take on the government. And a lot of that rhetoric and a lot of the reasons why you would have ordinary citizens get off their couches and think that they have a right to go into the Capitol is because of this long held rhetoric, which has in part been pushed by the gun lobby, saying that it's American, it's patriotic, it means you love your country, if you decide that you want to take up arms against the government.

Kelly Sampson 26:04

And so we've been seeing that, I want to give credit to Josh Horwitz from CSGV, who actually predicted something like this happening decades ago, because if you have been involved in gun violence prevention, then you've seen the groundwork be laid for something like January 6th, just by looking at what the gun lobby has said about what it means to be a citizen, what it means to participate in government, and to push this idea that you have a constitutional right, as a citizen, not to use your vote, not to use your words, but to use violence against the government that you think isn't serving your interests. And that's exactly sort of the rhetoric and a lot of the rationale behind what happened on January 6th. And so at Brady, that's something that we've really been flagging, and also trying to combat, whether it's in the courts, or whether it's through the halls of Congress or other policymakers.

Kris Brown 26:53

It's like a mathematical formula, right. If those conditions persist, it's not hard, necessarily, to predict something horrific like this is going to happen. And so I think the point that we're really trying to make is, we have to internalize it enough, all of us, everyday Americans, that it's not something that can ever happen again. And that is on us, that's up to us to understand and cherish these other rights, which are fundamental to America. As fundamental as apple pie is the ability to assemble, to speak in public, to vote, all of these things that are put at risk by an insurrectionist view of the Second Amendment, that is without limit, that swallows everything else, including the way of life in America that all of us love.

JJ Janflone 27:42

This is the question then that all of this, because it's a very scary question for you to ask, is that, where where do you see us going, then, in terms of safety?

Kris Brown 27:50

Look, I think there are very valid reasons for concern, for sure. But there also is reason for optimism. A big part of the change that I think we need to see happen is responsible gun owners speaking up much more frequently about the appropriate role of guns in our society. And understanding that, and I think I know from talking to many people across this country, that January 6th, is viewed as something that is a huge concern that we don't want to repeat again. And we have an opportunity, the greatest incubators in states across this country, to really think through whether or not we think it's appropriate that we feel safe in our public squares. And I will tell you, the most fundamental way that we can do that is to ensure that we have continuing permitting systems in place, and that those work, because we know from the research that's been done about gun violence prevention laws, two things in particular, are really, really important. And if states have these two things, they experienced materially less gun violence than states that don't. The first is a robust permitting system. The second is an expanded Brady background checks. And so I think, well, there are difficulties and there are challenges and there there will always be headwinds ahead of us. All of us need to stay engaged because at the end of the day, the greatest impediment for us protecting our democracy, protecting ourselves, protecting each other, is for us to lose the ability to believe

we can make a difference. And so there is no choice. There is no alternative except to be engaged, be committed, raise your voice, and work to ensure that nothing like January 6th is even possible again because the factors just aren't there.

Shira Goodman 29:55

Yeah, I would say people have to be voting in every election, voting for school boards, voting for your state legislatures, talking to your, petitioning your state legislators and your members of Congress. So people think it's always just about Washington. But what happens in our state capitals is very, very important, especially with elections. You need to be speaking out, writing letters to the editor. One of the things ADL, the action that we're working right now, is the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, which doesn't create new crimes, but it's talking about resources, and coordination, and collaboration between different agencies. Because as Jenna said, after 9/11, we created the Department of Homeland Security. We really focused on this other threat. We have not been focusing on what the real threat is and we need to be resourcing to that threat, educating about that threat, understanding about that threat, sharing intel about that threat. And so we're asking people to do that.

Shira Goodman 30:50

And we also want people to make sure when they're sharing information, they're not spreading disinformation or misinformation. They're being, being good connoisseurs of media, teaching their kids and being engaged. Like Kris said, the other side would like us to, you know, pull the covers over our head and just be worried and not engage. And, and, and the people who believe that January 6th was just a little protest and was in service of really important goals, they don't want people to vote. That, they want people to stay home, they want people to be afraid. So we need to make people feel safe and we need to make people understand their rights, and to remember that those people that you send to your state capital and to Congress work for you, and that their job is to listen to you. So even if you don't feel safe going there right now, because you're afraid that something could happen, you can pick up the phone, and you can send an email. And I guarantee you it is somebody's job in that office to tell that Congressperson or that state legislator, how many people called today about election reforms, how many people called today about, you know, food insecurity, how many people called today about gun laws. So make your calls, write your letters, and keep using your voice, because that is the only thing that will help us win.

Jenna Ben-Yehuda 32:01

You know, one of the biggest takeaways from the 9/11 Commission report was that there was a failure of imagination. There was a failure of imagination on the part of lawmakers and policymakers and the American citizenry, to contemplate such an attack on our homeland. We have before us another moment that calls for creativity, and calls for action because this is happening here. This is who we are. But America's also best when she's down on our luck. And so there is also enormous opportunity in crisis. We can't take it for granted. We have to be vigilant. We have to seek it out with urgency. And to Shira's point, there's something that everybody can do at every level. You can run for office. People need to run and win and get out there and show up and make phone calls and talk to your kids and talk to your family

members. And get out there and press for this and let your lawmakers know that you care. Because it's something that we all have to fight for. This is about today. And it's about the future. And what we do now determines that future for all of us. And it's time to get to work.



Well, thank you all so so much for everything that you've done so far, and everything that you continue to do to get people activated. And as always links to everything will be in the description of this episode, where people can follow along and get involved.

JJ Janflone 33:34

Well, I'm, I'm so glad that we had all three of these ladies on, Kelly, I feel like it's so hard to tease out, right, what 1/6 was, because it was a convergence of so many different things. But I'm glad that this conversation is continuing to happen and that people are taking the threats that it represented so very seriously.

Kelly Sampson 33:54

Yeah, exactly. I mean, it is a convergence and even just having the overlap of the three perspectives of the organizations that were just part of this conversation helps at least have some entry points, because I think one theme that kept coming up over and over again, is that this sort of activity, this sort of threat is here, and we cannot just turn a blind eye to it and hope that things will change just because the calendar did.

JJ Janflone 34:25

Well. We're gonna deviate though, Kelly, from our usual plan. So instead of having a typical call to action for folks here, our call to action is going to be: listen to part two of this podcast, which drops tomorrow where we'll be speaking with someone who was there at 1/6, Representative Jamie Raskin about, you know, not just 1/6, but what it means to, you know, what it means to want to keep our democracy safe.

Kelly Sampson 34:51

I mean, I don't think I could come up with any other call to action other than that, so seconded. Definitely tune in.

JJ Janflone 35:00

Hey, want to share 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.



Kelly Sampson 35:15

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