Episode 182-- Orphaned By Gun Violence

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SPEAKERS

John Woodrow Cox, JJ Janflone, Kelly Sampson

JJ Janflone 00:08

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JJ Janflone 00:37

Hey everybody, welcome back to another episode of Red, Blue, and Brady.

K

Kelly Sampson 00:40

I'm one of your hosts, Kelly.

JJ Janflone 00:42

And I'm your other host JJ.

K

Kelly Sampson 00:44

And today, we're lucky to have an old guest of the pod, journalist John Woodrow Cox back with us.

JJ Janflone 00:50

John recently published a piece in The Washington Post called "The Overlooked Orphans of Gun Violence," which found that over 40 kids a day lose a parent to gun violence in the US, that is

violence," which found that over 10 kids a day lose a parent to gun violence in the US, that is just devastating. And we knew that we had to talk to him about his study, his work, and what we can all do to bring that number down.

J John Woodrow Cox 01:08

My name is John Woodrow Cox. I'm a staff writer at The Washington Post, and I'm the author of "Children Under Fire: An American Crisis,". And I'm delighted to be here.

JJ Janflone 01:22

We're delighted to have you and the book now in paperback.

J John Woodrow Cox 01:24

Yes, recently, very recently.

JJ Janflone 01:26

For folks to pick up. And we do highly recommend it. We've, you've been on this podcast before. We've talked about the book, which for our listeners, you know, stop, go back, listen to the episode, I believe 125, come back again. But in that book, you talk about some of the ways that gun violence really harms children in a physical, mental and emotional way. But your work is kind of now taken a turn into focusing on children who have lost parents to gun violence, specifically, and I'm wondering where that progression came from?

J John Woodrow Cox 01:57

That's a great question. And the origin of this project dates all the way back to the very first kid that I wrote about in 2017. And who is one of the two central subjects of the book, his name is Tyshaun McPhatter. He was in second grade when his father was killed outside of his school in southeast DC. And, you know, I followed Tyshaun for the news story in the Post, a narrative for a couple of weeks, and then followed him for many months for the book. But early on in my reporting, I wondered how many kids did Tyshaun represent, because I had seen the way that losing his parent had derailed his entire life. And, you know, this was a kid who was not, you know, legally considered a victim of anything but, but clearly was a victim of gun violence. And I thought most of these kids are represented in kind of passing news stories where they say something like a "father of three" or "mother of two," and that's it, and you never learn anything more about the loss, the trauma, the suffering, what have those kids gone through when they lose a parent to a violent act of of a shooting. So that sent me off on to a very long, long, long process of accumulating all of this data. What we did was we looked at 20 cities, 20 of the largest cities, most violent cities in America over a single year. And we got, I got homicide data for every one of those cities, specifically looked at gun homicides and then broke down manually, how many children each of those victims of gun violence had?

JJ Janflone 03:41

I wondered if we could touch on so when you say that these kids are would not be considered, you know, a legal victim? I wonder is that just because they're not, you know, quote unquote, "harmed directly" because they haven't been shot, they haven't been murdered?

J

John Woodrow Cox 03:53

Yeah, exactly. Because our system, you know, when we talk about victims of gun violence, it almost always comes down to physical harm, right? It's not emotional harm. It's not. So you know, in some cases, somebody who maybe was threatened with a gun or child, let's say they were a direct witness, sometimes they might be considered legally a victim, but generally they're not, you know, generally you have to be physically harmed with a firearm to be considered a legal victim of gun violence. And you know, much of my work has been devoted to these groups of children who are not legally considered victims. They're sort of these hidden, uncounted populations of victims, and certainly children who lose parents to gun violence, I would count to be central among that group, because my reporting has revealed to me that that they suffer immensely, often for years after those losses.

K

Kelly Sampson 04:48

I'm glad you mentioned that distinction about how the law might consider victims, because I know even victims who are shot sometimes there's a undercounting or discrediting the emotional suffering that someone can go through, simply because "Oh, well, they survived, so it's fine." And in your most recent reporting, you talked about an original study with the Washington Post that found that, this is a quote, "Across 20 cities that were the site of nearly a quarter of the nation's gun homicides in 2020, more than 3,600 children lost their mother or father in a shooting." End quote. Can you talk a little bit about how that study came together?

J

John Woodrow Cox 05:28

Yeah, it was, it was arduous. I mean, it was really many, many, many months of the process was just, you know, I would take the name of the victim, put it into Google with the combination of words and just trying to find any sort of publicly available information at all. And there were a few, a few interns who helped with that process, because it would have taken one person years to complete, because, again, it's a quarter of all the gun homicides in that year. And so we used obituaries, news stories, people's Facebook pages, public memorials to victims of gun violence, all in an effort to just try to find out how many how many kids that they had. And what we were looking for, we won't go into all of the sort of rules that we apply, but we were really what we were looking for children who are underage. So if somebody had an adult child, we did our best to discount those. But we know that that 3,600 is an undercount, without question, because so many people when they're shot to death in this country, there is virtually no record of their life. There is a four paragraph news brief, saying, you know, the person's name, their age where they were killed. And that's it. So, you know, if you couldn't find a Facebook page, a memorial and obituary, which was true for a great many of these victims, yeah, we didn't know we just never knew. So we know that 3,600 number, as shocking as it is, is an undercount for sure.

JJ Janflone 07:00

And it strikes me too, that you have to know that the number is higher too when you think of folks who are parents or guardians, but maybe not like legally recognized as a parent or guardian as well, right. I'm sure there are also step-parents and aunts and uncles and things who are caring for folks, and

J John Woodrow Cox 07:14

For sure, and we didn't count, you know, specifically, I came across lots of grandparents, lots of step-parents, and we didn't count those, because we were trying to sort of have the most narrow definition that we could so that, you know, sort of no one would think we were inflating these figures for any sort of, you know, political reasons.

JJ Janflone 07:32

Yeah. And so yet, even though with that really narrow definition, you still, these numbers, it's you know, as you said, it's 15,000 children in America that are losing a parent. So that's, that's roughly 41 kids per day then that are left without at least one parent. In your reporting you detail though, that there are children who have lost both, you know, that they've lost their whole support structure. And that's a really hard number to swallow. You know at Brady, we talk all the time, there's, you know, you lose 100 People a day to gun violence, but sometimes I think when you say those numbers enough, the people, it doesn't hit people as much. And so I wonder what, what does that mean to you, having talked to so many of these kids or interacted with so many of these kids? What does what does that 41 per day actually mean?

J John Woodrow Cox 08:17

Yeah, I mean, that's what and that's where you get people to care, I think right is when you humanize that figure that 41. What does that actually look like? You know, the two kids that I focus most of the story on were a brother and sister in Baltimore, who had lost their father in 2017, their mother in 2020. And both of them had suffered profound grief trauma, really complex trauma. You know, in the case of Kaleigh, the daughter, who was with her mother in the moments before she was killed, she still is dealing with an overwhelming sense of guilt, because she became convinced that if she had stayed with her mother, rather than going inside this housing complex, that the shooter wouldn't have killed her, that the shooter would have seen a little girl there and said, "Well, I'm not going to pull the trigger," which probably isn't true. And that's what her brothers told her many times, is that you know, would have just been the two of them dead rather than just their, her mother. But she's she's struggled to get past that, you know, and she's had had vivid nightmares, vivid nightmares, and about what happened that day and a sense that, you know, her aunt now is taking care of her and for a month she couldn't sleep without her aunt. Not because she was afraid of her own safety, but she was afraid if she slept away from her aunt that she would lose her aunt too. So you know, and that was that was just her trauma. That was just one child's struggle afterwards. You know, we talked to families all over the country who had been in the situation and kids had dealt with, you know, enormous amounts of fear, anger, you know, just sort of the classic traits of PTSD.

And again, these are kids that are generally overlooked, even within their own communities, even at their schools, because again, they're not physically harmed. You know, there's that moment of, "We're so sorry for what you you've gone through," and then people move on. But these kids don't, you know, they suffer with this for the rest of their lives.

K Kelly Sampson 10:13

And you mentioned, not just trauma but complex trauma. And I'm wondering if you could kind of help listeners understand, what does that mean, what does complex trauma mean?

J John Woodrow Cox 10:25

So, you know, I think it means in some cases that, you know, every child is going to deal with it differently. There was a moment in my reporting that I'll never forget, in this particular case, in this particular story, that the brother Kavon, you know, he was 11 at the time that his mother was killed. So two years ago, he's 13 now, and he had told me that he was in a class at school, and his mentor had asked him, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" And he had refused to answer, he didn't want to answer the question he kind of blamed it on, "I don't want to stand up in front of people." And I didn't really believe that. And so I pressed him a little bit on why he didn't answer that question in school, because I didn't really believe it was about stage fright, I thought that there was something deeper there. And so he's laying on his grandmother's couch, and what he said to me, this is the exact quote, he said, "Everybody don't make it to the next five years. Where I want to see myself in five years is alive." And he's 13, right. And he wasn't saying that, because the way it would read in The Washington Post, he was saying that, because that is truly how he felt. There was a sense of fatalism in his life. And, you know, he knew he had a sense of what he was capable of. He was a kid who made really good grades at school, he was great at math, he was really smart. But, you know, when so much of your life has been defined by loss, by you know your dad's gone, you know, five years ago, your mother's gone two years ago, you know, what expectation could he have that he's going to absolutely make it five years from now? And so when we talk about complex trauma, I mean, that's sort of the way that it can come out as a kid questioning whether he's going to be alive when he turns 18? And what in what ways does that affect his decisions today? We don't think about those things. Often we think about grief, and sadness, right? Those are kind of the ways that we typically think about the aftermath of loss. But a lot of these kids also deal with huge amount of anger, because it's unfair. And they know it's unfair. And it's in some ways, they don't know how to express themselves. And what that can lead to is kids getting suspended and expelled and getting in trouble with police officers, because they don't have a healthy way, a healthy avenue to express what it is they're going through. And then people don't recognize that these are signs of trauma rather than signs of bad behavior, right. And there's this shift right now going on in the therapy world. And you know, this trauma informed teaching, and the question has shifted from not what's wrong with you, but to what happened to you. And I think that's such an important shift in the way that we talk about, especially children who've been impacted by gun violence.

 JJ Janflone 13:09

Well, and then especially too, children who are living in areas where they're going to be consistently it seems retraumatized, by gun violence beyond the sort of standard trauma that

everyone living in the US gets of living with gun violence. Because as you detail on your article, he is even almost the victim of a shooting of himself just picking up food.

J John Woodrow Cox 13:27

Yeah, exactly. Right. He's standing outside a Chinese restaurant waiting for his egg roll, and somebody opened fires, right, right next to him, he thinks he's been shot, you know, he runs home, he strips off all of his clothes. And he's hyperventilating in a, you know, total panic attack. He's convinced that he's been shot, and he's gonna die. So and those sorts of things make him revisit his parents loss, right. So it is incredibly complicated for children who are living with that sort of chronic threat of, of gun violence.

 JJ Janflone 13:58

And not to sort of switch tack because I think it fits to you know, when we're talking about this loss, I want to make it really clear to our listeners, something that shocked me even looking at the numbers of the study that, that you're work and the work with the Post pulled out is that none of these stats we've talked about, have involved talking about parents who have been lost to firearm suicide. This is as you said, it's this is pure homicide. And so I'm wondering if was that a distinct choice just because it's not reported on and in the same way?

J John Woodrow Cox 14:28

Yeah, it was not, it's just not gettable. It's not a thing that, you know, you can't go to a police department say, "You know, give me all your gun suicides." We sort of did what we could do. And that was, I knew I could get gun homicides, the names of gun homicide victims in these cities. And then, you know, it was something I could actually report out. But we just knew, you know, it is so hard to report on gun suicide in this country because we seldom know even who the victims are, you know, there is no news story. There's an obituary that won't address it directly. So often people, neighbors can die by gun suicide, and you'll never, you'll never know. But we know, of course, that a huge number of people every year, most people who die in shootings die by suicide. So you know that that that number, if in reality is certainly over 100 kids every day who are losing a parent to some sort of form of gun violence, I have zero doubt in my mind that it's over over 100, because of the, you know, the kids who lost parents to gun homicide we couldn't find, and the tens of thousands of kids who lose parents to gun suicide every year.

 JJ Janflone 15:34

I mean, if we lose 60 people a day to firearm suicide in the US, you know, just even assuming that five of those people are parents with children who are underage. That's, that's, that's a, a wild number. Yeah,

K Kelly Sampson 15:48

It's, yeah, wild number is I'm just trying to like sit with it and take it all in because even without, including suicide, that study in the Post found that there were only 11 days only 11, in all of 2020 when a parent had not been shot and killed, which is stunning. And so, you know, beyond the obvious pain and trauma inflicted on those who are left behind, what does that kind of loss mean to this country?

J John Woodrow Cox 16:21

Well, you know, we know, and this is something that certainly Brady knows is, that the most important factor in a child's life, if they're going to overcome trauma, and a lot of these kids were dealing with trauma before the loss, is to have an adult in their life who loves them, right. And the nature of of this loss is it's taking that person away, it's taking for most of these kids, right, they're losing at least one of those people. And a lot of these were single parents, right. So that's the starting point, is it already deprives them of this thing that is so critical in their growth as a human being in overcoming whatever trauma they potentially already endured. And and to that sense that, what does this mean for me and my future? How does this devalue, you know, my own life? My own future? You know, and I think when we talk about sort of this sort of generational, that you know kids dealing with forms of loss, whether it's uncles, grandparents, cousins. There's such a ripple there, right of what that person represented in the family. This this case here, sort of seeing the ripple, in Kavon and Kaleigh's life beyond Kaleigh and Kavon to the aunts, the grandparents, all these other people whose lives were blown up because of the shootings. It's just staggering. It's staggering. And we that is never the way we think about it. Right. And that's never really the way that the media writes about it. It's, it's this, you know, four paragraphs, that's almost always how shootings in this country are reported, especially frankly, in Black and Brown communities. There is not that sort of effort to humanize and to go in and say, what, what is the ripple in this community? What is the ripple in this family? What does it look like, day to day, that loss, we don't tend to treat those shootings in Chicago and Baltimore, the same way that we treat, let's say, something that happens at a mall in the suburbs, or a school in the suburbs. And what I can say, from having reported for years, in all sorts of different communities, is that the loss is enormous and lasting and profound, regardless of where it happens

 JJ Janflone 18:32

When we had talked about "Children Under Fire," you know, you had said that one of the reasons why you had initially focused on telling, you know, gun violence from the child's perspective is folks in the media or elsewhere, you know, couldn't say that it is a child's fault for being involved in a mass shooting. And I wonder, have, have you had the experience with this now reporting, though, that, you know, these are parents that have that have been lost, or parents that have been taken of folks saying, "Well, that's on them for being that they they've somehow we're in a bad parent, that it's somehow the homicide victims fault for for," you know, and I, you know, I'm doing air quotes, this is not a visual medium. So it's not helpful for listeners, but you know, that ,"You put yourself in a bad situation or you were doing something you shouldn't do." Have you seen that stigma spill over here as well? That yes, it's sad for the kids, but all these you know, their parents should have better done X, Y or Z.

J John Woodrow Cox 19:26

Yeah. Oh, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. That I've gotten those emails from, on this exact story. People saying that well, you know, because both both these parents had served time. But you know, my perspective on that is, why does that matter in a story that is about a child's loss or child's trauma, you know, Kaleigh and Kavon, it didn't matter to them. They didn't have any less love because their mother had served some time in jail on a drug charge. You know, their loss was not in any way diminished, by her, you know, her choice to go in an area where she was killed. That was dangerous, right? I mean that her her daughter certainly resents that, she wishes they, you know, her daughter never felt safe in the area where, where her mother was killed. But, you know, people work really hard. A certain type of person in this country works really hard to dismiss anything related to gun violence as not mattering. They're looking for a reason to say this, you know, "It has nothing to do with the gun. This isn't a gun problem. It's a people problem. It's a, it's a crime problem. It's a race problem," it's, uh, you know, they're looking for any sort of way to deflect blame off of either guns or our firearm regulations in this country. And, you know, that's a, that's a trope that I see all the time.

J John Woodrow Cox 20:51

And you know, what I, what I tell people is that, America does not, America is not uniquely evil. We do not have more evil people in this country than we do in other developed countries. Right. The difference in our country and other countries is that we have 400 million plus guns, and we have laws that are really bad at regulating those guns, that is the difference, you know, we so you kind of you know, and I often I'm sort of having that discussion with people who are really committed to the idea of American exceptionalism as well, right. It's like something you have to give up something here. But they're just simply is no evidence that we're a uniquely evil people. It's just that people have considerably more access to, especially to handguns in this country than they do in other developed nations. And that is consistently why we're left in this situation. So, you know, but I constantly deal with that. Well, here's the real reason, right? Here's the real reason that this happened. And it's not it's not to diminish things like, you know, gang violence is a problem in this country. Drug trafficking is a problem in this country. Those are things that are problems. Absolutely. But that's also problems in lots of other developed countries that do not have these rates of gun violence. Not even close, right, there are gangs, there is drug trafficking, in all these other countries. What's different here is that anybody can get a gun, and they can get ammunition almost regardless of their age. And if they're, you know, willing, they can go take somebody's life with it.

K Kelly Sampson 22:23

It's interesting, you know, when you talk about people saying, here's the real problem, because one of the things that JJ and I have seen is, whenever people talk about the real problem, they they never talk about trauma, and the role that that can play in perpetuating violence. And something that you talked about in your article is how the kids who are suffering the loss of a loved one to gun violence, they won't recover without help. And this is a quote, "But in order to get the help, the country has to actually acknowledge that the children who lose their parents to gun violence are also victims of it." And we talked about this a little bit earlier as to why children who lose their parent to gun violence should be included in the definition of victim, but how would that then allow them to get the help that they would need to go on to, to live as healthy a life as they can,

John Woodrow Cox 23:10

You know, this thing that I talk about all the time is investment, right is, and this goes back to the very first very first story I wrote that, you know, sort of led to the book, in Tyshaun's school, it was a formative moment for me and my thinking about how we respond to shootings and how we help kids and it was, you know. Tyshaun's father was killed after a string of shootings all on, all in his neighborhood, there have been six shootings on Wheeler road, which is a road in southeast DC. And in the aftermath of that, they had this community meeting and they had asked the students in their school to draw pictures of what made them sad about their neighborhood. And this school only went up to, you know, second or third grade. So we're talking about kids who are 6,7,8 years old. And the pictures that they drew, were of people being shot to death. Vivid scenes of people being killed. Funerals and grave sites and just incredibly vivid scenes of violence. And these were not drawn from television or from video games. These are things that these kids have actually witnessed. And, you know, this was a charter school that was in that community specifically to support kids who were dealing with dealing with trauma dealing with poverty, generational trauma, right and, and yet, there was one psychiatrist for the entire school and none of the teachers had gone through any sort of trauma informed training.

John Woodrow Cox 24:38

They were doing the best they could, but it just realized to me like, okay, I get this a whole school full of kids who need support, they need somebody to talk to they needed a professional to talk to. Even in school that is specifically there to help those kids, they're not really prepared to do it. So what we have to do societally, I think is say that recognize the reality of the trauma and then say, we're going to make the financial investment that it requires to put kids or to put therapists in those schools to support those kids. It is so hard in this country to get children who are victims of gun violence in any way, appropriate care. And what I've come to realize after doing this for years is it's not enough to say, just send them to a therapist. They need the right therapist. And, you know, part of this last story I wrote gets gets into that, you know, the city of Baltimore had a woman who is specifically trained to treat these children, children who had lost parents to homicide, and she did special training, and she really knew how to connect with them in a way that I have not seen other therapists able to do that. So it's not enough, you know, the sort of the starting point is they need therapy, they need access to good mental health care, they need to be in classes with teachers that don't expel them when they flip over a chair, because their cousin was killed over the weekend.

John Woodrow Cox 26:03

And then beyond that, you have to train people, right? You need, you need people who are actually qualified, and it's a high bar. But, you know, we've spent in this country billions, hundreds of billions of dollars on all sorts of things that have nothing to do with improving anyone's life, the money's there, right. But to me, so much of it comes down to seeing those children in places like Baltimore, DC, Chicago, and saying that their lives are as valuable as the lives of the children who go through the school shooting at the White suburban school, the way we respond to those two things is radically different in this country. So those shootings, you know, the the GoFundMe has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars. And you know, the governor issues a statement saying how sad they are about what happened. And you know, the

the therapy dogs come in, and dozens of therapists volunteer their time, there is always, always always a ton of support, which is great. That is exactly the way it should be. Right. So the argument is not that it shouldn't be that way. The argument is that it should be that way also when children who are dealing with chronic gun violence go through similar losses, but just because they're in a different community where society has said, "Well, that's just the way it is for those kids." They don't have access to that same sort of support. And it's, it's not going to get better until we decide that these kids lives are as valuable as these other kids.

K Kelly Sampson 27:29

Yeah. And I, I love that you point that out, because I think sometimes the solution that the "let me tell you, the real problem" crowd will come up with ignore the ways that gun violence stop people from being able to like, they'll say, well just get just stay in school kids get an education. And like, yes, we're going to tell children to deal with the same level of trauma that soldiers deal with at the age of seven. And to be able to have the foresight to be able to concentrate on, you know, learning about Joe and Jane going up the hill, when they don't even know if they're going to be able to live. That's how we're going to solve this problem.So I appreciate you pointing that out.

J John Woodrow Cox 28:10

That's that is such a, such an important point. And I referenced this one study all the time when the subject comes up is this study down Chicago, where they looked at children who had, neighborhoods where someone had died in homicide. And then they found that in those neighborhoods, the children who lived in those neighborhoods that they did worse on their test scores the following week, which means they didn't have to know the person, they didn't have to see it, they didn't have to hear the shooting, they just had to know someone in my neighborhood was shot to death last week. And it had such an effect, such a lingering effect that they did worse in their test scores the following week. So then you take those kids, and then think about Kavon, whose father's killed whose mother's killed, and then he nearly gets shot. And I guarantee he was in school two days later. What is your expectation of him? Or is he really are we really going to ask him to say, you better do well, like it's on you, right? This is it's on you to work your way through this, like, Give me a break. It's like, you're absolutely right, that sort of crowd tends to avoid that reality. It's, it's totally unfair, and it's just not based in any reality at all.

 JJ Janflone 29:20

Well, John, I don't want to, you know, it's unfair of me to say to expect you to give me an answer on how to fix this. Right. But do you have any suggestions for listeners who are concerned and want to do something?

J John Woodrow Cox 29:31

You know, there's sort of two ways that I was talking about what do we what do we do about our gun violence problem. And, you know, one is the front end, how do we prevent the act of gun violence from occurring to begin with? You know, the thing that I always say, the most

gun violence from occurring to begin with? You know, the thing that I always say, the most obvious thing that anybody can do is lock up the guns that they have. And if they have friends, who own guns, educate them on the importance of just locking up a firearm. Right, we could save hundreds of children's lives, you know, thousands of lives every year, if we just locked up, if people just locked up the guns that they have, if they just kept them out of falling in the hands of children. And I say this all the time, that you know, for a lot of Americans, the only form of gun violence they really care about is a school shooting, that's the only thing that ever gets their attention. And if that is the only thing you care about, which is certainly not true of your listeners, but if they have friends, and that's the only thing they care about, if we just locked up the guns that we have, if we just prevented children from obtaining firearms, well, more than half of the school shootings in this country would end overnight. That's the only change that we made, you know, Oxford, the shooting in Oxford, that would never have happened 11 People would have been shot, four kids would be alive today. So if that's the only thing people care about, that's the one change, right that we can make, it would have a profound difference.

J John Woodrow Cox 30:51

And I can go on and on about the other things we can do to prevent shootings. But I always see that as like the most obvious sort of bit of low hanging fruit is there's reams and reams of statistics that show you know, having an unlocked firearm in a home, how much more likely that is to lead to suicide to lead to an accidental shooting, could lead to somebody dying by a gun. And then you know, on the other side, we know that we're not going to get that number to zero, the number of people who are dying in shootings every year. So you know, what can we do? Right? What can we do to to support these kids and to me, so much of it comes down to money, it just comes down to investment is that people, if you show up to city council meetings, show up, show up and get in the face of lawmakers to say, you know, what are you doing to support these kids? What sort of investment are you making? People have to decide that that is an issue that they're going to vote on, that they're actually going to fight for. And because it does, it just is as simple as does the school have the proper training, the teachers in the school have the proper training, which is something that costs money? Are there enough therapists in the school that have the proper training, it's, it's it's dollars, right? It's money. And we have to decide that, you know, whatever, whatever thing we're spending money on, wherever those other dollars are going that they would be better spent on this, but people have to speak up, show up to meetings and actually make themselves heard. So those are kind of two clear things in my mind that that sort of everyday people, everyday citizens in this country can do to to make a real tangible difference.

K Kelly Sampson 32:16

That's a great point that you made about the school shootings. And you know, even if that's the only thing that you care about, given the number of people who have guns in this country, there's a lot of power, just in safely storing guns, obviously a lot more than that to go. But I think that's definitely a point to like, reiterate, make sure people heard it,

J John Woodrow Cox 32:34

Right. And I say this, too, I was add this is that this would do nothing to infringe on anybody's right to own a gun, right. So if you have a gun owning friend who is really resistant to any sort

right to own a gun, right. So if you have a gun owning friend who is really resistant to any sort of regulations, I see this all the time, you could still go buy your 15 AR-15, you could still do that. What this one element is asking you to do is to be responsible with the guns that you have. Because we know you cannot educate a child out of making a bad choice with a gun. That is undeniable, right? Children are little children are curious. Teenagers are impulsive, children simply cannot have access to firearms. But someone following this, someone actually applying this sort of thinking that I'm going to lock up my weapons doesn't mean they can't still own those weapons, it just means you have to be responsible with the guns that they have. So you know, hopefully, people listening, who I'm sure are people who lock up their guns if they have them. If they have friends who don't, you know, steal these talking points. And and please go convince them because literally during the course of this conversation that we're having a child is going to find a loaded gun in a home, it's just a matter of whether they fire it, kill themselves, kill somebody else, whether they survive being shot, it will happen because it happens constantly in this country.

JJ Janflone 33:44

Well, and we want it to stop happening. So thank you, John, for all the work that you've done, and that you continue to do. And of course, the link to not just your book, but to this article that we've been discussing today will be here in the description of this episode. So folks go read it, please. And do as John says, Get involved.

K

Kelly Sampson 34:05

Yeah, I'm, I just want to sit for a minute with the information that John shared with us today. Because over 40, 40 kids a day losing a parent is such a huge number. And to know that, in actuality, it's likely much higher than that. It's just mind bogglingly sad.

JJ Janflone 34:27

Exactly. And then add to that number, right. Suicide loss, add in non biological parents, add in other sorts of guardians, add in non-minor children.

K

Kelly Sampson 34:38

Yeah, I mean, I'm not a minor but losing a parent, would be hard on anyone. And imagine an 18-year-old who is legally an adult, but very well may still depend on their parents for so much.

JJ Janflone 34:49

And as John said, I think that we just have to make a decision, right as a country, that we're not going to tolerate this loss and make a concerted effort to address this issue, just like we would any other public health crisis.

JJ Janflone 35:04

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K

Kelly Sampson 35:18

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