

Episode 50: Guns, COVID-19, and the Risk of Suicide



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*****Brady legal music*****

JJ

Hey everybody! This is the legal disclaimer where I tell you that the views, thoughts and opinions shared on this podcast belong solely to our guests and our hosts, and not necessarily Brady or Brady's affiliates. Please note this podcast contains discussions of violence that some people may find disturbing. It's okay. We find it disturbing too.

*****Brady musical introduction*****

JJ

Welcome back everybody to Red, Blue and Brady and welcome to episode 50! I know it happens so fast. I really do want to thank each and every one of you for coming on this journey with us. We couldn't be here, I couldn't be here without all of you wonderful listeners. Now, today I'm

joined by some amazing folks at the American Association of Suicidology, Jonathan Singer and Colleen Creighton. And together we're talking about an extremely important topic during the time of COVID-19, physical distancing, what's sometimes called social distancing and, you know, issues that have been made even more important by recent reports of increased gun purchases. Namely, we're talking about how to prevent firearm suicide.

Then in our "Unbelievable, But" segment I finally get to talk about Judge Judy. This is legitimately a dream come true for me. Then in our news wrap up, I'm talking about everything from bad congressmen to states that are doing the right thing. I'm sorry to say that it's not all happy news, but that shouldn't be a shock for long time listeners. But you know hey, we're here, we're together and that's what matters.

*****music plays*****

JJ

So I don't want to waste a moment. I know you are both super busy, so let's just jump right in. And can I have you to introduce yourselves?

Colleen Creighton

Sure. My name is Colleen Creighton, I'm the CEO of the American Association of Suicidology.

Dr. Jonathan Singer

And I'm Jonathan Singer. I'm the president of the board of the American Association of Suicidology and an associate professor of social work at Loyola University Chicago.

JJ

And I mean, that begs the question right off the bat about you know, what is the American Association of Suicidology? And you know maybe if you could give us a quick primer on some of the language we should be using?

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Sure, So the American Association of Suicidology is the oldest and largest member based suicide prevention organization in the world. Suicidology is the science of suicide. Ed Seidman was the first person in the world to do a dissertation on suicide. And he went on to found crisis hotlines, suicide prevention lifelines, they were called, and create the process known a psychological autopsy. And then founded the American Association of Suicidology. And what we do is we work to prevent suicide, help people build lives worth living. And we talk about, you know, working closely with suicide attempt survivors and folks who have lost loved ones to suicide. And the researchers, clinicians, crisis workers, students, impacted friends and families. Everybody that's in this world is part of what AAS does.

Colleen Creighton

What I like about AAS is exactly what Jonathan said, is that it really does represent every single entity or person or individual or community out there that's been touched or impacted by this issue.

JJ

Well, and I think one of the things that's really important that talk about today is you know why when Red, Blue and Brady is launching a bunch of episodes and many says devoted to COVID-19 why are we talking about suicide when it comes to COVID-19 and gun violence and gun violence prevention?

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Well, one of the things about suicide that we know is that when folks feel lonely, when they feel isolated, when they feel like they're not part of an important group, that this is one of the things that increases risk for suicide. And we also know that when folks are feeling isolated, perhaps hopeless, about the future and they have access to firearms, there's an increased risk for suicide. And in a situation like COVID-19 where you have people who are socially distancing and being socially isolated doesn't necessarily mean that you're disconnected. But for some people, it can be. It also means that there's not necessarily monitoring or friends checking in as they might. And so there is in a really important overlap between the risk posed by firearms for suicide deaths, the risk posed by social isolation and feeling isolated and not part of a community and suicide risk.

JJ

And one of the things too that we've seen that increases sort of risk of suicide is having access to firearms, and I was wondering if we could talk a little bit about that in particular.

Colleen Creighton

Absolutely so access to lethal means is definitely a primary concern when we talk about this issue. Especially now, as Jonathan noted, when you don't have friends checking in on you and you're left by yourself or, you know, with your family, there's two concerns there too, are that maybe someone if they know you're maybe having a crisis, you have access to lethal means around your house. And so that's our primary concern there, too, is ensuring that when people are seeking help that you know, give them lifeline numbers, give them crisis text lines reaching out to other individuals. Our concern is that the access to lethal means is right there in their own home.

JJ

One of things that's been so interesting to me is I think maybe one of the few good things about the whole corona virus has been we're starting to talk as a country about public health crises, about what those are, about what those look like, about what the impacts that public health has on everything else in the country and the world as a whole. And so I was just wondering how the American Association of Suicidology, how you view firearm suicide like, would you classify that as a public health crisis?

Dr. Jonathan Singer

So the American Association of Suicidology absolutely sees firearms in suicide is a public health issue. We have a firearm and suicide committee that is chaired by Aaron Dunkerley and Mike Anestis. Mike Anestis is one of the leading researchers on firearms and suicide, and we're

grateful for all of his insights into this topic. One of the things that's important for people to know is that firearms are used in half of all suicide deaths. Suicides make up three in every five gun deaths. Suicide by firearm is almost always deadly, with nine out of 10 firearm suicide attempts resulting in death and just as a context suicide by cutting results in the death about one out of every 100 times. Right? So this is a huge number. Every day, 63 Americans die by firearms suicide. That's one every 23 minutes. And in 2018 you had 24,432 Americans die by firearms suicide. Your listeners will be aware of the fact that homicide is not the leading cause of death by firearms--it is suicide. And this is absolutely one of the things that makes it a public health concern.

JJ

Well, and those the statistics are always wild to me because, you know, one of the stats that we repeat a lot on this podcast is we lose roughly 100 people a day in the U.S. to gun violence and to know that 70 of those people are from the result of suicide by firearms. We have to consider suicide gun violence.

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Yeah, and I mean it is one of these things where being inside the bubble of being a suicidologist, working with families and children in your own practice setting, doing research, talking with folks like, of course, firearms are an issue around suicide. Like I don't, It's not something that really makes any sense to me that people could talk about them not being an important issue in this topic. And that to have a conversation about firearms and to not talk about suicide erases a central piece of this public health problem.

Colleen Creighton

This is where we also want to commend Brady for really stepping up as one of the first out there talking about this. I think from this time, like Jonathan said, we're seeing the rate of suicide increase in United States every single year. Um, it's clear that we need to do something different. So I'm extremely thankful to Brady and other groups who are really starting to bring this forward in new and maybe not the traditional means and methods and kind of phrasing that our fields is used to. So I think together as we start pulling out these facts and start addressing these individually and kind of calling more attention to aspects, I think that's where we're gonna start making a dent.

JJ

Well on behalf of Brady, even though I had nothing to do with that, I will say thank you. I was wondering if we could talk about that a little bit more if we could dig in. We have seen firearm suicides increase almost every year. Do you think we're going to see an increase as well, maybe because of the added stress that is social distancing and the economic downturn?

Colleen Creighton

Well, it's really hard to predict. I think we all are afraid that's what's gonna happen. If you look at traditional trends kind of leading up to today from the past, we're seeing an increase. You have people that are again distant from support systems away from family members away from

friends, away from any kind of social connectivity other than online and again being home with access to lethal means. All signs point to yes, that that's we're afraid, that's what might happen.

Um, and I think we're working really diligently across the association here to ensure that we're putting in measures to kind of prevent that as much as we can, whether it's messaging reaching out to folks, using virtual and every kind of technological means necessary to kind of put the messaging out there, that if they need help, here's how to get it.

Dr. Jonathan Singer

And I think that the piece about the economic impact of COVID-19 and this pandemic cannot be underestimated. One of the things that we know about suicide rates is that when there are economic downturns, there are increases in suicide rates, and this is a particularly sudden and intense economic downturn. This is different from the 2008 great recession. This is different than wartime fluctuations in the economy. This is something that has happened immediately. People are getting fired, they're losing their jobs. There's no sense of when this is going to turn around. And increasingly, over the last decade, people have turned to what they call the gig economy right? Which is very risky but very flexible employment.

And so the concern is that as people lose their jobs that in fact, we're going to see an increase in the sense of hopelessness, a sense of burden that people feel like they can't support their families. Maybe they were responsible for supporting parents. Maybe there was an expectation that they were going to be able to retire, and their 401K At the moment they have to withdraw is down by 30-40% which radically changes what they're going to be able to do for the remainder of their life. These are all really important factors to consider. As Colleen said, we don't know what the future holds. All we can do is we can say, given what's happened in the past, we know that economic downturn, the presence of firearms are two very potent predictors of suicide risk, and both of them are increasing.

JJ

I'm very concerned about sort of the groups that are already or the demographics, I suppose, that are already sort of vulnerable to suicide that we've seen increased risk for. We're seeing younger and younger teenagers and then in sort of a side group, veterans. And I'm very worried about that sort of change to their daily routine, particularly as you know, as a former teacher. The children and teen thing concerns me because schools are a stabilizing force for a lot of kids.

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Well, absolutely. You know, one of the things that I spend a lot of time on is thinking about schools and suicide. And schools can sometimes be a place where kids find relief from the things that increase their suicide risk. Now, for some kids, it is a source of stress and strain, such as those kids who are experiencing land-based bullying and harassment that contributes to suicide risk. But when you have kids who are in the home all the time, if there is physical or sexual abuse going on, if there's emotional abuse and and emotional abuse counts for about 3/4 of all abuse, we know that when kids feel like they can't turn to their parents when they're feeling sad, suicidal, anxious and they don't have anyone else to turn to.

If there's a firearm in the home, their risk of suicide increases significantly. And this is not a new finding. This is something that David Brent who's a researcher in Pittsburgh, documented back in the late eighties. So this is a known risk. And so I absolutely agree that having fewer adult eyes on kids, having greater access to firearms in the home and having this mix of stressed out parents stressed out kids is not good for suicide prevention.

JJ

And I'm assuming that it's the same sort of issue that we're seeing with the rise in domestic violence. Just because for some people, home isn't a safe space.

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Absolutely. I mean, and they're all interrelated. You know, we talk about public health as a broad thing, and public health is absolutely an important perspective. But one of the things that public health approaches are weak on, is the, what we think of as the micro-level, the interpersonal. And addressing these interpersonal disputes, interpersonal conflicts. These become sort of the ingredients that stoke a fire that can result in interpersonal violence that can result in suicide attempts. And all of these things are things that we need to be vigilant about addressing.

JJ

Which, you know, my two questions when it comes to sort of addressing this twofold is, you know so clearly this is something we should be talking about, right? But I think for a lot of people, suicide fits into one of those taboo topics, especially gun suicide. There's something about it that seems really scary or uncomfortable to talk about. So, you know, the first question is, how should we be talking about this?

Dr. Jonathan Singer

So one of the first things that we need to do is exactly what we're doing today, which is raise the issue. So much of what's happening today is fear about who is going to give me COVID-19 and will I die from it? That is an important thing to think about. But we cannot ignore the hidden or silent risks that people are experiencing, such as, suicide by firearm, the interpersonal violence that we were just talking about. So number one talk about it.

Number two, we need to acknowledge that our social service delivery system is under significant stress right now because we have people who are the eyes and ears of social services that are unable to provide services in the way that they've been trained to, in the way that they've been, that their agency's support them to. And I'm not just talking about Child Protective Services. I'm talking about all of the social services, the ones that are in the libraries, the ones that are in the after school programs, the ones that are in the nursing homes. All of these social services as well as community mental health. These play an important protective factor for folks, including suicide risk.

And so one of the things that we need to do is we need to make sure that when there is funding available to address social care, which is social care in my estimation is the big umbrella, and healthcare falls underneath that because health is one part of the social fabric. It's an important part, but it's only one piece of the social fabric. And so we need to make sure that folks are

getting emergency funding, that we don't have federal issues, federal philosophies that are dumping a bunch of money into volunteer activities and not money into already sanctioned and trained professional activities. And this is the same that's true for making sure that to the extent that we can, in safe ways, that we're continuing the research on what is happening in the moment with social isolation, suicide risk and firearms.

Colleen Creighton

And I think if I could quickly touch upon that, I think the conversation or the concern about having conversations, will they be awkward? Perhaps. But what's the alternative? And I think that's where this field is, if you look at the number of suicides that occur each year, people are still afraid to have the conversation. But we're encouraging, even if it's an awkward conversation, that conversation could save a life. So I think especially now, especially as stress levels increase, anxiety increases its more imperative now than maybe even before that we do address suicide, that we do address suicide by firearms.

Dr. Jonathan Singer

You know, one of the things that I will say and this is not intended to be a sales pitch, but I do think it's really important to you to reiterate. You know that so the American Association of Suicidology does have a Firearm and Suicide Committee. And the committee has the power to do what its members think is important in terms of addressing firearms and suicide risk. And so anybody that's listening that is concerned about this issue. This is a place where folks can gather on the sort of the suicide side of this conversation to exchange information, to come up with ideas for policy initiatives that can coalesce groups in local areas and online and things like that. And so there is, there is a structure within the American Association of Suicidology that is designed explicitly to address this topic.

JJ

No, I mean, that's a good sales pitch that is so much better than you trying to sell some you know hand sanitizer you made in your garage.

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Yes, you're not getting that, by the way, so.

JJ

Gonna resource horde that? Is there like a one stop shop sort of place people can go that will have, like, sample scripting for them or sort of sample conversations for how to do that first initial reach out. I mean, we've done them on the podcast before, specifically targeted at veterans and people with PTSD. But I'm wondering, sort of you know I'm trying to talk to my eight year old, you know? Where might I find some guidance on how to do that appropriately?

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Well, if you're talking to your eight year old because your eight year old saying things like, I'm going to kill myself or I don't think anybody would care if I was dead or alive. The very first thing that you need to do, of course, is to let them know that you're there and you're listening to them. And this is the same, whether they're 8 or 88, is to reconnect that sense of disconnection.

You know, when folks are feeling suicidal, oftentimes there is the sense that nobody cares if they live or they die, and for some folks, and this is not necessarily the case with eight year olds typically. But there's a sense that people would be better off if they weren't around. And that's that sense of burden.

And so, uh, making sure that you're able to talk about this in a way that fits for you but basic things like, you know, it sounds like you're really wondering if you know if people would care if you lived or died, and I can tell you that that I absolutely do. Tell me what else is going on right? The more people can talk, the better. There are lots of programs out there. There's a program called QPR, which provides training for folks. There's mental health first aid that provides training. If you're getting into the point where you are a trained professional or you've had these training and you're talking with somebody about lethal means, there's there's a free webinar at SPRC.org called counseling on access to lethal means--CALM. And that is a training that addresses how you can talk to somebody about suicide and firearms as well as other lethal means.

So there's lots of trainings, and resources out there now. What I'll say is that some of these many of these are in person training, which you can't do right now. And so there's some, there's some limited options for folks who are at home during this social isolation segment of our history, but there are webinars, such as the CALM Webinar QPR has something, and so there are resources out there.

JJ

I've heard before, and we've talked with other psychologists and whatnot on the podcast before about the idea that if someone is going through suicidal ideation or is moving forward with, like the intent to commit suicide, if you can sort of engage them in talking to you or pausing for a period of time that decreases their risk. Is that true?

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Yes. When you're working with somebody who's suicidal, time is your friend. At a very basic level, folks who are in a crisis, any kind of crisis, it's almost impossible to remain in a crisis state for a long time, right? It's a state of disequilibrium. We have a natural tendency towards equilibrium. When you're talking with somebody who is suicidal, the longer you can talk with them, the more you can find these little nuggets, little nuggets of gold, right? Like you're panning for gold where you find out what is your reason for living? What is your reason for staying? Maybe what are the things that are uniquely increasing your risk for suicide today that we can work to prevent in the future, right?

So having these conversations is really important Kevin Briggs is a California highway patrolman who had the Golden Gate Bridge as one of his beats. He talked about how his main technique for being part of a conversation with over 400 people who ended up not jumping was that he bought time by just talking with them. And one of things that happens when you talked with folks is you increase the social connectedness, you increase the likelihood that somebody says, Ah, you get me and believe it or not, that is an experience that many adults don't have and

so to have that experience is incredibly profound, especially in a moment where you're thinking that nobody actually cares enough to have that connecting experience with you.

JJ

I think it would be definitely cool to leave listeners with some kind of a challenge touching on what Jonathan basically saying, you know, now, while everybody is self isolating, that key to communication is still important. So I think it would be cool if we could kind of say a reminder to at least once a day, reach out to someone either inside or outside your network, check in on somebody, um, reach out via phone or text or chat or however. But like Jonathan said, I think it's key to keep communication going and don't just fall behind our screens and forget about that interconnectedness.

Dr. Jonathan Singer

And what Colleen was just saying is really important, which is that you can reach out to somebody who might really benefit from hearing from you. So often we say, if you are suicidal, call this number. If you're having thoughts of suicide, reach out. But I can tell you that that is the most difficult time for you to reach out. And time after time I've heard from suicide attempt survivors say, if somebody had reached out to me, I might not have made the attempt.

And so, taking the time to reach out, to do a daily phone call or, um, every Friday or whatever it is that works for you, that you can do, reach out to people and have a moment of connection. Now, what I also want to say is that Colleen and I in no way are intending to give the impression that simply making a phone call is enough and that folks who are suicidal are somehow fragile and just need a pat on the back.

That is not at all what we're saying. What we're saying is that in this time of social distancing, when the traditional opportunities for connections, even micro-connections, have been removed, that it's important to be intentional about reaching out because that connection is important for all of us. And if you're concerned or you're thinking that people are glad that they don't have to see you anymore if you're thinking this might be the time if that gun that is in your house is making you scared because you've thought about using it, having somebody reach out and talk to could be the thing that could save a life.

JJ

And surrendering your firearm temporarily because you're concerned is an incredibly like responsible, you know, appropriate act. And it doesn't mean that you're never going to get that firearm back. It just means that you're being safe at that moment.

Colleen Creighton

It's actually a sign of strength, recognizing you do need help. So I think recognizing and saying I do need help is not a sign of weakness at all. It's actually a sign of strength, and I think we encourage anyone to not be afraid to reach out when they need help or to recognize when they need help and surrender their firearms.

JJ

Yeah, I just it's one of the things that we've normalized in the US that if you've drank too much, your friends are supposed to take your keys, and that's that's an act of them loving you and being compassionate. That they want you to be safe. So they're taking their keys from you. And then in the next morning, you go and you pick up your keys. I really wish that we could get sort of a social norm change around firearms to be sort of the same way, if I'm concerned. I'm gonna call, you know, my friends are gonna come and just remove those.

Colleen Creighton

But I think it's extremely important to start having those conversations now if they're not already taking place, especially with the increase in gun purchases that are happening recently. You have more firearms out there, uh, individuals or families have more firearms in the home, and so I think we all need to be a little more attentive to that fact. And you know, if you know someone that you love may need some extra attention. May need some extra care, is going through something. I think you need to have that conversation and not to be afraid to have that conversation.

Dr. Jonathan Singer

And also, I think it's important for folks to remember that there are many people in America who don't even recognize firearms as being lethal in the sense of suicide, right? They might have 40 or 50 firearms in the house, and they're as invisible as the furniture. And this is one of the things that when we talk about a culture shift, we have to say, look, I realize that you've taught your kids how to use this safely, and it doesn't dawn on you that they might try and use this to kill themselves, but they just told me that they were, and so we need to remove the firearms. Or we would like you to, uh, make sure that your house is safe when somebody's talking about killing themselves with a firearm.

And one of the ways is that I can hold on to your firearms. Now that person might be like, okay, here's one of them, but they have 39 others. So this is another part of the conversation, which is that this means removing all of the firearms in the home if we're actually going to prevent suicide by firearm.

JJ

Yeah, and if we could, can we just dig in to the fact that we are seeing more gun purchases now? This is a record high, and for most of the purchases, this is for first time gun owners. And that concerns me a little bit because it's not like, you know, you can't go to a class right now to learn proper proper handling and proper storage. It's just that's not available at the moment. And so it concerns me that maybe this is a purchase done out of fear in a really stressful time.

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Well, I think you're absolutely right. I mean, I think people are scared and even though firearms will not protect you from the coronavirus, and in fact owning a firearm will put you at greater risk for harm, people are looking to do things to be active in protecting themselves. And so as somebody who is not a firearm owner, it doesn't make any sense that you would say I need a firearm. But it also doesn't make sense to me that somebody would go out as a single adult and

buy 48 rolls of toilet paper, right? These are two things that are not sensical, although you can't kill somebody with toilet paper, thank goodness.

JJ

Yeah, but fear triggers different responses in people.

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Absolutely.

Colleen Creighton

The other concern is that it's not only an individual living in their house, it may be, but there's also a family aspect. So I know, Brady does a great campaign and project with End Family Fire. So I think there's also the element that with the increase in the number of guns or firearms in the house, there's also increasing the likelihood if they're not either stored properly and they're easily accessible. That's also where we have a concern, too, is that you have maybe not the adult who purchased the gun. But you also have family members having access to that lethal means.

JJ

What would you recommend for listeners to do if they're worried about themselves, if they're worried about someone, what can they do?

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Well, if somebody is having thoughts of suicide and they're alone in their house or apartment, yeah, because of what's going on with COVID-19 absolutely reach out to a local crisis line such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. There's crisis text. There are other suicide prevention related lifelines that people can connect with. Those folks are trained, they know what to say. They're available. You can also reach out to friends, and you don't have to necessarily say that you're suicidal if you're not actively suicidal, if you just want to reach out and talk to somebody,

I know it's scary, but you absolutely do that. You can call local law enforcement and say, I've got a firearm in my home. I'm scared, please take it. And you can if for whatever reason, the Internet's down, the cell towers are down, I would write a letter to yourself and talk to yourself in the future and say, hey, this is me. This is what I want you to know. This is how I was feeling right in this moment and it's a way of getting information out there to an intended audience, which is you in the future. But it's a way of processing through writing, and all of those things have been shown to be useful and effective in reducing suicide risk.

JJ

Then what do we have to do? And I know this is a really unfair question at the moment, but what do we like as America as a whole? What do we have to do to decrease our suicide rates?

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Oh, yeah, that's really easy. So there are some very simple but not necessarily easy answers. We've mentioned one of them on this show several times, which is talking about it. You know, the fact that most people don't think of firearms and suicide as being connected means that there

has either been intentional or unintentional silencing of this problem. And so we need to address firearms and suicide as a problem. And part of that is the need to fund research. We absolutely have to fund research to find out what works in terms of reducing access, what it means to have people not able to get access to firearms in the first place.

Mike Anestis has done some really good work, research that showed that states where people have background checks and waiting periods that those laws actually reduce suicide risk compared to states where the only laws they have in place have to do with storage of firearms. And, um, and then we also need research on maybe sort of the more interpersonal side, which is how do we talk to folks? How do we create communities? We're having the conversations about removing lethal means is something that is more acceptable in the way that taking car keys away from somebody who's had too much to drink is acceptable. And so the research funds the science. Science provides insight into what works in a way that just taking our own personal experiences is great for a personal life but is not great for policy. And it allows us to fight these myths about suicide that, you know, if somebody doesn't have access to a gun, they're just going to use some other means. Well, that's not true, right? And so we need to have more research into this area. We need to have more education about what's actually going on.

JJ

Yeah, I think that that's a really important point that the access to guns actually has a major impact, which I know is one of the things that was really surprising to me.

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Yeah, absolutely. And so you know the question of what we do and the reason why I said these are simple, but not easy is, have more conversations, do more research, dispel myths, build these community norms. We need to build community norms where anybody, regardless of your political affiliation, regardless of your take on the Second Amendment that you say, hey, I love you. I care about you. Firearms, 9 out of 10 suicide attempts with a firearm is deadly. We're going to do something about that because I want you to stay. And if that is a community norm, I'm almost positive that we're going to see a huge reduction in suicide deaths in the United States.

JJ

Well, on that note, then thank you both so much for coming on today. I really do appreciate it. And I think that this and then, of course, every resource we talked about today I'll link to in the description of this episode as well, so people have access to it. But I think, yeah, it's just really important to remember that we're all connected.

Dr. Jonathan Singer

Well and JJ, yeah it was an honor and pleasure to talk with you today about this important topic.

music plays

JJ

So let's have a moment of levity here, but note that even this "Unbelievable, But" is a little scary. So if you know me, you know that I actually love Judge Judy. I mean, I really, really do. But a rerun this week was just downright scary. During it, a landlord and the tenant were having a fight which included the tenant Craig sending the landlord mean messages on Facebook. Now this is like every Judge Judy episode ever, but in this case, Judge Judy yelled at Craig about his profile photo, which was him aiming a gun into a camera with the tagline quote I'm hot as a pistol unquote. What really put this over the top came in the after trial interviews where it was revealed that Craig had been convicted and served a 15 year prison term for shooting and killing his girlfriend. So no wonder the landlord found his post scary. That's terrifying. What's even scarier, though, is that after those 15 years, somehow he's still got access to a gun.

*****music plays*****

JJ

So to begin our news wrap up, a sobering detail.

Federal gun background checks were up 300% last Monday compared to the same day a year before, according to the gun industry's trade group. Now we're very happy that background checks are being performed. But I have to say I'm always worried when there is a surge of gun purchases, particularly now in this time of heightened fear and particularly when these are first time gun buyers.

Also in the news, some gun dealers have defied measures to halt the spread of coronavirus, prompting officials to enforce their closure. We saw this in Philadelphia, where on Monday the city ordered all quote nonessential businesses to shut. But gun stores remained open as buyers flocked in.

Meanwhile, Alaska Congressman Don Young skipped a corona virus relief fund vote but did make time for an NRA event. Young, who is Alaska's sole Congress person and an NRA board member, flew back home the day before a March 14th House vote on a coronavirus relief package. Instead, he attended a senior citizen luncheon where he made light of the seriousness of COVID-19 and attended an NRA fundraiser.

Luckily because I promised you something happy. Some states are moving in the right direction. Maryland has ramped up support for fighting community gun violence. Before a journey due to the coronavirus. State lawmakers approved a measure that requires 3 to \$10 million to go to the States Violence Intervention and Prevention Program each year. To further support evidence based gun violence reduction strategies. This bill also included 3.6 million for Baltimore Safe Streets Program, which deploys violence interrupters, to underserved neighborhoods to defuse conflicts. This is great, but sadly, Maryland is only one of eight states to fund community based prevention efforts.

*****music plays*****

JJ

Thanks as always, Brady's life saving work in Congress, the courts and communities across the country is made possible thanks to you for more information on Brady or how to get involved in the fight against gun violence, please like and subscribe to the podcast. Come see us online at BradyUnited.org or follow us on social @Bradybuzz. Be brave and remember, take action, not sides.

*****Brady musical outro*****

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