Epsiode 87: Decolonizing the Vote with Christine Nobiss

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SPEAKERS

JJ Janflone, Kelly Sampson, Sikowis

JJ Janflone 00:09

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

S

Sikowis 00:40

Hey, everybody, I am so excited to have you here with us for a really special minisode with Sikowis of Seeding Sovereignty. Now, one of the things I want to highlight, this happens a lot in the nonprofit world. And it certainly happens a lot in the podcast world where we often record weeks before things go to print, is that sometimes things change, and in this case, is no longer with Seeding Sovereignty, but is now with the Great Plains Action Society. That actually works out really well for you listeners, because now you get links to both Seeding Sovereignty, and the Great Plains Action Society in the descriptor of this episode to go check out. That being said, everything that we talked about that's happening with Seeding Sovereignty and Radicalize The Vote is still happening. So check out this episode, check out amazing Christine Nobiss, aka Sikowis, how great all of her work is check out Brady's Voting Access Saves Lives Initiative, and then also go check out

the Great Plains Action Society. Now with that, I want to, you know, now that we've pulled back the curtain on timing, go back in time, and have Sikowis introduce herself to all of you. Yes, my name is Sikowis, also Christine Nobbis, and I'm Plains Cree-Saulteaux, of the George Gordon First Nation, Saskatchewan. And I grew up in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and I live in Iowa city now and I've been living here for about 15 years. And I ate a colonizer and the director of our shift program was Seeding Sovereignty, Seeding Sovereignty is an indigenous woman led organization. It's a collective of women and queer folks, and you know, LGBTQIA+ folks that are working to, you know, dismantle systems of, you know, based upon white supremacy and colonized systems in order to bring forth a better world, you know, a world built on an indigenous-led regenerative economy, a world built on a an economy of compassion. And a lot of this work we do, obviously, is indigenous, centered, indigenous led, in fact, all of it is indigenous-centered, indigenous-led, and we work to uplift and empower our folks to get their voices and their issues heard.

JJ Janflone 02:43

Since I found out about your organization, I've been so floored by the amount of work and sort of the reach that you all have. But I was wondering if you could talk about the the position of sort of "decolonizer" a little bit.

S

Sikowis 02:55

Yeah, that's actually on my business card.

JJ Janflone 02:57

I mean, that's one, I wish I could tell that 'Hi, my name is JJ and I'm a decolonizer,' like, I, it's great.

03:04

So about three years ago, our executive director Janet said, 'You need a title.' And I'm like, well I don't really do anything in particular, because I kind of do it all, you know, I, I write, I organize events, I you know, organize like events from grassroots level to national level, I am an artist, I create my own graphics, we do our own advertising and promotion for events that we're doing. And, you know, I work on specific issues, I do work on 'big A' in Iowa here, which is big agriculture, and like, you know, trying to overcome the damage that colonial farming practices have done, but you know, we work on the climate crisis, I

work on missing and murdered Indigenous women's issues, which will be a part of this conversation today. And, and just, you know, so many other things that are happening, you know, we also try to keep up with current events, and so on and so forth. So I sat for a long time trying to think of like, what, what is it that I do, you know, and it's really hard, because, you know, I, like I just said, I kind of do it all. And, you know, I'm an academic, you know, so I was thinking about, you know, all these different terms that I've, you know, used just when I was getting my master's degree, and I just, you know, thought of the term decolonize and that just, is what I'm trying to do. That that's like, what I've been trying to do, my whole life is decolonize my mind, my life and my world, you know, and, and make it a better place for indigenous folks and all folks to live in. And so that's how I came up with the term "decolonizer" And since then, there has been some people that have, you know, moved in the opposite direction saying that you can't decolonize a colonized system and you know, the term decolonize really isn't the right term. And but I, I do believe in it, I do believe that we are trying to decolonize, if anything, you know, our minds from certain ways of thinking that have been instilled in us based upon what Western you know, ideologies are about, you know, just when it comes to the the white hetero patriarchy, right. So that that's how I came up with the word decolonize.

K Kelly Sampson 05:06

I think that's so powerful. And especially I love that you said it's on your business card, because I feel like one of the things, even seeing so many of the problems that at least I see in the United States, some of it starts with just the myths that we have, and the total fantasy of the foundations of this country, and what it's based on and what it's all about. And so I feel like your title, in a way also just confronts people, makes them have to actually deal with the reality rather than this sort of, I don't know, rose colored, tweet, neat little story of you know, we were a British colony, and then we fought back, and we were righteous and wonderful and pure. And now we are the beacon of the free world like it, I don't know, I just think your title is very, very, very, cool.

S Sikowis 05:50

Thank you. It gets to the heart of the problem is what i think that's that's really what this is, this is our problem. This is the you know, the actual disease is colonization, colonial capitalism is what I actually think is the problem and that's, that's what we have to be doing right now, fighting that. I think, and then, present through all of that too, like, just the idea of colonial capitalism is violence, right, and sort of the the presence of violence, violence being done, in particular, like in this case, against indigenous communities. And I'm wondering if we could talk a little bit about gun violence in particular, and some of the work I know that you guys had a wonderful zine, for example, that I will be linking in the

description of this episode, talking about sort of gun violence, and I'm wondering if we can maybe unpack what that has historically looked like, towards indigenous native communities, and then sort of what it looks like now? Um, I know big question, I'm so sorry. I've been doing this all day to people giving them really complicated questions and being like in, you know, in a few sound bites, if you could just solve racism for me, that would be wonderful. You know, that's sort of what I've been doing day to day. So I apologize. I think this is a good time to talk about the zine I wrote titled The Second Amendment: A sacred covenant of genocide and enslavement between the nation state and settler militias. You know, I, I've often argued for years now that I don't really believe the Second Amendment was written to protect, you know, US citizens or if you will, back in the day like the the colony of the US from, you know, foreign invaders, or to keep their government in check. I think that the Second Amendment was written into law so that it basically allowed colonial militias and settler vigilantes to continue to murder and and rape and and basically pillage native lands and, and to, I guess, scare and, or coerce, Black folks into continued slavery.

JJ Janflone 07:43

Which is just so fundamentally different from how we're seeing, like, for example, like, mostly white militias now or so called "militias" now present their version of the Second Amendment.

S

Sikowis 07:54

Exactly, I, it's such a copout, and I just I feel like these people either are just so uneducated, or they've just they've, they've drank the Kool Aid, they really don't understand their own histor, I don't think. In fact, the country in general doesn't understand its own history, because it's it's whitewashed its history to such a point, that even the people, you know, teaching what they consider correct history don't understand what that is. We often joke within our native communities that our indigenous children and our indigenous people have a much better grasp on what real history is, and as well on federal policy, more so than, you know, teachers and lawyers might have. Just because, you know, we grew up dealing with that in our communities, like all the time, and so yeah, I definitely feel that this country was, you know, founded at the point of a gun. I mean, you know, mind you back in the, you know, early part of colonization, it was a really ineffective gun that blew people's heads off half the time when they were packing, you know, gunpowder in there . But it's, you know, like, this country really was founded at the point of the a gun, for the sake of, you know, free labor and free land, it was a tool for theft and violence.

Kelly Sampson 09:09

And I mean, I'm so glad that you talked about how went all the way back to before there even was the United States. This idea of these settlers, basically using guns to conduct a genocide. I mean, I don't know how else to say it. And I'm wondering if, you know, you can also talk about what conditions are like today, and I realized that there are, the Indigenous experiences not a monolith, but just general trends around gun violence in Indigenous communities in the modern times as well.

Sikowis 09:41

Yeah, I think that the fact that we're, we are in a pandemic right now is actually a good time to to talk about it. As I know, you both know, there is a massive increase in gun sales. Also, we do know that during pandemics or when people are shut in you know, or you know, face lockdown that there is an increase in domestic violence or I would say gender based violence because as we all know, women face the majority of domestic violence in this country and in the world. And so while lockdowns are, you know, and stay-at-home orders are, you know, going all over the world, you know, we have, you know, this increase in gun sales, it's like a perfect storm for gun violence as well. I'm going to read something to you really quickly, you know, congressional findings for the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, H.R. 1585 state that women in the United States are 11 times more likely to be murdered with guns than women in other high income countries and that the presence of a gun in domestic violence situations increases the risk of homicide for women by 500%. And furthermore, you know, gun violence has a disproportionate impact on Black American, Indian, Alaska Native and Hispanic woman, in addition, segments of the LGBTQ community and people with disabilities are highly vulnerable to severe forms of relationship abuse, but there is alarming little data. And that's something that every town put up. And so you know, I, we all know what's happening within our indigenous communities, and within our black in our Latino/Latina communities, we just don't really have the the statistics to prove it. But based upon what we see in the public sphere, where often at times, it's a, you know, a person of color, you know, usually a black man that receives some form of abuse, or is murdered by you know, police or white supremacists. What have you imagine what's happening in the private sphere? So imagine what's not getting out there. And that's, that's really where I'm at right now with gun violence within, you know, BIPOC communities.

JJ Janflone 11:52

I mean, like, for example, even legislation that is being held back, you know, that I think people don't know about or don't know the implications of it.

Sikowis 11:59

Yeah, the Violence Against Women Act, which is a highly important piece of legislation for indigenous folks that actually has like the only piece of legislation, within it, that allows us to prosecute non-natives on tribal land, it's like a really big step for our sovereignty. And the Violence Against Women Act currently, has been sitting in limbo for over a year now, maybe even a year and a half at this point, because of the boyfriend loophole, which the NRA has been heavy, heavily lobbying against, which would increase protections to survivors, by disallowing, you know, more than just like, what would be considered like a spouse that is a living spouse, you know, it'd be also to like, you know, boyfriends that they're dating and like. It would increase the circle of what is considered domestic abuse. And so the NRA is heavily lobbying against this, which is why I call the NRA a domestic terrorist organization on a regular basis, I think that they are definitely at the they are the vanguard, or they're, they're at the front of like, what the 'white head' or patriarchy is, and they are definitely a group that needs to go away. I'm so glad they're being sued right now for disrespecting 501(c)3 rules. And, you know, all the other issues with money that, obviously they are so tied into, but um, yeah. I just, the Violence Against Women Act, the Savannah Act, the Not Invisible acts. These are all pieces of legislation that are still sitting there doing nothing, just, and people and there's people that are fighting so hard to get them passed and, you know, we really, really need these pieces of legislation passed. It's important, and that's why we need to vote, you know, because we need to get people in there that are going to stand up for indigenous folks, you know. And I can't say that, you know, because, you know, we are allowed indigenous folks are not considered a political entity, based upon what the IRS has written and like, we have issues that go way back prior to even the establishment of this government. And so like, you know, we can talk about these things and say that, yes, we need this passed and it's because it's for our safety. Well, and I wonder, too, if you could tell our listeners a little bit about the current and ongoing issue with like, missing and murdered and murdered Indigenous women as well. Because I know that that's a huge issue, and I'm always shocked when people don't seem to know about it. But I think that that goes back to what you and Kelly have both articulated, which is this idea of people in the US in particular, not being aware of what is happening or the history of what has happened to indigenous communities.

14:43

Yeah. That laugh is a one of a little bit of irony or sarcasm. I don't know we'd call it but um...

JJ Janflone 14:52

I know it's a heavy question.

14:54

it's still, it's still I've been doing this work for a long time and I come from a community where, you know, a lot of women and girls have gone missing. Winnipeg actually, we have a very high rate of indigenous folks living there and probably the highest in the country. And so like per capita, and so it's a very, like I joke, I call it a rezi kind of city. And just, there's just lots of native folks that have culture, native things going on. At the same time, there's a real ghetto culture, a lot of poverty, a lot of, you know, abuse, drug abuse, things like that going on, which is again, like a, you know, perfect storm for, for people to go missing, you know, or be murdered. And, and obviously, not just by like, our own people, this is happening by, by by other folks as well. Like, for instance, 90% of indigenous people will experience violence from a non tribal member within their lifetime. And I mean, I, I know, this just from firsthand experience, you know, like I was seeing what I saw growing up that this is definitely something that I believe to be true. And I also wrote something not too long ago, police, government and media silence is violence. And so why are we hearing about the the fact that Indigenous women and girls and men as well, I mean, basically all of us, like I call it, I actually call it MIR, missing and murdered indigenous relatives. The reason we're not hearing in mainstream media, why indigenous folks have like the highest rates of you know, murder and, and being missing in the country is simply because the want to erase us was so strong, that the sentiment still carries on today, whether or not people know it or not, you know. They might not even realize that like they're ignoring indigenous peoples, based upon the fact that the history books aren't teaching them the right history. And these white supremacist institutions like the government, the police, the media outlets, they, they themselves have been built to ignore the indigenous problem. And so that's why we don't hear about it, you know, like police brutality is not just physical violence, it's the absence of action. You know, cops are slower to respond to calls happening like in, you know, BIPOC neighborhoods and LGBTQIA circles, right. Cops, I don't know if you ever heard about 'starlighting,' but this was something that happened in Saskatchewan like, maybe 20/30 years ago, and still happens, but it just happened to be like a, kind of, a trend there for a while, where you pick up a, you know, a drunken person, drop them off in the middle of nowhere, and they don't necessarily have to be drunk, either. I mean, that was just the that was the stereotype. That was what people were saying, right. But I I, you know, I beg to differ, maybe these, I don't think that that's always the case. I just think they just picked up people they didn't like, or, and they dropped them off in the middle of nowhere in the winter with no clothes, like no proper attire, and these people would die. And that was a thing that and then that's still a thing, that is something that happens right now to this day, you know, with the houseless with any type of person that they consider to be, you know, a problem. They

just, they take them somewhere and they drop them off. And, and then these people are like, you know, left to fend for themselves. And we all know that that's, that's a real issue. So so there's that. Um, you know, there's, there's the fact that, you know when, when, when a BIPOC person goes missing, like, you know, they are very slow to respond in a search effort. There's much more, you know, even government databases aren't set up, you know, to, to necessarily, you know, keep track of the trends, you know, like, it would be nice to know how many people, how many woman Indigenous women have died. And of course, Black and all the other communities have died from gun violence, for instance, but we don't have those, we dont have that on record

K Kelly Sampson 18:52

I was really, when you were talking about the erasure and how, you know, part of the reason why we're not getting these reports is because these institutions want to forget it, that always strikes me whenever I hear officials, even officials who are trying to make some point about unity, say we're a nation of immigrants, and I'm like you're leaving something out. You're leaving out the fact that not everybody on this land immigrated here. And indigenous people were here when you got here, but it's, it's not as neat to say what really happens. So they'll just say we're a nation of immigrants and leave that out. And another thing that struck me is when you talked about white supremacist institutions, and we're seeing a lot, I mean, voting and the right to have your voice heard, at least the way it was first envisioned and the way people are trying to preserve it. It was an institution that was created for white property owning men. And so we're still dealing with the legacies around access to voting, access to democracy for everyone who wasn't a part of that original pact. And so I was wondering if you could talk about some of the issues or barriers that Indigenous people face when trying to access democracy?

S Sikowis 20:12

Yes. So I, I have, I'm leading up a program or a campaign, if you will, called Radicalize The Vote, where we are doing what we can to get as many Indigenous folks registered and voting this year. And, you know, it's part of a much larger efforts around the country, there are other organizations and tribal nations doing the same thing. And we're just here to, you know, help out, you know, the reason I, you know, really wanted to start this is because I do feel frustration about the lack of ability to get to the polls for Indigenous folks. And I can't say that I'm actually solving the problem. But what I'm trying to do with this particular work is, is make it culturally catchy for those folks that can vote and, and and you know, entice them to vote, based upon the fact that everything that's happening at the front lines ends up in legislation. And so like, I really want there to be a better understanding of like, why, you know, we need to vote. Because if you, you know, if you

spend this so much energy, time, effort, like putting your body on the line, to try and change something, right, like, you know, for instance, right now, people are trying to, you know, modify, you know, they're trying to, they're trying to reform the police, right? How does that happen in the end, right? Like, legislators have to, you know, sign into law, different different bills that will, will modify things. And so we need to vote because we need to get the right people in there to do what they need to do. And we, I call it 'indigenizing Congress' or infiltrating Congress, or, you know, whatever it is, you want to call it, because yeah, it is in our system. But, but we still need to, to get in there and, and change it. And I feel like we have a responsibility as stewards of this land, as well as Black folks to be honest, because I consider us to be in this fight together and Latinx people to, to do this, because, in essence, I guess you could say, we know better. I mean, I am not, I don't want to be too condescending, I just I do think we know better. And I do feel like these particular, this particular culture of whiteness that has evolved in America is just really immature still. But then back to the vote for native folks. We face serious disenfranchisement at the polls, in terms of lack of ability to get to polls, which can sometimes be you know, over 30 miles away. We face disenfranchisement, when it comes to housing, you know, as you know, a lot of people will not send ballots or allow people to vote through a P.O. box. And a lot of natives have P.O. boxes, because that's just what it's like on a reservation. And so, you know, and then there's also just permanent addresses, we have, I think, probably, I'm gonna guess, like, probably some of the highest rates in the country of, of houselessness not just people living on the streets, though, okay, those numbers are very high. For us, we, we have a houseless rate, where we have a lot of folks that move between households, you know. They, they, it's a very, it's, it's part of our culture to, to, like, you know, to live with an extended family. And so people move around a lot, right. And but it's so if you don't have like a, you know, a permanent address on record somewhere, then that stops you from voting, you know, we also have a lot of issues surrounding even even licenses and having like our, our signatures on file. We are the, we have like, on some reservations, unemployment rates as high up as 80%. And so, you know, there's going to be issues with having access to all of these things, even the gas money, you know, to get to a poll, where you can do everything in person and prove in person, like, you know, who you are, and where you live, you know, just getting getting the gas money to do that is an issue. So, you know, and not only is there that now, there's USPS doing what they're doing. And, you know, we do know that there are, you know, I just I just read that right now that somebody somewhere is trying to, you know, stir up, you know, indigenous folks in the US to, you know, confrontational online, based upon issues that are just being essentially made up, you know, something similar to what happened with Hillary Clinton and the Russians and all of that, you know, I am not going to go there. But you know, that it's just it. And then of course, I do, I do believe that the government is still, you know, I don't know what government I'm talking about, necessarily what portion of it or if I'm talking about, you know, just just there's somebody somewhere that still

wants to disenfranchise us and know and like, suppress our vote. And I think it's because we, as indigenous people, have a powerful vote, even though we don't have high populations, I think that people do want to listen to us. And so that you know, how we vote is going to affect how other people vote. And I don't think this country really wants us to have that voice heard. And speaking of that voice, and the ways that people get access to it, I'm wondering if we could talk even more sort of about the necessity, particularly for those that live in rural areas and rural reservations, like the necessity of the mail and and why that is so vital. But also, just like the the issues with access for voting, because I don't, one I think that a lot of Americans just, period, just don't know about the Indigenous population that continues to exist, despite everything in the US. I think that they don't know that there are people who live in cities who identify as native that, there are people who live on reservation, like I think there's a lot of very, they've seen a John Wayne movie once. And that's the the beginning and end unfortunately, of sort of their "cultural awareness." And but for particularly people in rural areas, the mail is so important, because I think, as you articulated, like even getting out physically to vote, you know, that could be hours of driving to a polling place. So I'm wondering if we could talk a little bit about that, and what sort of this disenfranchisement of the mail can mean.

26:21

I mean, USPS is the you know, poor people's way of communicating. It's the poor people's way of getting, you know, information out to each other, and, and goods and what have you. Obviously, we all know that these careers are highly expensive, and people can't afford to send things you know, through them. I'm just thinking about right now, this this Navajo radio project that I've been helping with, I've been helping an elder put together this radio project that is very powerful. And you know, she she's done, the majority of the work, I've just been there to, you know, just to support and help fundraise and, you know, help recreate, like, you know, some videos for it. But so the reason why she put this video together, or these, this, this ad, these ads together, which are going out on Navajo radio stations, is because many elders still don't speak English. On the Navajo Nation, many, many people, a lot of people do not have access to Wi Fi, there's a there's a really big digital divide there. And that that's everybody from like, you know, young to old. And so how do you get that information then, right.? And so it's through radio, that's how they receive a bulk of their information, elders, and another people that might not have access to WiFi, and then through mail, you know, the, the Navajo Nation, you know, sends out information via mail to their people. And as we know, this is also how a lot of people in rural areas get their information as well, because you know, Wi Fi, you know, as much as we'd like to think it's everywhere, it's still not there are areas where people still don't have access. Standing Rock was a good example. You know, when we were there, you know, we, we people couldn't, they couldn't access Wi Fi outside of the camps, or inm I'm sorry,

inside the camps.

S Sikowis 28:15

And cell service is not ubiquitous, either. I think there's this belief that everyone has a cell phone, and everyone has landline internet. And that's simply especially if you're in an economically disadvantaged area, you don't. No, no you don't. And reservations are some of the most ill serviced areas in the country. I mean, it's not just about you know, cell to cell phone towers and WiFi, it's also about you know, even like road infrastructure, water. There's a small town in New Mexico right now, that is going through some pretty dire issue of having lack of access to clean water. And because they don't have, you know, piping to Albuquerque, which is actually just a few miles away. And and so like, it's just if we don't have access to like clean water, and and even like, and gas lines, you know, because a lot of reservations as well rely on propane. So they have these really big propane tanks to heat their homes in the winter and so, you know, other things. But if you don't even have access to those things, then what makes you think that there's going to necessarily be access to, you know, cell towers and Wi Fi. And so this is why the mail is so important. And we all know that this is this, this is highly important right now, because of COVID, Indigenous populations have faced the highest rates of mortality per capita in the country, because of COVID. And that's why it's really important that indigenous folks vote by mail, but I feel like they're the most disenfranchised when it comes to actually voting by mail. So, you know, it's it's a really tough situation,

K Kelly Sampson 29:51

Kind of to go along with the conversation we've been having about issues and conditions on the ground and then access to voting and people's ability to sort of speak into and get representation on issues. One of the things that we've been kind of working on at Brady is, and it's, I definitely, like JJ, I grew up in a city and have much more, I'm much more well-versed around issues around urban populations. But one of the things we've been seeing, and I'll just use DC, for example, is that I don't know how much you know about the lay of DC. But it's, we're broken up into these things called wards. And the wards that experienced the most gun violence were wards seven and eight, also are the wards that happen to be a majority black. They're also the wards that suffer the most in terms of like disinvestment of services from the city and things of that nature. And there's also a lower level of participation in the electoral process. And one of the arguments that people have made outside of Brady and Brady sort of taken under our wing is this idea that, in a lot of ways, the people who are most disenfranchised by the system are also the ones who would stand to have the most to gain if they could participate and push, especially like local officials to actually listen to what they're saying, and bring in funding for programs

that they care about in their communities and, and respond. And so I'm wondering, are there parallels there for what you've been seeing from indigenous communities? And it's okay, if there aren't.

S Sikowis 31:27

Yeah, no, that's actually, that's really cool. This is something new to me that I've never really thought about. And I think that this is a great opportunity to kind of brainstorm here. You know, I think about cities like Phoenix, you know, Albuquerque, Sioux City, right here in Iowa. And, and other, you know, places, you know, where you have really high rates or higher indigenous populations. And I already know, like, just from knowing the cities and the people that I would definitely say that the same thing is going on. I would, I would, I would bet that and I can't say that I know that because I'm just, you know, guessing here based upon experience, and knowing how these cities work and knowing like the high houseless populations that there are there and the the rates of violence that are going on that that definitely there, I think there would be a correlation for sure, similar to what's happening with black folks. I and you know, as you know, I will you don't know, but in case you didn't 70% of indigenous folks don't live on the reservation anymore, they live in urban settings. And so, you know, it's a, it's a fair bet. You know, I was just thinking about Sioux City, because that's near and dear to my heart. And they, you know, the indigenous population there, you know, can vary between, like, you know, like 2%, to maybe three on a good day, because it's a very transient place. Um, it's like the tri-state area of South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska. And there's, like, you know, four reservations that are like in close proximity that like, people come and go from, you know, Santee, Omaha Winnebago, not too far away. And then even the Meskwaki in Iowa, you know, they're a few hours away. But so, this, this particular place, is, you know, a really, there's like a real native corridor going on in Sioux City and like, down, up to Sioux Falls, and then down to Omaha. So, so it's a very transient place when it comes to like natives coming and going. But though they only make up maybe 2% of the population, they make up, from a study that was done a few years ago, you know, 48 to 63% of the houseless population. Now, just based on like, common sense, and what we know what houseless people are facing, do you think they're voting right? We also know that...

 JJ Janflone 33:59

And not that it's not that they don't want to vote, it's that they don't have access.

34:04

Exactly. No, yeah that wasn't meant to that wasn't a remark and based upon whether they want to or not, or have the, you know, the, you know, the ability to or want to vote or anything. It's more like, do you think they're able to vote?

JJ Janflone 34:17

Mm hmm. Yeah, I just want -- I figured you weren't -- I just wanted to make it really, really clear for listeners because...

34:23

I want them to think I'm disparaging houseless folks at all, because I'm not. I'm just saying based upon what I was talking about earlier with voter disenfranchisement and law, you know, just addresses, transportation, everything you need to vote, you know, are they voting? And, you know, I don't I don't think that the numbers are high. And, and then so that makes me also think about, you know, the areas of Sioux City also whether it's high indigenous populations from south of the border, that are living there that are working in these meatpacking plants. You know, getting COVID, you know, just facing tremendous uphill battles, in terms of just getting even a fair, a fair minimum wage. And it makes me wonder, you know, are these folks, are they able to get out and vote? You know, are they facing higher rates of violence within their communities, racially motivated violence? You know, I, you know, I, I would, I would dare to say so for sure.

S Sikowis 35:27

And that's something that sort of, I know, for me has been flagged, because also too, and and we consider at Brady, we would define suicide as a form of gun violence as well. You know, 100 people in the US die a day, due to gun violence. 60% of that is is suicides. And from what I've seen, too, we've seen, and I think this goes directly what you're talking about rates of suicide increased during COVID. But I've also seen just sort of statistics of, like, native and indigenous youth being at higher risk of suicide than European American teens.

36:03

Yes, I have actually written about this as well. Yes, suicide, I said, suicide should be considered a component in the the MMIW or the MMIR rates. Indigenous women have the highest rate of suicide in the country, it has risen to 139% since 2009. Yeah, and and for men, 71%, you know. I wrote an open letter to Trump actually, on May 5, and suicide was

one of the issues I wrote about, I said, suicide rates for indigenous peoples in the US have risen significantly, so sorry, not since 2009, since 1999, forgive me, and like I said, 139% for Women 71% for men. We have faced genocide and colonization for centuries, and have only begun to legally gain the same rights and safety as settler society. However, legal safety does not erase institutionalized white supremacy, daily racial and gender depression, nor the ongoing historical trauma in our communities. These are also factors and the MMIR crisis, and why suicide should be counted in the statistics. Our relatives are not committing suicide in a vacuum, they're doing it for all the same reasons that they go missing and, or are murdered. And again, I don't know what the statistics are for people killing themselves with a gun. But, you know, I'm pretty sure that that would be part of it. And I definitely feel like suicide is also a form of gun violence as well. It's, it's really, really sad.

K Kelly Sampson 37:41

I was wondering, first of all, that letter was super powerful, but what does MMIR mean, I'm not familiar.

S Sikowis 37:48

Missing and murdered Indigenous relatives, I was just mentioning earlier, like, the term MMIW is used. And then there's also like, MYWTG, t to s, you know, like, you know, a girl's trends and, and two spirits. And but you know, I, our men actually have, um, there are some advocates that even say that our men might even have higher rates of being missing. And so, I don't know, the, it's hard to know the statistics on that, because there hasn't been a lot of studies done on that yet. But that's why I just like to use the term missing and murdered indigenous relatives. And now I want to say today, you've inspired me so much. So I'm wondering if there's anything you would want to share with our listeners on things that they can do if they've also been inspired and want to get involved? You know, beyond if they have the means, obviously, helping support. But you know, is there should? Is there something that you'd love to for them to get involved in with Radicalize the Vote? Is there anything in particular that you want to sort of plug for them?

38:54

Yeah, please check out RadizalizeTheVote.org and get, hop on our outreach circle platform, we're trying to build a community through there to activate people to you know, just do different tasks in order to increase voter registration in Indian country. And, you know, contact your local group near you, you know, BLM or a tribal nation or indigenous

group/organization doing something and see what you can do to help out because the reality of the situation is, is that we have been fighting the system, and we will continue to fight it as indigenous people, you know, as Black people, Latinx people, Muslim people, Asian people, we will continue to fight, oh, and LGBTQ. I can't forget that. And woman, you know, there's just there's a, there's a serious large amount of disenfranchised folks in this country. You know, even class, even class based disenfranchisement. And what we need is some real, real solidarity. And then we also need, you know, white folks to really like hop on, get on board in a real way, not just for protest, you know. Not just for, you know, a couple weeks while something's trending, like really just dig in to what's going on in your community, and do what you can to build bridges, because that's really the only way that this change is going to happen. It has to happen from the bottom up. You know, we need to get who we want in, you know, office to make these changes that we need to be safe and happy and healthy, and for a more equitable future. You know, that that's, that's the only way I feel like it's going to happen.

JJ Janflone 40:51

Well, I want to thank you so much for for coming. And I'm going to link to everything in the description of this episode, so that folks can check things out on their own time and click and educate themselves and be involved. But I think we we kind of keep circling back to the I, I, this is the thing that the more and more I talk to activists, we keep circling back to the same thing, which is people have to have ownership of themselves. And if you can't get out, vote if you can't support like if you can, and you have the capacity support so that others have that opportunity, as well.

S

Sikowis 41:21

For sure.

JJ Janflone 41:25

Hey, got something to share with the podcast? Listeners can 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. And, you know what else you can do? Listen to this ad!

S

Sikowis 41:40

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gives you military grade protection online, and you can access all your favorite sites without restriction. They never log your activity when using your servers, and you can always trust your privacy to them. Someone who ideally, once COVID is over, would travel quite a bit to countries or places with internet restrictions. I gotta say, I love NordVPN. Right now listeners have an opportunity to support the show and get 70% off on a two year plan by clicking the link in the description.

JJ Janflone 42:11

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