

Episode 203-- Fighting Fear “ and Assault Weapons “ with Ha...

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SPEAKERS

Richard Aborn, JJ Janflone, Kelly Sampson



JJ Janflone 00:09

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JJ Janflone 00:37

Hey everybody, welcome back to another episode of Red, Blue, and Brady. I'm JJ.



Kelly Sampson 00:43

And I'm Kelly.



JJ Janflone 00:43

And together, we're here for part two of our episodes on the assault weapons ban.



Kelly Sampson 00:48

Yeah, and I think this episode, like the one before it (which if you haven't listened to, press pause, go listen to it), is really helpful because it gives us some perspective on what it took to get an assault weapons ban passed in the first place, and also helps us be grounded in lessons learned and what we can do this time.



JJ Janflone 01:10

Exactly. As some of you may know, the assault weapons ban initially passed in 1994, it then lapsed in 2004. And that can seem, you know, the time period can seem, I think, especially for our younger listeners, like that was a lifetime ago, right? But it really, actually isn't. And there are so many lessons we can learn from advocates like our guest today, the fantastic Richard Aborn, who was then president of the organization that would become Brady, the Handgun Control Inc. You know, there are so many lessons that they used to get that ban passed in the first place in 1994, that we can learn to help get a ban passed in 2023.

R

Richard Aborn 01:48

So, my name is Richard Aborn. I'm a lawyer by training, a former prosecutor, and my experience as a prosecutor in Manhattan led me to the gun control movement, which was one of the most satisfying times in my life. It ultimately led me to the leadership of what was then Handgun Control Inc., now the Brady Campaign. We successfully passed some legislation during my tenure: the Brady Bill, the ban on assault weapons, the ban on large magazines. And we established a very robust center to prevent handgun violence, steeped in the belief that the solutions to gun violence are not singular, but multidisciplinary. And to this day, I pursue this passion of mine, to try and do whatever I can, in my own small way, to try and reduce gun violence.



JJ Janflone 02:31

I mean, that's astounding. And we're going to talk about just some of that today. You need your own full podcast series, we'll have to bring you back in just for that, or memoirs, at the very least. But I wonder, you know, you started on this, but what brought you into working in gun violence prevention to begin with?

R

Richard Aborn 02:48

It was actually my experience as a homicide DA, in the Manhattan DA's office. And it was actually really simply this, every time I went to a homicide, or every time I ever read an autopsy of a homicide, inevitably it was a gun and a handgun. And it became pretty clear to me, that if we were going to pursue our highest calling as prosecutors, which is to prevent crime in the first place, prosecute if we failed to prevent, that we had to go after the guns. But I felt that based on two reasons, one, just the sheer number of guns that were being used in shootings and killings — it was like 75-80% of all the killings. And secondly, I refuse to subscribe to this notion that was prevalent at the time, that Americans were somehow more violent than other people. I didn't believe it then, don't believe it now. It's just that we have these instruments of lethality in our hands, that when we go to exercise anger, we end up shooting, as opposed to using fists or knives or screaming or something.

R

Richard Aborn 03:47

So I thought, well, if we really want to reduce violence, at that time in our city, now in our nation, we had to go after the guns. I went to the then sitting DA Robert Morgenthau and said

nation, we had to go after the guns. I went to the then-sitting DA Robert Morgenthau and said, "why don't you let me see if I can trace where these guns are coming from?" I found out very quickly that they were coming from out of state, set up one of the first interstate strike forces to buy guns that were coming into the state illegally. And I was a DA, I needed law to prosecute, I realized in that process, that there was just an absolute dearth of federal law governing the distribution of guns. And this light went off, well of course, we have guns all over the place, there's no law limiting the distribution of guns, not even doing a basic background check on people who are buying guns. So that really led me to, well, to be honest, I got very angry about that. I said, of course, Americans are slaughtering each other and this is unnecessary. And the pain of this was, even back then, you could see that it was falling on young men of color. And that struck me as doubly unfair because it was such a concentration of the violence in our most challenged neighborhoods. So I actually left the government to go work on the gun control issue and help set up one of the early gun control groups in New York State, and that led me to some discussions with what was then this fledgling group called Handgun Control, founded by a gentleman named Pete Shields out of San Francisco. Ultimately, I went on the board and then ultimately I was asked to run the operation, which I did with great joy for a number of years, great joy and a little bit of angst, a little bit of tension.

K

Kelly Sampson 05:24

I mean, there's a whole story in what you just shared about seeing guns play out in crime, tracking them, realizing they were coming from out of state, and then seeing the disproportionate burden on, you know, men of color. That is a whole thing. We definitely have to have you back. But I want to drill down a little bit. You mentioned that you became the president of Handgun Control Inc., from 1992 to 1996. And could you kind of share for listeners the history of that organization?

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Richard Aborn 05:54

Sure. Well, that organization is now the Brady Campaign, it's the exact same organization, just a very smart change in name. It was started by a man named Pete Shields, who was a very senior executive at DuPont, whose son was killed in a ritualistic slaying in San Francisco. And Pete, like many of us, and particularly people that have suffered these horrors, became quite incensed about the gun issue in the United States and founded Handgun Control. He got first Sarah Brady interested and involved and then got Jim Brady, as Jim was able to do so, involved. And a bunch of us around the country started coming together, and our organization began to grow. And at that time, I think there was only one other national gun control organization, which I believe was a ban organization. I was always opposed, then, and I'm now opposed, to a ban on all guns. I do think it would probably violate the Second Amendment, I think there's something to the Second Amendment. And I also think it's unnecessary. There are gun owners across this country who handle guns in a safe and responsible way. They keep them locked up, they train their children on how to use them. They don't end up in accidents, that's fine. It's sport, it's part of the culture it's hunting. Whether you like those things or not, it's an established part of the American identity. And it's okay, we don't need to take guns away from those people. But we do need to focus our efforts on making sure that criminals who are out there to do harm to others don't have access to guns. And what I liked about Handgun Control was that it was very much aligned in that way. In fact, if you think of the term handgun control, it was about controlling, not banning. And that's what we still seek to do: control the illegal distribution of handguns. And by the way, we say handguns to buttress this notion, because

this was about reducing violent crime, of course, accidents and suicides to be short, but the bulk of it was about reducing violent crime. Keep in mind, while crime is rising very rapidly, right, this is not the last time that has occurred in the last 30 years.

R

Richard Aborn 08:12

In the late 80s and the 90s, crime was soaring in the United States. It was actually the number three issue in the '92 presidential cycle, which helps us drive the gun control issue into the presidential debate. And we got then Governor Clinton, then became President Clinton, to endorse us. That was a seminal moment in this movement. Suddenly, the gun control issue, which had lingered on the outskirts of politics, became a core issue. And I was very happy about that. And frankly, we worked very hard to make that happen. My view was, until Americans were talking about the Brady Bill, the ban on assault weapons and the ban on large magazines at their dinner table, we weren't going to win, and making it into a presidential issue, smack in the middle of the campaign "and we can talk about how we did that" I felt was very important. And it worked.

K

Kelly Sampson 09:06

And you know, from that kind of seminal moment, there's another seminal moment that you were firsthand a part of and that is that the Brady Bill passed while you were president of HCI. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about what that process was like.

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Richard Aborn 09:20

I'm not unaccustomed to hard work. That was probably the hardest any of us ever worked in our lives. And it was a total labor of joy strewn with a lot of frustrating moments, a lot of disappointment, but really undergirded by just sheer determination, sheer tenacity, and the absolute belief that if we rallied enough people in the country, we could do this. And I will say unequivocally, those three bills passed because Americans across the United States gathered together and said we're going to move the Congress to do this. And by the incredibly dedicated staff at what was then Handgun Control, people that I saw just pour their hearts and souls into this effort. It was a highly disciplined, multi-year process, highly disciplined politically, we had a very, very sharp team that worked the Hill. And we had, as all groups do, a rating system for each member of Congress. We focused on those members of Congress that we thought we could bring over to our side, and then even occasionally would sort of tiptoe into those we thought would never come our way, just open a dialogue.

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Richard Aborn 09:25

And we organized, I think I criss-crossed the country 100 times just speaking with local groups, because our belief was, the more you could involve the grassroots in this and make this national effort resonate at the local level, the more progress you can make, because, as much as we all like to get supporting editorials in the Washington Post and The New York Times, what really matters is the hometown paper of a member of Congress you're trying to persuade. So we did a lot of that work with a terrific communications team at Handgun Control, and then we

just rallied people around the country. And we were very disciplined about transferring that momentum that was occurring at the local level to the Hill. And there are lots of mechanisms, as you know, to do that. So it was a highly coordinated, very disciplined effort that resulted in the patent and the passage of this. But if there was one word that I think best captured the spirit with which people approach this, it would be passion. It was the passion to get this done, because we knew, literally, literally lives were at stake. And we simply were not going to stop. I wasn't leaving Washington until I got it done. I had no desire to have a career in Washington, I really didn't. I had a desire to do three things: get the three bills passed, build a center, and then leave. But I wasn't leaving until we got it done. And every single person with staff believed that.

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Richard Aborn 10:26

In that vein of that passion, I'm guessing that no one slept, because in '93 you have the background check bill. And then in 1994, there's the assault weapons ban, which is another piece of legislation that was kind of on your list of the things to get passed. And I'm wondering if you can kind of break down for our listeners too, you know, why sort of that one, two punch of background checks, of an assault weapons ban, of the other legislation, why it was so important for all of those things to kind of happen together and simultaneously?

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Richard Aborn 12:19

There were a number of reasons and thank you for the question. It's a very perceptive question. That was not by accident. That was totally by design. Originally, just to go back a little bit, originally, the Brady Bill had been put on the crime bill, which then President Clinton and Chairman Biden, Biden was chairman of judiciary, he was our chairperson, don't forget, he was chairman of the judiciary, they really wanted to get the crime bill through the Congress. We at HCI, Handgun Control, were very concerned that the crime bill was not going to move rapidly. And Brady was attached to the crime bill. So we mounted a campaign, which we called free the Brady Bill, to both get attention and to decouple it from the crime bill, because our belief was, and I really believe this, that if we could build up a big head of steam, a lot of national momentum around Brady, we could then take that momentum, bring it over to the ban on assault weapons and the ban on large magazines, tap into that energy, and keep it going to pass the other two bills. We did make a deal, if you will, with the White House and with the Senate to put the assault weapons ban and the ban on large magazines onto the crime bill. But we did get the Brady Bill off. And that worked. You know, if you break down the chemistry of passion, one of the elements you'll see in it, is adrenaline. There was a lot of adrenaline coming out of the passage of Brady. And as we passed Brady, I think we took the weekend off, maybe, I think it was Thanksgiving weekend. Maybe we even took the Thursday off. And then I went right back to the White House right away and went into to see Mr. Stephanopoulos and said let's go after assault weapons. I think he thought I was a little bit loony. But we went out. I said, let's do it. We've got the momentum. I know what's out there in the country. Let's pursue this. If it goes down, we go down. And they said fine, you know, do what you can out there. And so the staff went home, had a bite to eat, spent time with their families, and came right back and keep in mind we had staff across the country. So people were keeping all sorts of hours.

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Kelly Sampson 14:20

And on that point, you mentioned this adrenaline keeping you all going, but just on a personal note, what was it like working in gun violence prevention at that time for you? And for the staff? You know, what was the office mood like? I would love to kind of understand just the first-person feeling.

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Richard Aborn 14:40

So you have to understand the arc here. And I'm just going to be blunt, I'm just going to be perfectly blunt about this. When we first started doing this, people didn't really know what it was. They didn't really understand what the issue was. They didn't know what the term meant. I had colleagues in the government saying, "my God, you left the government to do this? What was he doing? Why are you wasting your time?" But I believed in it and very quickly found a number of people that believed in it. And if you understand anything about organizing, one of the first key successes to organizing, is to make sure you try and find like-minded people, because there's unity and strength, right? There's momentum and strength. So we started doing that, we started doing it. But it was a rump organization, it was small, in staff and budget. There was this huge monolith out there called the NRA, they were absolutely crushing us. So we knew it was an uphill battle. But when you're facing an uphill battle, every step feels like a victory. And we started thinking about not ultimate victories, the signing of legislation, but incremental victories, and in order to send messages of momentum to the country, and to build the movement in the eye of the press, and therefore on the Hill, we would look for little victories.

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Richard Aborn 15:56

Go to Kansas City and get your Kansas City group to pass a City Council resolution, go to New York State and get the state legislature to pass, just do whatever you could to start building momentum. And the staff at HCI was, I don't know what the staff is now at Brady, but it was small, it was small. They understood that and they really embrace it. In fact, they had been doing some of those things before I got there. So there was this constant sense of struggle, but incremental progress, and that was really the important piece. We would actually take votes to tell you the truth, knowing we're going to lose, then take the vote again, and lose by a little bit less, and proclaim victory. Because it was a victory. We've picked up three more people on our march towards a majority vote. So we did a lot of that. I'm not going to say it was easy. It wasn't. But it was a joint labor of love. Everybody was united around the goal and people were really putting in the work they needed to put in, in order to do it. And it was fantastic. But not easy. Don't let me convey that this was easy. This was a tough thing to get done. And you all know, politics is a brass knuckle sports. People were perfectly happy to bloody us up if they wanted to. And the NRA was, you know, they were a big enemy. I mean don't underestimate the power that they had, both in ways seen and unseen. And we just steadily chipped away at that until ultimately, it worked.



JJ Janflone 17:22

Yeah, we still have I feel like it's still big Little Engine That Could energy at Brady today.

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Richard Aborn 17:28

Well put, well put, but, you know Margaret Mead's famous saying, you will always be amazed at what a group of well-minded, connected individuals can accomplish. That's this.



JJ Janflone 17:37

I wonder when you're talking about sort of these incremental victories, or like sometimes you take a loss, knowing that maybe it can help you get a win in the future, right, how did everyone feel about things like the sunset provision being written into the assault weapons ban? So knowing that maybe you win, you know, you're winning for 10 years and then it's going away, was that part of the strategy as well? Was that the thought? Or, you know, what happened there? Because I think that's a question that a lot of folks have.

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Richard Aborn 18:04

So no, we never wanted a sunset, it was not something that we would have contemplated. We hadn't put it up strategically. But, we got to a point where we were a number of votes short in the Senate. And we're told, in a very crystal clear way, you have one of two choices: either take a 10-year sunset or you're not going to get the vote, come back and fight another day. It was an extremely difficult strategic decision to make. And here's why. We understood very, very well, that we had enormous momentum in the country. We also understood that rebuilding that momentum was going to be very difficult. We would no longer have the singular focus, the support from the White House would likely dissipate, and, therefore, the support from the Senate and the House would dissipate. And who knew what was going to happen in the next election? Versus getting the three votes that we needed to pass the legislation with this 10-year sunset. And we brazenly but, clearly mistakenly, believed that no president and no Congress 10 years down the road in 2004, the date was so far away that it seemed like the future that would never arrive, would put these weapons and these magazines back on the streets. We were also quite confident it was going to work. So we thought we would have the vote, and no one would want to tackle the issue again. We won the vote, not by many, we won the vote, but you only got to win by one. We won the vote. We got the bill in place for 10 years. It worked. The data now is clear that it worked. It's irrefutable. But, we mistakenly believed that the Republicans would never put the guns back on the streets. And they did. I'm just calling it the way it is. The Republicans put these guns back on the streets and they should be held responsible for that to this day. They should be held responsible for not taking those guns back off the street, particularly now, where it's just beyond cabal. It's just beyond question that these guns are the principal instrumentality in all these mass shootings. You know the data as well as I do, but you cannot refute that.



JJ Janflone 20:06

This is a very unfair question, but you know, sort of looking back maybe even just at your time at HCI, or the movement more broadly, is there something that you wished that you had all done differently? In retrospect?



Richard Aborn 20:10

R

Richard Aborn 20:18

Sure, you know, you always have to look back. Contextually, everybody thought we were going to fail. Nobody thought we were going to pass everything. Everybody was against us every step of the way, it was about. I do wish we had not left the loopholes in Brady. We just didn't think we could close them. And again, you make very hard-nosed political decisions. In retrospect, I don't think we would have failed if we tried to include that in Brady, who knows? You know, I don't really know. That's certainly a large regret. That in some ways is probably the largest. And the fact that we were able to do assault weapons on the heel of Brady helped preserve the movement and kept the movement going. After I left, it's not crystal clear in my mind, whether the movement continued to expand or if it shrank for a while because the issue receded. If it did shrink, that's a failure on our part, we should have had mechanisms in place to sustain it. But actually, I don't know that history. But I think not closing the Brady loopholes that now exist and everybody's trying to close, which is ridiculous we have to have these arguments, was probably a pretty big mistake.

R

Richard Aborn 21:33

We almost didn't have a severability clause in the Brady Bill, but somebody from legal caught that. And a week or so before, we're calling up for a vote, we quickly ran to the Hill and amended the bill. Thank God, that would have been a massive mistake if we had let that go through. I don't think they were, I mean there were tactical mistakes we made along the way, but they aren't worth reviewing now. I think that maybe we could have built out, we were at a hot moment, right, we were centering the country on this, maybe we could have built out the coalition a little more. But understand, we were just overwhelmed. Every breath went into passing this legislation. So you really weren't thinking in this very broad way at the time. You are hyperfocused. As Jim used to say to me all the time, "keep your eye on the prize, keep your eye on the prize." Jim would come up to me all the time and go like this: "Richard, don't get distracted, keep your eye on the prize." You know, the famous keep your eye on the prize saying. So we were doing that, we were just hyperfocused on getting these three bills through Congress. Maybe we didn't move, you know, we were equally proactive on the non-legislative side, we really put a lot of effort into building CPAs, centers for preventing hand gun violence. And we got school curriculums established across the country based on conflict resolution skills. We started litigation strategies, we started a program with all the pediatricians across the country to get doctors to talk to parents about the dangers of guns in the home. So much so, it finally got sued by the NRA, it was so successful. We worked very actively with Hollywood on their messaging about guns and violence. Maybe we could have pushed that a little bit more, because we had all this momentum. But I don't know if that was a mistake as such. It just was at some point 24 hours do run out.

K

Kelly Sampson 23:24

And you know, now we're sitting here in another, you know, era, where we're once again trying to pass or renew I guess I should say, an assault weapons ban. And so I'm wondering, what do you think about these current efforts to pass that bill? Is it different this time around?

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Richard Aborn 23:40

Well, you have more players on the playing field now. I wish all the groups would unite behind a

...you have more people on the playing field than when all the groups were united around a common message around this. We had extreme message discipline, we were really good at having message discipline. And that's really important in this atmosphere. So I think that would be really important. One of the keys to our success in the 90s was that we were able to build out the coalition of groups that were supporting gun control. We went from victims, to victims and advocates, and educators, doctors, and then we made a very big effort to bring law enforcement in. And this is the 90s, now. Now, that made a big, big difference on the Hill. It was one thing for the NRA to talk down to a victim and dismiss them as being emotional, but it was much tougher to talk down to people who carry guns every day and face the horrors of gun violence in their jobs on a frequent basis. I think one of the things that has to be done now is to continue building out that coalition. And I've always thought that the missing piece was gun owners who support gun control. And there's a very large contingent of gun owners out there who do support gun control. In fact, we've spent the last two years setting up a parallel organization called 97%, which is to provide a safe space for gun owners to come together and talk about gun control. And we're hoping by expanding the coalition, we can aid in some way the overall efforts to promote other gun control legislation. Will gun owners support a ban on assault weapons? Not sure, they don't like the "B word." But I do believe they will support a ban on large magazines. They know you don't need 34 rounds to go hunting.



JJ Janflone 25:20

I wonder if that's what you've sort of seen in this long history of advocacy and working in the space changing, even between, you know, maybe gun-owning attitudes, or how the U.S. has a whole responds to gun violence, because there's, as you said, there's a new player on the field, like Gen Z is an unexpected massive force, I think that no one was expecting to hit the ground running in the way that they did. But I'm just curious, what you've seen change?

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Richard Aborn 25:46

Well, I have to give you a sort of a timestamped response. I think in the last two or three years, it's become even more complex than it already was. Trust me, I get the complexity of passing legislation, firsthand, I get it in the space. The big factor now is that people are scared. And they're scared because of the division and I'm sorry, but a lot of the racial attitudes in the United States. And until we tackle that fear, this issue becomes all the more difficult. You see that in the increased number of gun sales, reflected in the Brady background check numbers, skyrocket. Gun sales, just maybe they tapered off the last month or so, but they've been skyrocketing. You also see it in the number of illegal guns now showing up in cities and the sharp increase in shooting and murder rates. So people are really frightened, and they want their guns. So that puts an additional burden on the gun control movement, whatever term you want to use, to convince people that we're not a gun ban movement, at the very moment you're moving for a ban on assault weapons. It's a tricky linguistic argument. But we did it before. And you can do that, again. You don't have to convince everybody in this, don't forget that, you just got to convince that reasonable middle to come your way. Now, so that's the hard side, that people are scared.

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Richard Aborn 27:09

The good side of that, good in the sense of it helps you politically, is that it puts the issue back out there once again, in a way that it hasn't been out there for 20 years. With the murder rate

out there once again, in a way that it hasn't been out there for 20 years. With the murder rate skyrocketing in all the cities across the United States, the shooting rates skyrocketing everywhere, people want solutions. So in some ways, it's 1992 all over again. And you're coming up on the '22 elections, where I hope the gun control issue really plays prominently in a number of races. And then of course, the '24 cycle, where it'll be critical. The big challenge, and I know you know this, but the big challenge in '22 is to make sure that some races are win, if not wholly, at least in part on the issue. And the press writes that the next day, the press says, I'm making this up, in Rhode Island CD-1, the gun issue dominated and the candidate supporting gun control won or in reverse, the gun control boom was able to knock somebody out of office based on their stand on the gun issue. So in some ways, it's tougher because people are so frightened. But, in some ways, that's actually something that could be flipped to your benefit, if the linguistics are handled properly. Because there's political demand out there now for government to react. And this is one of the reactions. And now you have the data. You have the data now, which is a big help in legislation.

K

Kelly Sampson 28:36

I just want to make sure I understand, when you say people are frightened and you alluded to race, are you saying that people have been sort of, through marketing or through the NRA or through groups, have been led to believe that there's some scary Black person or something like that, that has a gun? And so is the fear a racialized fear? Is that what you're saying? Or is it more that there's a fear just in general because of people seeing crime, and they've been sort of convinced that they need a gun for that?

R

Richard Aborn 29:11

I think it's a little bit in between those two things. This whole argument over white replacement doctrine, I think has really shaken up a lot of Americans. They don't exactly know what it is. It's being completely mislabeled, misused, I would say intentionally, but who knows. And I think that has frightened a lot of people. And then also people are seeing a lot of urban crime. And they associate that with people of color, at times, in their minds. So I don't think it's like a Willie Horton moment to go way, way back to caucus where they're afraid of a Black individual coming up to them with a weapon. I don't think it's that, I really don't think it's that. I think it's a generalized fear of crime, but undergirded by what they're seeing happening in the city, which is one of the big scandals the United States that shouldn't be, we need to really focus all of our efforts. Most of the work I do now is thinking comprehensively about violence reduction. We really need to focus our efforts on understanding why that's happening and what we can do both in terms of short-term mitigation and long-term mitigation. That's a whole conversation onto itself. So I think the answer is it's somewhere between the two lines you put up.



JJ Janflone 30:25

Does that fear surprise you at all?

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Richard Aborn 30:28

I've been quoted saying this, I've been shocked at the number of people who have come up to

me and said, "you know what, I think it's time to get a gun," that I never dreamed would get a gun. They just wouldn't do it. It wouldn't even occur to them. And they're going out there, doing it legitimately, but they're going out there buying out rifles, and they're buying handguns, their frightened. And that's, that's a big warning sign. A nation frightened is a nation in peril. So we really have to do what we can to try and mitigate some of this fear. Its not easy, I'm not suggesting any of this is easy.



JJ Janflone 30:58

Is there anything that sort of frustrates you too, having been in the movement so long? Because this seems like this would get, I mean, I know, I get frustrated and I've been in it for a hot second compared to you.

R

Richard Aborn 31:07

The thing that frustrates me the most about these sorts of discussions, not you two, you two are wonderful, but these sorts of discussions, is the amount of purposeful misinformation that the other side pumps out. I'm going to tell you something which upset a lot of people with time, when I came into Brady, I went out and raised a bunch of dough from some foundations I knew in New York to hire a research director and people saying, research director, what the heck are you doing? We're trying to pass legislation. I said, if we're going to pass legislation, we have to refute the amount of just false information that the other side is putting out. And I can only refute it if we have the facts, he who has the facts ultimately wins. So we put a lot of effort into getting the facts. So we could put those facts out there. That still persists. There's so much misinformation out there. And that frustrates me. Look at assault weapons, didn't work, didn't work, didn't work. Baloney, it worked. We know that. So that sort of is one of the things that bothers me the most and never quite get enough time to talk about, particularly if there's somebody from the NRA on the show with me, it just becomes a thing. I've stopped doing a silly screen match.

K

Kelly Sampson 32:19

For people who are listening who want to get involved or who are kind of thinking, you know, I would love to get involved, but let's be real, nothing ever really changes, so why should I try? What would you say to someone who kind of feels that way right now?

R

Richard Aborn 32:34

Look at the history of the gun control movement. Everybody said to us all the time, nothing's going to happen. Why are you wasting your time? Everybody believed we would go nowhere. I mean, nowhere. And as I said earlier, friends of mine who cared about me said, "what the heck are you doing? You've got this great thing going in the government, you got this great thing going along? Why are you leaving all this?" It happened, because people across the country joined hands, if you will, in common purpose, and were dedicated on behalf of fellow Americans to get this passed. And it worked because there was just so much determination, so much passion, and so much energy. You know, I don't care if you can't outspend your other opponent,

but don't ever let them out work you. And they never ever, ever outworked us. And then the NRA will tell you that, they in fact, they were shocked. We were hitting them all over the country. Never left the other side at work you and this will happen. It's happened before. And it can happen again. If people want to get involved, they should understand that nobody can do everything. But just because you can't do everything, doesn't mean you shouldn't do everything you can, if you will. So people can get involved by volunteering for a local group, they can reach out to Brady, I'm sure Brady has national organizing mechanisms within the organization or reach out to some of the other groups, but find a way to connect at the local level. And if you don't want to be actively involved, we always need money. Money is in many ways the life behind politics. I don't care whether you're running for office, which I've done, or whether you're pushing an issue, we need money, so you can contribute. So there are a number of ways to get involved. And if you don't want to do those things, get yourself acquainted with the facts, be the person in the room that really knows the facts about gun violence. And when somebody in the room says something, you can say no, that's not true. So be knowledgeable, and being knowledgeable, you make yourself in a sense, an ambassador for the movement and that's incredibly potent. And understand when you do that, your friends do that, your social network does that, and pretty soon, you're blossoming out and spreading out. So there are any number of ways to get involved from the very small, which I just said, to much larger volunteering.



JJ Janflone 34:52

No, thank you so much, Richard. I always think it's great to end on a note of stuff that you can do, you can get involved in, I think it's way too easy in this movement, otherwise or actually, you know, goodness just in this world, to get frustrated or to feel stuck, like there's nothing we can do. And as you've outlined, there are so many things we can do. So thank you so, so much.



Kelly Sampson 35:16

Well, that was a good conversation. And it really, it left me feeling sort of, I guess the word would be fired up to see when all of this first began, there were so many naysayers who just, whether because they didn't want to believe or it was unimaginable, just didn't think that Richard and his colleagues would get anywhere. But they had sort of a clarity of purpose, and they just stuck to it and kept the goal in mind at all times. And that kind of helped them remaining. And I feel like, although we have so many Americans on our side, there's still a lot of, just for a variety of reasons, forces against us. And so I really appreciate seeing that just keeping the goal in mind and moving towards it.



JJ Janflone 36:04

I mean, I second all of that, Kelly, but I think that's kind of my takeaway. Its just that you have to keep the momentum going and I think sort of that that message of resiliency, right, that sometimes you get knocked down, sometimes you have to lose to win. And so I'm just kind of repeating that to myself a little bit as as we move forward into the new year.



Kelly Sampson 36:24

I love that sometimes you have to lose to win.



JJ Janflone 36:29

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Kelly Sampson 36:43

Thanks for listening. 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. Get in touch with us at Bradyunited.org or on social @Bradybuzz. Be brave, and remember, take action not sides.