**HMS Eric Ward - transcript**

**Lisa MacVittie** 00:00

I'm the last survivor of the Holocaust in our family.

**Jackie Congedo** 00:04

Behind the words, pictures and artifacts in the museum are people whose stories of survival and hope come alive to inspire new generations of upstanders. One by one these stories stir the soul

**Al Miller** 00:18

Can there really be hope for us?

**Bella Ouziel** 00:20

Mine was 40018. My sister was 40017.

**Jackie Congedo** 00:28

Holocaust survivors, their descendants, liberators, champions of justice and courageous upstanders ask only this, hear my story, so that the lessons they teach will echo for generations

**Elisha Wiesel** 00:41

I will never meet someone else like my father. But there are many of us who if we come together, can keep his voice alive.

**Jackie Congedo** 00:48

These stories will change you, they will move you to action, inspiring the best of humanity every day.

**Jackie Congedo** 00:54

I'm Jackie Congedo. Today's conversation is with Eric K. Ward, a Senior Advisor for the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Executive Vice President at Race Forward. Eric is a longtime civil rights organizer and strategist and one of today's leading experts on the intersection of racism and antisemitism and their threats to inclusive democracy. Eric has spent years educating people about the dangers of these hateful ideologies, how they fuel each other, and the ally ship required to combat them. Joining me and hosting this conversation is Kevin Aldridge, Opinion Editor at The Cincinnati Enquirer, and my co-host on the Upstander Ripple Effect podcast.

**Jackie Congedo** 01:39

So it's so exciting to be here today with two of my friends who we've been hanging out for a while sort of across the country. But first, we've got Kevin Aldridge, the Opinion Editor at The Cincinnati Enquirer who is also co host of the Holocaust & Humanity Center new podcast, the Upstander Ripple Effect. And he's joining me today, as we welcome our amazing guest, Eric Ward

**Eric Ward** 02:05

Good to see you both

**Jackie Congedo** 02:06

into this podcast studio space today to you know, talk about the state of the world. Talk about, you know, how we think about things in the perspective of history, and where we are today. And to explore some, you know, ideas about what does this look like moving forward, you know, we think about the Black-Jewish relationship, we think about, you know, the, the moment in our democracy and where we're headed. And what we can do to, you know, come out stronger, in the end. So, you know, I was actually just talking about, you know, how many, how many questions that I write down for that. I thought, you know, this is a conversation with friends. I'm excited that the folks who are watching and listening get to be part of it. And I just want to, you know, want to start by catching up and sort of catching folks who are, are listening and watching up on where the story started. So, yeah,

**Eric Ward** 03:00

I mean, it has, it's great to see you both. And it actually has been a while. It's hard to imagine, I think we three have not been in a room together since before the pandemic. But it doesn't feel that way. It feels like I was just sitting with you all.

**Jackie Congedo** 03:21

And that was back... That so that was the first the first time we sort of connected was after the march in Charlottesville.

**Eric Ward** 03:34

In 2017.

**Jackie Congedo** 03:35

Kevin, you all were running a story at the Enquirer on the state of hate groups.

**Kevin Aldridge** 03:41

Yes.

**Jackie Congedo** 03:41

In southwest Ohio.

**Kevin Aldridge** 03:42

That's right. Yeah.

**Jackie Congedo** 03:43

So Eric, you're out in the Pacific Northwest. And really in a minute, why don't you tell us a little bit more about where, how, what got you there, your background? But yeah, but this moment, you're at the Pacific Northwest, you're doing all kinds of organizing around anti-democratic movements and, you know, resisting these forces of white supremacy, white nationalism, antisemitism, racism. And Kevin, you're running the editorial pages, right?

**Kevin Aldridge** 04:09

Yes. Yes.

**Jackie Congedo** 04:10

So pick up there. And let's see where we intersect here.

**Eric Ward** 04:14

Okay. So I guess Yeah, I guess I'll talk I'll, so we get I think at that point, I am firmly entrenched back into Western States Center, which is a social change organization based in Portland, Oregon. And it's funny, I don't even remember, Jackie. I don't know. If I think maybe you and Kevin had extended an invite for me to come out and actually have a conversation right? Not a pitch. Right? That was really important. Don't pitch to the journalist. Don't come in with a political line or an ideological line. Come in and help us kind of think about this moment. What does it mean for democracy? What does it mean for our community? And it was a profound conversation. The questions were very powerful. I think that evening, there may have been a presentation at the underground museum. And it was, I think, sponsored by JCRC, the underground museum, and others. And it was... that night was profound. The hall was filled. There were so many questions. This was really... it's hard to believe. But this was just on the other side of the "Unite the Right" rally that took place in Charlottesville, Virginia, and that rally was really a wake up call for Americans. For the first time, we saw Neo-Nazis and others in their alt-right coalition, taking to the streets in massive numbers, intimidating and harassing the Jewish community, targeting the local Jewish house of worship there, in such a state that the community had to remove items from the house of worship

**Jackie Congedo** 06:24

Their Torah out the back.

**Eric Ward** 06:28

A young Heather Heyer who was a young civil rights activist was was killed by a neo-Nazi, and it was a real wake up call. What was interesting was Cincinnati or I like to say Cincy, right, hey, yeah. Wasn't frozen by the moment. The leadership of Cincinnati wanted to figure out what did this mean for its community? And how did it prepare to hold its community together in this time of tension. And so I was thankful to have come out, I think it actually even rejuvenated me. And it was an example for Western States Center, for those of us in Pacific Northwest, that we had things to share from our own experiences, and that there were communities out there who were looking for that, so that they could take on their own leadership. That was my first trip out.

**Jackie Congedo** 07:28

Yeah, yep. And we were before we were at the Underground Railroad Freedom Center. We were at the Enquirer, and we were doing some, just like you said, having a conversation with journalism staff. Because in the wake of this piece that ran, you know, it kind of illuminated, I think for for, for the newsroom that this is like a new day. And these are issues we've got to cover. And, you know, there's having done this myself, you know, in past life, as a journalist, it's really hard to be an expert on everything. You're thrown to the wolves every day to cover whatever story and so the depth of, and the sensitivity around, this issue of white nationalism, and the way these different hatreds intersect is something that you wouldn't know unless you really had had had the resources to study it and understand it. So we brought we brought Eric in and take me back to like, remember that?

**Kevin Aldridge** 08:30

Yeah, no, I do remember that moment. In fact, and we'll probably get into this and a little bit later in our conversations in some other areas. But as you said, as journalists, you know, part of our job that we look at is, you know, how do we bring context, understanding, information to folks and help them really understand what it is that they're saying. And so sort of, in the wake of Charlottesville, the Enquirer wanted to take on this project of sort of looking at the status of hate groups in the region and kind of across the area. And, and in doing some of that reporting, it was illuminated to us that some of our knowledge and sensitivities weren't quite where they needed to be. And that's actually how, you know you and I kind of first

**Jackie Congedo** 09:13

I think that was one of my first conversations with you. And I remember your... I just remember the approach that you met me with was so refreshing. It was just like, "Yeah, we've got to learn and we're all here to learn."

**Eric Ward** 09:25

It was so different than I think what other journalists had been asking at the time. Everyone wanted to kind of know the "Days of Our Lives" of the white nationalist movement, right? I joke a little bit and we'll get to that right. I hope folks who are listening and watching right now, understand like that wasn't the most important piece. The encyclopedia of what the white nationalist movement is or, or the alt-right. What was more important, I thought from that conversation, what it sparked for, for me, was a recognition that there were other people who were taking seriously, "What do we do?" Right? Not allowing these hate groups to kind of drive the narrative or drive the process of how a community comes together. And that's what I really felt walking into that space that day. These were journalists who wanted to inform their community. They weren't there to be like, explain to me who's dating who, or, or this, it was, how do we help our community understand phenomena so that they aren't divided so that they aren't pitted against one another? And that was, to me, the process of responding to the moment was just very unique.

**Jackie Congedo** 10:52

Yeah.

**Eric Ward** 10:52

And it sparked some other pieces that came out of that. Very, very powerful.

**Jackie Congedo** 10:57

Yeah. And so you know, that was what you're a three-time Cincinnati visitor now, at least.

**Eric Ward** 11:03

That's right

**Jackie Congedo** 11:03

And so So after that, I feel like we said, Well, that wasn't nearly enough, we gotta have you come back. And we hosted this summit at Union Terminal. You know, right after the Holocaust & Humanity Center was just opened in 2019. And you came in to sort of, you know, share the keynote. And I remember, you couldn't, you could have heard a pin drop in that hall, as you were talking about sort of your work and your story and your thesis. I even remember, I don't think I'll ever forget the "Aha" epiphany of one of the participants who was listening, when she said, "Aha, Jews will not replace us. That's what they meant. That's, that's what they meant." And, and I remember back, you know, now, I think, those of us who are paying attention to this issue now or have come on board and our understanding kind of what's going on a little bit more. You know, the replacement theory, unfortunately, we're living in a time where now, there's some fluency about that. People know what that is. But we forget 2019, 2017. This was like, even even people in the Jewish community, I think, struggled to really understand like, "Wait, what are... how are they casting us in this conversation? And what is that? And how do we respond? And what does that mean for us?" So I just, I'd love to have you share a little bit about how you came to this understanding of the intersection of racism and anti semitism in the in the space of white nationalism.

**Eric Ward** 12:37

I mean, it's interesting to go back to that moment, because I think about Charlottesville, and as the footage was coming in, and I was watching one of the cable news networks. And what they were reporting was that white nationalists are marching down the streets saying "You's will not replace us. You's will not replace us." And I remember the journalists looking at one another trying to what does that mean us? Antisemitism was so outside of the conventional understanding of the American public, we didn't understand what we were hearing was "Jews will not replace us." And that idea of Jews will not replace us, comes out of an old narrative called the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion. It was a antisemitic narrative that was developed in the early 1900s, to cast Jews as the scapegoats, right? In order to deflect the tension between the haves and the have-nots

**Jackie Congedo** 13:44

Away from the Czar, right?

**Eric Ward** 13:46

Away from the Czar, to try to taint the idea of democracy, right? Equality, fraternity, brotherhood... and it was a very powerful narrative, right? And Jews were such a small population, who had faced anti-Jewish bigotry in history, it was easy to tap into. That's the nature of when you hear "Jews are not... will not replace us." It's a retelling of the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion. We now call it the Great Replacement Theory, right? But it's a direct descendant of that antisemitic narrative. White nationalists tapped into that, as part of a strategy to reverse the gains of 60 years of civil rights struggle led by African Americans, joined by others in this country. And in order to overturn civil rights, you have to hold in place in terms of a narrative that Black people aren't fully human, right? Or that Black folks are lesser than. That's called white superiority and the Great Replacement Theory of the Protocols of Learned Elders of Zion provided a narrative that allowed people to hold that by saying, in fact, they weren't dealing with Black people's pleas of legitimate grievances, that it was simply a Jewish conspiracy, that Jews were the puppet masters of African Americans, or feminists, or immigrants. That's what we saw taking place on the streets of Charlottesville. Sadly, it is spread from the streets, right into political offices, and media and entertainment. But that's what we were seeing happening on the streets of Charlottesville.

**Eric Ward** 13:50

The thing is, is even if we didn't understand the narrative, the majority of Americans understood something was wrong here. And I think what people were responding to, in that event, right, bringing together civil leadership, to understand how it stands together in in Cincinnati, in the Greater Cincinnati area I was, I was explaining what this narrative actually meant. I'd like to think I came in with something profound. I think I was helping people understand something, they already knew - that there was another social movement afoot in this country. And it wasn't grounded in inclusion, it was grounded in exclusion, and sought to rollback the gains of the African American civil rights struggle. And that's what it's been up to ever since.

**Jackie Congedo** 16:29

Yeah, so let's, let's talk a little bit. And, you know, I'm remembering Kevin, you were part of that day, that summit as well. And, and you, you've kind of, like, had your own journey, within this conversation and sort of understanding some of this. And, you know, I think about it as we sort of had the luxury of not having to really understand that narrative, right. As a Jewish community. You know, for those of us who use whatever term you want to use, or white presenting, or have access to whiteness, or, you know, for all intents and purposes, walk around the world as a white person. I think it's, it's something that, you know, we, we don't want to be proximate every day, to the things that make us different, when they cause us risk. And so that, then that's kind of at the very core, right, of some of the rift in the Black-Jewish relationship. Right?

**Jackie Congedo** 17:30

Because Jews, Jews have an identity that has been othered for thousands of years, based on some of these conspiracies and ideas, and in different contexts, throughout time. That's meant more or less, right, based on how they've presented based on the social order is at the time. And so it hasn't always been a, you know, resulted in exclusion, resulted in persecution for Jews. And I think, you know, you look at that the latter part of this past century for for Jews in America, this has been the the heyday of Jewish life all around the world, really, for for thousands of years. Really the exception to the rule, when you think about what the history of persecution against Jews has been like, but and here we are, as a community, waking up to the idea that there's a whole host of people out there who don't think that actually we're white, who, who are engaged in these age old tropes to try and undermine safety and security. And meanwhile, you have a perspective, from communities of color who were like, "And? We've been here all along, like, you know, this isn't something that we can come in and out of this isn't something we take on and off." Or, you know, how do you know someone's Jewish? Well, you know, I walk in, and it's clear and present. So I don't know, speak a little bit to that, Kevin, and how you've been on this journey and kind of where your thoughts are now.

**Kevin Aldridge** 19:10

Yeah, I think to some degree, that's what sort of complicates the nature of the relationship between two groups that you would think, have somewhat similar histories as it relates to oppression and persecution. But I think the Black experience here in America is, is even within the similarities there, there's very much a difference. I believe it was James Baldwin, who said that, you know, even though you know, the Jewish people had undergone persecution, they were able to get out of that. And they were rescued and able to come into America in a way that, you know, Black people were still here trapped and dealing with the oppression and Jewish people were able to escalate in society in a way that Black people weren't. Now some of that escalation allowed, you know, Jewish people in this country to aid in the civil rights movement, to rent to, to Black tenants when nobody else would rent to them. And there's a whole other set of circumstances and relationships that come from those types of those types of dealings.

**Kevin Aldridge** 19:10

And so when I first heard Eric's theory, it was difficult, I think, and it is difficult for a lot of African Americans to kind of absorb and take in, you know, initially, because we tend to look at white supremacy, through a lens of black and whiteness. And this notion that that, at the root of that is antisemitism, this concept, which many black people, and just quite frankly, many people in general, I think are just like, not familiar with. And it wasn't until hearing Eric speak and talk about this, that as I began to observe some of these white nationalist, white supremacist organizations, how they would move, I began to see antisemitism that was invisible to me prior to that. And so what he was saying started to make a little bit more sense to me in terms of, well, there actually is a mixture here, because now that I'm just not solely looking through this as the lens of a Black person, I can kind of see things a little bit more broadly now and kind of understand a little bit more of the interconnections of what's going on and how the theory that Eric talks about talks about works.

**Kevin Aldridge** 21:31

And I think that's an that's an important step, you know, to be able to take into sort of understand, you know, the link between these two things, if we're going to have greater allyship between, you know, between our two communities, and sort of, you know, kind of understand that, while we've had similar experiences, there's enough differences that we kind of have to respect and sort of understand how we need to talk through those things. But also understand where the connections that are there between those who would like to do both of us in, you know, how we can work together and not let these other things interfere with our ability to, to get at who the real enemy is.

**Jackie Congedo** 22:18

Yeah, yeah. So I want to, I want to piggyback on that, because something sort of popped up for me, as you were talking about, you know, what you see? And what you're sort of, you know, it's it has a lot to do with the way extremism functions, which is to sow division, right? And in moments where you are acting on impulse, because how can I think about anything other than the racism that's right, in front of my face - is threatening my life?

**Kevin Aldridge** 22:53

Sure.

**Jackie Congedo** 22:54

Or is, is there is risk of that threat every day in many interactions? And I think about that moment, you know, what's come since then, right? You know, the killing of George Floyd and sort of the this reawakening of the Civil Rights conversation in our, in our, in our world, in our, in our country, and in cities all over this country. And this moment of real, real scarcity and threat, right, for the Black community. And, and then I, and then, you know, meanwhile, I'm thinking about this, like seismic event that happened for the Jewish community on October 7th. And what we do as human beings, in the wake of those moments is we have a tendency to retreat, right? So what happens when things like October 7th? I'm seeing threats to Jews, that's what I'm seeing. That's what's on my radar. It has to be for my survival for my safety. In the wake of George Floyd, what are you seeing, you're seeing threats to people of color? That's so so it requires intentionality? To say, actually, we're all in this together. And if I don't look past, the way, I'm hardwired to think about this, and I don't lean in, to actually the agendas, that the forces that want to sow division, and how they're moving on the chessboard.

**Kevin Aldridge** 24:27

Yeah, that's a perfect segue to what I was thinking is that and it and it came out of our conversation from our story on these these hate groups, these white nationalist groups, is we have a tendency to think of them as an educated unintelligent, rubes. And you know, to some degree, that was what the Jewish community was telling us, hey, these, these folks are serious like they're you. You can't make light of them as if they're not. As if they're jokes, as if they're not serious and and it is. We have a tendency to think of them that way. But in reality, they're playing chess, not checkers.

**Jackie Congedo** 25:06

Right.

**Kevin Aldridge** 25:06

I think that's the way that we have to begin to think more deeply. Of course, when things happen to us and impact our communities, there's going to be, you know, emotional reactions, and we're going to feel certain ways. But I think we have to evolve and develop ourselves to the point where we can feel that while at the same time thinking deeply and saying to ourselves, "Hey, what's really going on? Is it really as simple as you know, what we like to condense things down to?" We know, on an intellectual level, it never is, it's never as simple or as black and white as we always want to paint things. And I think that, as we are as we are dealing with these situations, and the emotion, which activates us, we also have to activate that part of ourselves that deep thinking part of ourselves that says, "We've got to we've got to pull back for a minute, and try to see the larger picture within the moment." And I think that's what we're...

**Jackie Congedo** 26:05

and and the opportunity. I mean, there's there has been some real, I think, incredible allyship that's come out of the last what, less than a little less than a decade or more recently, you know, in terms of shared experiences, and this kind of resurgence reemergence of, you know, the idea that, that there are reasons to be in coalition together. There are reasons to be in relationship with each other. And there have been some really hard moments, there's been some really hard moments. And so I, you know, while I am a glass half full person, I am certainly not naive. And I wonder if we can just talk about some of those. I'm thinking about the article, The New York Times piece that ran recently, you know, and before we've been talking about that, October 7th happens, right? And, you know, in the Jewish community, this, this is the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust. This is a really, I think, you know, an existential evidence of an existential threat against the Jewish people. Half... half of the Jews in the world live in Israel, right.

**Jackie Congedo** 27:12

And so the idea that there is a there is an existential threat to Israel is an existential threat to half of the Jewish population. We think about that, actually. I think it's important to point out, you know, the losses during the Holocaust, and we talk about the percentages of European Jewry that was erased in the Holocaust. Well, one in every two Jews lives in Israel. So when we think of, you know, it's, it's easy to say that's a conflict that's over there. And it's, you know, there's, there's politics associated with it. But the reality is that we're talking about the lives of half of the world, world's Jewry, in the State of Israel. So coming out of that, there's this deep trauma, pain. These feelings of I don't even know that I have words for the feelings, right? In the wake of October 7th. And, you know, we kind of come out of that moment looking around thinking, "Okay, where are our friends to understand this pain, and to at least have the space to see us absorb it, or stand there and hold our hand and absorb it with us?" And, and in some cases, I don't want to paint with broad brushes, you know, I'll never forget you calling me. And I know that there, you know, there were these conversations happening, and they didn't necessarily make the headlines. These conversations were happening, because of the work that has been done, and relationships that were holding, but publicly, what was happening was a very different story. And what we continue to see happening in terms of these, you know, rallies in this movement, that I think at the end of the day is mainly in terms of the numbers of people, folks who desperately and deeply believe in human rights, in liberation, in, you know, in seeking an end to oppressive forces, and ideas generally. But they're, but they're what they're saying, and the movement has a different, has a different agenda, right? And a different flavor and lands very differently for the Jewish community.

**Jackie Congedo** 29:21

And there's this interesting intersection, right around identity that happens in that space. So I just, I'd love to hear you speak, Eric, a little bit about what your life has been like since October 7th. Being in this work at the intersection of Black and Jewish communities, the intersection of racism and antisemitism. Watching deeply painful terror is what it felt like, on my end watching it. What does that been like?

**Eric Ward** 29:51

I mean, not only painful but but I would argue dangerous right?

**Jackie Congedo** 29:57

Yeah, yeah.

**Eric Ward** 29:58

We should we should unpack this. I think before I I unpack it, I almost want to take a step back and just say, one of the things that I think I think of George Floyd or I think of other moments of Black horror in America.

**Jackie Congedo** 30:22

Yeah.

**Eric Ward** 30:23

And I think the Jewish community, right? Those in Gaza, right? Want to hear exactly what anyone else would want to hear in in this kind of moment, which is - it is horrifying. And I'm sorry that that happened, right, to your community. And we weren't hearing that in in that moment. And I'm not saying it wasn't being said. But it wasn't the story that was being told, the story that was being told was not one of understanding, the deep loss, the triggering horror, right that that that meant for the Jewish community, what was being told was, was a different narrative. And I think that was quite a loss in that moment. That's what folks wanted to hear. That's what they deserved to hear. And it's what they needed to hear in that moment. And it was not a message that was that was given.

**Eric Ward** 31:31

It's not surprising in that moment, then, that people would turn inward into into silo. You're not hearing from your friends and colleagues and allies, the thing that is most important, right, that the idea of the fundamental right to exist, and that's a deep and painful place and an isolating place to be. We know that in smaller scales, I know what it was like to walk to the world after the killing of George Floyd and not know what folks might say, or if they would show up or how they would show up. And so I think it's important to hold that was a deeply painful moment in U.S. social change, and in the American public. To understand October 7th, and its ramifications in the United States, we almost have to start with a premise, right? I'm not going to ask folks to automatically accept this premise. But to just kind of wrestle with it in curiosity. It is a premise that white nationalists, neither create antisemitism, nor Islamophobia, right, or anti-Arab racism, nor do they bring it into our communities, they merely tap into the unconscious bias that already exists, meaning, we walk around with those biases. Now, that doesn't make us a Louis Farrakhan, or a David Duke, right? It just means we walk around with biases as human beings and in moments of stress and high emotion, we tend to fall back into those biases, without even knowing it, right?

**Eric Ward** 33:20

And I think that was a moment, October 7th, for the tragedy, and then the horror of what we understood would come, right? From that horror, I think also was a moment where too many doubled down first into unconscious bias.

**Jackie Congedo** 33:41

Yeah.

**Eric Ward** 33:42

And because we didn't have an understanding of antisemitism or Islamophobia, anti-Arab racism, we became defensive, right, when other folks began to point out, right, these biases, in our memes or things we might be saying. But I think the real other danger in that moment, was it wasn't really the Jewish community and the Palestinian community in the United States, talking to each other, or the Arab community in the Jewish community talking to each other. It was really everyone else.

**Jackie Congedo** 34:17

Yes. Yeah.

**Eric Ward** 34:18

Talking for those two communities, right. And to me, that was a betrayal of values, right? In a way that I have not seen around other issues. The third that I think made this moment very challenging is that we're talking about a nationalist conflict, right. That is in the only way I could almost liken it to is the conflict in Northern Ireland, right, that lasted for generations, right, and the way that it was framed here in the United States. It was romanticized in one way, right? Folks didn't understand the national, the nuances and the complexities of a nationalist conflict versus anti-Catholicism or anti-Protestantism. It was all just simplified and mushed together, right. And in that effort to simplify what was happening, we lost the ability to actually be good allies towards resolution and solution, which is what the majority of people want, right. And I think in that moment, it's not surprising to me that the Jewish community felt isolated. It's not surprising to me that the Palestinian community feels isolated. It's almost as if we took a conflict that was impacting communities here directly. That was happening in Israel and Gaza. And we projected all of our own emotions on top of a conflict, not understanding that that carried real consequences for people's lives, or families and colleagues and friends that that they needed. So that was one piece.

**Eric Ward** 34:25

The other piece is is that it served to fracture, a very nascent coalition,

**Jackie Congedo** 36:09

yes,

**Eric Ward** 36:11

that had formed to try to respond to the attacks on democracy, and those 65 years of black civil rights gains in this country. And in that kind of high emotional state, I will be quite honest, I'm not sure that coalition can be placed back together in a moment where it is most needed here, right? If we were to be good allies outside the United States, we must have a democracy to be a good ally in and one of the losses of this moment is is that the coalition may be so fractured, that it is not able to defend democracy right here at home. The long term impacts of October 7th, the loss of lives, right, but the fracturing of that coalition may be felt for generations to come.

**Kevin Aldridge** 37:14

No, I was just gonna say that. That's that's just a that's troubling to even to even think about it. Yeah, it really is.

**Jackie Congedo** 37:24

Yeah, the stakes are high.

**Eric Ward** 37:26

The stakes are very high.

**Jackie Congedo** 37:27

The stakes are high. I think also, you know, I love what you point out about, you know, the the way, you know, actors adopt antisemitic ideology or racist ideology, right. It's not, they don't create it, they adopt it. And they only they can only adopt it because it exists.

**Jackie Congedo** 37:48

And it works. And this explains why we have folks on the fringe, right, talking about how Jews will not replace us. And at the same time, we have, you know, calls of, you know, kill the Jews or death to Israel. I could certainly cite more nuanced versions of that rhetoric today, who otherwise would call themselves peace loving, progressive human rights activists, right? And so, you know, empirically, unfortunately, I think what both sides need to reckon with, and I'm not talking about the people who are legitimately hateful. But I'm talking about the folks who are actually engaging in the dog whistles, and perpetuating the rhetoric and creating a tone, where actual violence is just one small step away. And we've seen that we've seen that in this country is that, you know, you might not be an anti-Semite, you might not be a racist. But if you're trafficking in it, you're part of the problem, you're part of the problem, and you have a responsibility. So I wish that people would, I wish and I'm, I'm, you know, I think we're all trying right now, it'd be really conscious of the language that we use of how we're... because to your point, the coalition is fragile, if at all, at this point, and, and I think we got to be really careful about, about how we, how we use language, and how we how we create space for people to be heard, how we let folks speak and, and and hear along those lines.

**Eric Ward** 37:48

And it works.

**Jackie Congedo** 39:41

I want to ask you, Eric, about something that I've been reading a lot about, which is this you know, there's this conversation on the left happening from from what I've been hearing and reading about it. I don't know that it's happening so much in Cincinnati, but I'm hearing about it in other places. That basically the the definition of antisemitism that includes acts and rhetoric that are anti-Zionist. Right? So this is this is, you know, not critique of Israel. This is the assertion that Israel as a as a nation state is illegitimate, that it's somehow evil, demonic, that it is wrapped up in all the stereotypes that we've had about Jews for centuries, right? That those those ideas, that rhetoric, action based on that is antisemitic, right, or traffics in antisemitism. I'm hearing on the far left, that I don't even know if it's the far left at this point, but in some of these coalitions and spaces that that that definition, the assertion that that definition is actually a tool, a fascist tool. Have you heard this, and what do you make of it? So explain sort of what that what's meant by that?

**Eric Ward** 41:00

Yeah,

**Jackie Congedo** 41:01

I don't know if you've heard this, Kevin, but it's a really

**Eric Ward** 41:03

So I have seen... I've seen some references to the... so I'll almost try to explain it. And if it doesn't make sense, I hope folks who are listening and watching this, it's okay, that it doesn't make sense. It's not clear to me that it it makes sense.

**Jackie Congedo** 41:27

That's what I'm saying. I'm questioning. I really think there's real problems with this.

**Eric Ward** 41:31

So the the, the argument is that the language that is being used in some of the definitions of antisemitism, right, that point to the antisemitic notions within some anti-Zionist critiques, is being used to shut down the conversations. And so it's being used or being deployed as a weapon. And, and because some folks are arguing, I think incorrectly, and I think not useful, and I actually think it causes harm, that somehow Zionism is a fascism, right? That this is just an extension of a fascist tool. Now, folks are going to have to rewind that whole part I just did like five times to try to absorb it, it's worth absorbing. What I think the danger there is, is what's underlying that, for me are two things. One is this idea of absolutism, right? That Zionism is either all good or all bad. The problem with that is it's being held to a standard that we don't hold other ideologies to

**Jackie Congedo** 43:01

Or other nationalist movements,

**Eric Ward** 43:02

or other nationalist movements. Again, there's something underlying that that I think is an unconscious bias.

**Jackie Congedo** 43:14

Also not to interrupt you, but I'm gonna interrupt you - the idea that let's defer... in what other universe in progressive spaces would we not defer to the mainstream community to define the hatred? That's a that seems to me to be a double standard. Right. So to say, we know better than you do?

**Eric Ward** 43:41

Within the human? Yeah, I think within the human rights discourse. Yeah. Typically, we allow those who are most impacted, to define the terms of what various

**Jackie Congedo** 43:51

Carries harm for our group and what doesn't? That's right.

**Eric Ward** 43:54

Again, I think the pieces... is there is a debate within the Jewish community around the definition of, of antisemitism. The piece that grabs me, I can't speak to that - I'm not Jewish. I'm not. I'm not saying in that debate, in the same way that I'm unlikely to step into a debate around the definition of feminism, or sexism, I'm gonna pay attention, I'll likely have an opinion. But it's not my place to drive that definition or that debate. What's interesting... What's interesting about debates that take place in the Jewish community is everyone outside the Jewish community feels like they have the authority and the credential to argue that debate. Now, I try. I try to imagine that, you know, folks may not realize this, but we have lots of debates and disagreements in the Black community, right. If you try if you are not Black and you try to come in and answer that, that debate, you aren't usually warmly received, right? It's not that we don't care about those opinions. But it's it's an internal debate and dialogue that is, that is happening. And it's healthy for that debate and dialogue to happen. But there's something else that happens.

**Eric Ward** 45:21

I don't know if it's just the size of the Jewish community is so small, and that other allies feel they have a stake in, in those debates. But there's something there that happens. But but here's the piece that I want to get to that I think is is important for us to understand. What's underlying this question is, is all antisemitism anti-Zionist? Is all anti-Zionism antisemitism? There is a desire to oversimplify, right? And in these emotional moments, right, I've been in emotional moments, I have seen other nationalist conflicts. Always in those emotional moments, the goal is to oversimplify right? To make one side good, and one side bad. So that you can act accordingly.

**Eric Ward** 46:20

And things that bring in nuance, right, who gets killed in nationalist conflicts, typically, the moderates, right, or the folks who are framed as moderate, typically, the most radical those are the folks who are actually trying to stretch into real solutions. But they're typically the folks who are who are killed, who are marginalized. Why? Because they're actually trying to bring depth and nuance to a conversation, because they're looking for real solution. And they're looking for solution across the aisle. Right? Because they understand, that's what it takes to build real solution. By bringing nuance, folks will push back. And I think that's a little bit of what you're seeing in that rhetoric. It's an attempt to oversimplify what is actually a very complicated situation. You have a nationalist conflict, you have a religious divide and some aspects of it. Right? It is a global political situation, right? That is happening in the region. It's not so easily explained simply through the lens of what we understand here in the United States, which is the lens of the race divide, right, the color line that we talk about, but since that's all we know, we tend to assert our lens over that situation. And things that don't fit, we try to do away with or ignore,

**Jackie Congedo** 47:55

like the fact that half the Jews in Israel are not white, or not

**Eric Ward** 48:00

or folks, we would

**Jackie Congedo** 48:01

Jews of color

**Eric Ward** 48:02

here in the US. Yeah, there are pieces here. Look, in terms of human rights. Those of us who hold human rights values, have every right to critique human rights abuses, as we see them. That can be done without dabbling into unconscious antisemitism, or anti unconscious Islamophobia or anti-Arab racism. But but here's the trick. How do you know you're not dabbling into something you refuse to learn about? Yeah, and I think the real test is, if you are serious about being an ally, and bringing a real solution to the region, right, to Gaza, to Israel, then you have to back it up. by deepening your knowledge. You don't have to have that knowledge to start the conversation. But to hold an arrogance that it is unneeded makes you not an ally. It makes you an instigator.

**Eric Ward** 48:03

And I remember those instigators on the campuses of, of schools growing up going to a lot of public schools. There were fights on the campus. I always remember those folks who kind of circled right the combatants and kind of egged him on, even if the combatants didn't really want to fight even if they wanted to figure out a way, right, that circle kept folks fighting because they found their entertainment. Right. They found their thrill. Right in that violence in that confrontation. They weren't trying to look for a solution. They weren't looking for nuance and complexity. And that's the biggest danger right now. In with the conflict happening there. With the results of October 7 And in this country. We have a lot of instigators not a lot of solution makers.

**Kevin Aldridge** 49:50

Yeah, that's great insight. I mean, as someone who you know, we talk about this all the time, I'm big on dialogue, but then you've also gotta know how to have the dialogue.

**Eric Ward** 50:02

Yes.

**Kevin Aldridge** 50:02

And nuance is definitely something that's lost. I think I wrote a piece last year talking about this notion of absolutism that, that that this assurity that we have that we're so right on a particular issue, without even having all the all of the knowledge. I mean, I think the kind of people you're talking about are the same people who will comment on us on a Enquirer story without having even read anything beyond the headline, it's like, how can you how can you venture an opinion, and you don't even have sort of like a knowledge base. And I kind of feel like on these issues, there are a lot of people who are commenting and who are weighing in, who have not spent the time to educate themselves to really learn and immerse themselves and, and hear of the experiences. And that's very dangerous. I mean, I always say you can have an opinion about everything, it doesn't mean it's a good one. And it doesn't mean it's an uninformed one. And we've got to get past the point where it's where it's sort of fashionable or in vogue, to always have something to say, you know, I think to your point, sometimes, as you said, the best thing to say is like, "Hey, I'm just sorry, this happened to you, but I don't have enough knowledge or information, to be able to speak intelligently about who's right or who's wrong in this situation. I'm absorbing information, please forgive me until, you know, I'm able to come to some kind of resolution."

**Jackie Congedo** 51:28

And I think it is entirely possible that some of the silence that we heard, right, in the aftermath of October 7, was that kind of silence. It was I just don't know what to say, I don't know enough about I don't want to say the wrong I am learning. I'm listening, and I'm not speaking right now. The way that was heard by the Jewish community is, of course, a different story. But But that leads me to this other piece, and then and then we're gonna get to, like some happy things at the end here.

**Eric Ward** 51:54

Yeah, but this is so important. It's

**Jackie Congedo** 51:54

so, so important.

**Eric Ward** 51:58

And and we probably got it wrong. We probably Yeah, 80% of folks who heard this, regardless of what opinion they hold, probably feel like we said something wrong with the promises. There's no space to have these conversations. How are we supposed to get better in our understanding? When there is no space to kind of try to wrestle through something that is super complex? I've been to Palestine, I've been to Israel, right? Both places, several times. And the one thing I know, as an American, though, you know, I tried to say, I'm not an exceptionalist. I love you know, don't get me wrong. I love my country. And not because I think

**Jackie Congedo** 52:41

exceptional as in America is an

**Eric Ward** 52:44

exceptional place. Right, right. We have all the answers? That's not it. I just think there are things here that I grew up with, that I just have learned to love, right? And, but, you know, there's a little exceptionalism and there's, and, you know, I remember like, sauntering over there, wanting to sitting and listening to people, my heard a lot of different perspectives, a lot of different people's made time to speak to us and to show them show us their lives. And I remember just thinking, you know, asking a question, and just hearing the question come out of my mouth, and just realizing it was the most arrogant question. Like, it wasn't even a question. It was a, "Why don't you do this?" You know? And, and I'll always remember, the person looked back at me and said, you know, you Americans, you come over here. And you think we've never considered any of these questions that we don't wrestle with these questions like they've never occurred to us. And so the reason this conversation and conversations like this are so important, is that we have to understand there is so much we don't know. Now there are things we do know, we should speak out to that, right?

**Eric Ward** 54:00

People have the right to live free from worship, you know, a free from fear, right? People have the right to worship, they have the right to live, work, love. Those are things we can hold. But understanding the solution takes a different level of engagement, and denying bias, right, denying the fear that these communities hold, right, doesn't help us get to those places. And so I really hope... I know it's a heavy conversation. I would just say, I know we didn't get it right. But it's an important conversation to keep having over and over again, it's it's, it's not happening enough. And it's not happening in a sharpened kind of way.

**Kevin Aldridge** 54:48

If I can ask you, Eric, because one of the things that I think about is is trauma, and the impact of trauma on our ability to be able to have the types of conversations and create the kind of spaces. Because I think a lot of times when you do come into these conversations, everybody's coming into it with their trauma. If you're an African American, you're coming into this conversation with the trauma of your experience here in the United States. If you're a Jewish person, you're coming to this conversation with the trauma of, you know, of the Holocaust and experiences that that you've had and October 7, then all of these things that, that reignite us. And so, if you're an Arab American or Palestinian, you're dealing with the trauma that's related to your experience. And we're all bringing this trauma to the table to try to have a conversation. And we're putting our blood on the table as we're trying to talk about everybody else's suffering. Kind of tell me, how to how do you think... I mean, tell me your thoughts in terms of how that plays into this whole?

**Eric Ward** 55:54

It's, it's very real, I think. To not acknowledge the just the history of antisemitism, and its impact for us to pretend like it was nothing, right. As an African American, it has to begin to I have to get to a point where it feels the same as when someone denies the impact of the Middle Passage, right? And generations right of intentional system called chattel slavery, and the impact... when people deny the impact of that, right. It's it hurts, right? It stings in a different way. It not only because it's painful, but it makes you fearful. Right. And so I think that's right, right, but the traumas, the our histories influence us. And if we are serious about building, building, right community with one another, we have to be aware that those things really matter, right? Look, one of the things I know about myself is like I have serious critiques of policing, right, I was involved. And a champion of Black Lives Matters, right? But the need to take another look at at the policing system in this country. And I have serious critiques. Some of that is from personal experience. Some of that is from historical experience. When I sit down with a police officer, when I see a police officer, right, the immediate thing, like I can feel it right, my adrenaline rushes upon first sighting. But I also understand, right, that sitting in that kind of reaction, isn't the solution. Right?

**Eric Ward** 57:48

At the end of the day, if I'm serious about what I'm talking about, that means also engaging law enforcement. That means sitting with law enforcement, so I have to be willing to work through that. And I gotta tell you, right, there are some law enforcement officers who understand that right? And the way that they approach me is in a very different way, right? Because they are serious about finding real solutions right to that system that results in a disproportionate death and harm to the black community. It's about being intentional leaders, I think in that moment, and intentional leadership means understanding the historic traumas that communities have experienced, and not being so cold about it, or not comparing it or not trying to compare it as a hierarchy, right? And until we get there, there's no reason the Jewish community should feel safe or trusting of the rest of the world. We stood by, right, as over a third of that community was killed like less than two generations ago, in Europe, it wasn't just the Nazis, right. The entire world stood by has that happened, and that was on the legs of generations of other atrocities. Mistrust? Absolutely. Right, mistrust until we provide things that look different, that's a natural reaction by a community. And until we own that, as leaders, we aren't really the solution oriented leaders that we're trying to trying to be.

**Jackie Congedo** 59:35

So that leads me to thinking about this article before we move in

**Eric Ward** 59:40

Yes,

**Jackie Congedo** 59:41

and more, you know, sort of where do we go from here and leave people with a little bit of hope at the end of this conversation, which is important these days. You know, some there were some pieces in that article. I'm talking about a New York Times article that ran a while ago describing sort of the state of the Black-Jewish relationship post October 7th, and you know, the, the potential, where do we go from here? What does it look like? And I'm haunted, actually, by some of the perspectives that were shared. And I know, I have to believe that, you know, so context for people who haven't read it, you know, there's there's a number of interviews, as we were saying, I don't think nearly enough interviews, but there's, there's an interview with a Jewish civil rights organizer, activist, who, who really is, is deeply aligned, and in that, you know, Coalition for Palestinian rights, right, and is at the marches and is, is sort of, we're talking about trauma, and the future of, you know, these two traumatized communities, and the potential for, you know, what the potential of that relationship is, and there was a New York Times piece that was written, you know, a while ago, exploring this, I don't think in enough enough perspective in detail, but took a snapshot, one snapshot of, of really mainly two activists, a Black activist, and a Jewish activist who are really quite aligned in this space of Palestinian, you know, solidarity. And, and I even hate to describe it that way. Because, really, it was it was two two perspectives of people who are leading, leading a movement that has trafficked in at the very least, if not sort of, proliferated some very problematic ideas about Jews, right. And, and so you know, that the interviews with these two activists, what they exposed, was this idea that in order to really show up in order for the future of this coalition and the relationship to be a positive one, and the potential for it to be a positive one lies only in the surrender, of Jewish trauma, of Jewish identity, as it relates to peoplehood. And, and that is so troubling to me.

**Jackie Congedo** 59:43

And it's something when I think about the standards that we hold, in human rights spaces, for identity and struggle, and the space we we keep for that for people. It troubles me and to your point, Eric, I look at there's something going on there that there's a different standard for Jews in some of these conversations. You know, those those things are happening. And I think, to your point, we're talking earlier, they're not the only things happening, they're not the only things happen, but they're happening. What does that mean for how we move forward? And what does it Yeah, what does that mean for how we move forward?

**Eric Ward** 1:03:08

So, you know, not to critique the New York Times, but it was a it was an unfortunate article, and not because the article was was bad, right, whether I agree with it or not. And I thought it also had an assimilationist argument to it, right, that that Jews needed to assimilate into and leave behind and that set off alarm bells for me. But the real the real problem with that was that it was the sole article that The New York Times chose to put forward, as being kind of the Black-Jewish relationship. What we were seeing there was one Black-Jewish relationship and the parameters of that relationship. And put in that context. It was interesting, right? It was, it was made me think it made me disagree, right, but it made me look at it, it would have been better if the New York Times had done five or six different... there are lots of different Black and Jewish relationships. What it did is it kind of quadrupled down like I use, quadruple and quadruple down on kind of the myths of Black-Jewish relationships.

**Jackie Congedo** 1:04:27

It's a great piece.

**Eric Ward** 1:04:27

And it's one big stereotype that typically, non Jews and non Blacks like to tell like they like to drag it out. They love Black-Jewish conflict, right? Look, Blacks and Jews aren't getting along. That means our unchecked unconscious biases aren't so bad. You know, it's it's that kind of thing. And I thought it was unfortunate because the truth is, is there are many different types of Black-Jewish relationships. Right there was the 1960s Civil Rights Black-Jewish Coalition, not the entire Black-Jewish community, by the way, right? Those were specific leaders who had found their way together, who found things that bound them together both in history, culture and aspirations for their communities and, and for this country. And we see other kinds of collaborations, we see it in the world of hip hop, right? We saw it in jazz, we probably still see it in jazz, we see it in sports, we see it in science, right? We see these kinds of collaborations pop up. And we don't tell those stories, because we don't actually have the mediums to tell those stories in a broad way. So they get told about us and about our relationships. And they're usually filled with tropes and stereotypes, and caricatures that aren't very accurate. Look on a non representative, or, or, or they portray them as rep, you know, representing all aspects of our very diverse right communities. So I thought it was a really lost opportunity by the by the New York Times. Look, I come out of a music subculture. Moment magazine just did this phenomenal kind of profile of kind of my music subculture right and come out of the punk scene.

**Eric Ward** 1:04:48

And it's it's it's, yeah, it's an amazing look at my life. And it's interesting for me not to be telling it.

**Jackie Congedo** 1:06:39

I felt like I had just sat in a room with... Did you read it?

**Kevin Aldridge** 1:06:43

I have not. Yes,

**Eric Ward** 1:06:45

yeah, we won't. We will bore you with it.

**Jackie Congedo** 1:06:49

Yeah, it was very, it was so lifelike,

**Eric Ward** 1:06:52

That writer did a phenomenal job of kind of putting together - how did Eric start to talk about antisemitism? Where did this come from? And there's a short documentary called, it's not out yet. So folks who look for it, called, "We've Been Here Before," which is actually another look. And it's a story about how Blacks and Jews and non-Blacks and non-Jews, in my particular part of the punk subculture actually ended up fighting antisemitism. We didn't know we were fighting antisemitism. Our music scene was being attacked by white power skinheads, supported by these neo-Nazi organizations. We didn't understand, we just knew we loved our music, and we loved each other. And we wanted our subculture, and we wanted to be kind of left alone, we didn't understand... we were we didn't understand the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion.

**Eric Ward** 1:07:49

And so it's interesting, I come out of a music culture, that was probably one of the first groupings outside the Jewish community to take on antisemitism. And we didn't even know. But But within that story is a story of black Jewish relationships, within that punk scene, that are very close and very affectionate. So my whole my whole take on that piece is, I did worry about the whole assimilationist argument. We all have to have skin in the game, to be in effective coalition with one another to be in community. And that's not just Blacks and Jews, that's white folks, that's immigrants. That's Latinos.

**Eric Ward** 1:08:29

Everyone has the right to bring their identity and their histories to the table. We are smart enough in the United States to manage that. Okay, I know that sounds exceptional, right? We really we really

**Jackie Congedo** 1:08:44

Are we? I hope we are.

**Eric Ward** 1:08:46

We really are. We are we have that kind of creativity. I see it each and every day in little ways. It then gets politicized, right in these weird ways to kind of tear us apart. And because we don't deal with unconscious bias, we're vulnerable to being manipulated. But he but here's my piece. The real question is, what kind of Black-Jewish relationships do we want to build today? Right? And it's not going to be all of our communities supporting those relationships. But it doesn't mean that it shouldn't be done. Because the truth is, is we're dealing with two communities who have a deep generational history of trauma, right, and having to survive and deal with oppression. It should not, it may shock folks to understand that the whole concept of white supremacy so if you're listening to this, and you're a racial justice activist, you should understand, right white supremacy is first formulated as a system of bigotry against the Jewish community, right? White supremacy 101 targets the Jewish community in the Iberian peninsula, then comes to the Americas. And because white supremacy 2.0 built on the basis of anti-Blackness, the truth is, is if we're serious about a society where everyone, right, including those 74 year old white male living in rural Iowa, right, he also has the right to dignity, and to live, love, worship and work. The truth is, is that we have to untwine both anti-Black racism and antisemitism to get there. And it won't be everyone who wants to do it. And so we have to find ways and it's not just political, right? It's through volunteerism, it's how we show up in our communities, we have to be intentional about it, if we want to begin to tell our own stories.

**Jackie Congedo** 1:10:47

All right, so let's leave people with a little hope. I think that was hopeful. There's, you know, there's there's a there's a future we have to write. And no time, like the present to do it. Because we're steamrolling right along here towards what can feel like a little bit of a cliff, I think, regardless of what side of the politics you're on, and America, it's everyone thinks that, you know, whatever happens on both sides is going to be catastrophic. They have different reasons for that. But you know, there's this, there's this sort of feeling that we are headed towards this cliff of, you know, of dissolving community cohesion that's just rapidly disappearing, and what the what the implications of that are going to be on our democracy. So what's the good news? I mean, what have you seen as you've been traveling, speaking about this? What? What gives you hope that we got a fighting chance here?

**Eric Ward** 1:11:49

Cincinnati gives me hope.

**Jackie Congedo** 1:11:52

I love that answer. I didn't pay you to say that.

**Eric Ward** 1:11:54

You did not pay me to say that. Cincinnati gives me hope, because I think Cincinnati is another model, right, of how we might try to do this. And, and that piece gives me hope, right. Another piece that that gives me hope is watching the Jewish community debate more internally, rather than externally. Right, so so not allowing itself to be manipulated by folks who have other interest, right? And really having, which I stay out of, but having really substantial, like debates and arguments. But the other thing that gives the other thing that gives me hope. I think there is a seriousness in the Black community about this moment, right? I often tell folks, you know, the Black community isn't thinking... it's not that we don't care. It's not that we're unaware of what's happening in the world. It is a very pragmatic understanding, right? That if we don't get a handle on defending democracy here, there's not much we're going to be able to do anywhere.

**Eric Ward** 1:13:15

And I'm seeing like a new both generation, and a regeneration of older generation of Black civil, civic leaders and civil rights leaders, who are just entering the space with a different kind of seriousness, that is about continuing the Black liberation project, which is civil rights for all, but also doing so like from a universal perspective, this idea that everyone does have a place at the table, that that's what it means, right. And to me, that parallels also Jewish tradition, the idea that safety ultimately comes right, when everyone has safety. And we're seeing that in the Black community in a really kind of significant, serious way.

**Eric Ward** 1:14:07

And it gives me hope that both communities seem to be reorienting themselves to that message at the same time, the last time that that happened, right, this entire country changed, right. And in terms of its aspiration, and this time, if it happens again, I really think it's going to usher in a new era of community that that will open the door to possibilities. I'm actually very excited. This is a hard moment to be in. But I'm excited about leadership and models. So Cincinnati, your work I've seen replicated now and discussed in other communities around the country right from that leading so many years ago and I think you all should keep pushing ahead. Be a... be a model for what it could look like. And if we can get it right in Cincinnati, maybe other folks have a chance.

**Jackie Congedo** 1:15:10

That's the plan creating a community of upstanders. Right? I mean, we couldn't we couldn't have really two more outstanding upstanders. And certainly, you know, Eric, just our gratitude to you for all you're doing to stand up every day. It's not always about being the loudest or the one with the first thing to say, it's about doing the right thing. And it's just a pleasure to to know you in this moment. Gives me great hope so, thank you.

**Eric Ward** 1:15:36

Absolutely.

**Eric Ward** 1:15:38

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**Eric Ward** 1:16:02

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