Upstander Ripple Effect Episode 5: “New Beginnings” featuring Helen Kaltman and Whitney Austin

Transcript

**Kevin Aldridge** 00:02

What do we mean by the upstander ripple effect,

**Werner Coppel** 00:06

stand up against hate and prejudice, even if it does not affect you from

00:13

moral dilemmas in today's headlines, upstanders who rose for justice and stories of survival,

**Kevin Aldridge** 00:19

be prepared to walk away from this conversation inspired and motivated.

00:28

Well, welcome to the upstander ripple effect Podcast. I'm Jackie Congedo

**Kevin Aldridge** 00:32

and I'm Kevin Aldridge,

00:34

and we're so glad you're back with us for this month's episode. We are talking about the idea of new beginnings.

**Kevin Aldridge** 00:41

For many immigrants, that's their story. They come from other places to the United States, looking for new beginnings, a fresh start, a new lease on life. And sometimes their new beginnings can mean new beginnings for the communities that they that they ingratiate themselves in, and new beginnings for our country. So we'll be talking about some of that here in just a minute. Yeah,

01:02

as we tie some of these threads together around this idea of what it is to start again. As Kevin mentioned, we've got our archive story, which is an immigrant story. It's an immigrant story that comes out of our archives at the Holocaust and Humanity Center, a story of survival and of and of starting again, and of many different generations and sort of what they carry from their in this case, mother and grandmother, when they that they take into their lives, right? And their new beginnings as well. And so we were so privileged to sit down with Helen Kaltman and her daughter, Elana Grubbs and Elana's daughter, so Helen's granddaughter, Ariel Grubbs Guttman, three generations of women talking about their family's miraculous and really perilous escape from, from, you know, from the war, from the Holocaust and survival, story of survival. And, of course, along the way, all of these new beginnings. This is a story where, you know, Helen and her family had to start again many different times, and what that was like for them. And we also have an upstander New Beginning story. Got to sit down with my friend and someone I just so respect and admire, Whitney Austin, who has just, you know, in some ways, a similar right story of of new beginning that sort of was born in a moment of adversity, yeah,

**Kevin Aldridge** 02:40

just an incredible story. I mean, her story of survival in and of itself, one might think of as a as a great and miraculous story. And one might think that that might be the end of that story. But in fact, what, what could have been the end in a negative way, but, but certainly was a ending in the terms of a great survival story, became a new journey for her and a new beginning on a path which she sat down to make sure that other people didn't have to go through the unfortunate circumstances that she went through that day on Fountain Square. So just a just a great story. Yeah,

03:19

yeah. So often we think about opportunities as, I'm sorry, new beginnings exclusively, sort of through the opportunity lens, right? That this is a, this is a new chapter, a turning of a new page, an opportunity. But also, you know, so often New Beginnings come because there is this adversity, right? And you know, we have, we have choices. In some cases, sometimes, you know, we put ourselves in those positions, but in many cases, this is something that happens to us, and so how we respond to those moments of adversity sort of defines the next chapter and what that beginning can can look like. So you know, before we get into our sort of segments for this episode, I want to bring us back to where we started, related to sort of the new beginnings of an immigrant journey and some of the headlines that have been buzzing over the last couple of weeks, ever since the presidential debate between former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris. Related to Springfield, Ohio, which is not so far away here, but about an hour or so north. And this allegation completely unfounded, based in not a shred of evidence or fact, allegation that former President Trump seemed to sort of retreat to repeatedly throughout the debate about the Haitian community that that has sort of found a new home in Springfield.

**Kevin Aldridge** 04:53

Yes,

**Jackie Congedo** 04:54

so you know, and I think at this point everyone knows what the that rumor is, right? I hate to even repeat it, because I don't want to give it any additional oxygen. But this idea of, I think, for the substance of this conversation, it's important this, I this sort of like, based in no fact, allegation that somehow there are Haitian immigrants in Springfield who are eating people's pets, you know, killing geese and wildlife and eating, eating pets. And, you know, it was interesting to me, Kevin, like watching the debate, because it almost felt like that was the Get Out of Jail Free card for Trump, left and right. Every time he felt backed into a corner, like there, you know, on a totally different topic that you know, he didn't have a good answer for or he didn't want to talk about, he would just retreat to, "But what about, what about the people in Springfield eating cats and dogs?" This like repeated sort of dehumanizing, vilification, which, at the end of the day is sort of a tactic in fear monger

**Kevin Aldridge** 05:58

Oh, absolutely. Yeah. I mean, it's, it's, you know, straight out of the playbook that we've seen from him throughout, you know, his presidential campaigns, throughout his four years in the White House. It's, it's typical politics of division versus bringing people together. Look the the sad thing about this whole conversation we're having around this ridiculous assertion about immigrants eating pets in Springfield is the fact that there are probably some very real issues to be talked about in the city of Springfield as it relates to, how do we welcome immigrants and communities, while at The same time, you know, recognizing the very real stresses and changes in the social dynamics that come along with that. And if we're going to have those types of conversations, we need to have the most the most serious minds, the most thoughtful people at the table, having those conversations, not throwing out red meat that's going to play into people's fears or to the to the lowest common denominator, something that is respectful to the new people who, in many cases, were invited to that community and while also paying respect to the people who have called Springfield home for a very long time, who are having to make adjustments and to adapt to that new reality, those new beginnings and so, so there is some very real conversation to be had there that's not being had mainly because of of this dehumanizing nonsense. And it's just, it's just par for the course for folks who aren't interested in real solutions, but who want to sort of use, you know, use circumstances or sort of hot button topics to further a more nefarious agenda there. And I think that that's what we see at play,

07:51

yeah. So before we get into sort of, you know, I think there are problems here on the left and the right, right, and at the end of the day, there are problems, I want to be clear that are sort of harbored in the extreme elements of both parties. And I don't even know that it's a party thing. It has to do with sort of the broader landscape of our politics and the fact that people are gravitating towards this kind of extremism. I want to just focus a little bit more on this libel, this rhetoric around around, you know, bigotry targeting the Haitian community, and the fact that I didn't realize this until our producer, Anne Thompson, who is a brilliant journalist and wonderful human being, was doing some research. And there, there is actually a history, a long history of really deliberate seeding of these kinds of dehumanizing tropes about Haitians. And I'm looking at a piece that she pulled by Ayendy Bonifacio, written September 16, 2024 tracing the anti haitianism behind the Springfield scapegoating. And you know what he says is, "The history of anti Haitian sentiment in the United States stretches back to the Haitian Revolution of 1791 to 1804 when Haiti's enslaved population bravely overthrew French colonial rule and declared their independence. It was a monumental victory for the global abolitionist movement. Yet this Triumph sent shockwaves through American society." right, which obviously taking liberties..ellipses here was, you know, in the middle of our own history of enslavement, "striking fear into the hearts of slaveholders and their political allies who wielded considerable influence over the nation's major newspapers." And so instead of he goes on to say, "instead of celebrating Haiti's historic uprising, the US media painted it as a dangerous contagion spreading from the Caribbean, threatening to infect the United States with notions of Black rebellion and social upheaval, vilified as threats to social order, fueling deep seated racist fears that aim to preserve the institution of slavery at any cost." And then it goes into talking about, actually, it wasn't just any kind of sort of dehumanizing propaganda that was sort of seated at that time. It was specific propaganda about these sort of savage indigenous people who, and again, all of this in quotes, who were so subhuman that they actually had cannibalistic tendencies, right? So, you know this idea of the US press, he says, frequently reported on the supposed barbarism and primitiveness of Haiti and its people. Indeed, stories have circulated about Haitians eating animals and practicing cannibalism since the country's founding. Now, okay, guarantee you, as you said earlier, when we were talking about this, there's no way I would, I would venture guess that no one, not probably how many people out there, other than

09:10

non-historians, right, who are not historians or non Haitian sort of know that history? Yeah, yeah.

09:48

Would. And they'd say, Well, I mean, what are you talking about? We're trafficking. We're not trying to traffic in that. We're not trying to play to that. Wouldn't even know that exists. Well, this is the way that biases and stereotypes and dehumanizing ideas about certain, certain group, groups of people, any group of people, can come out in dangerous ways, because it's actually in the groundwater. It's like institutionalized and socialized without even our own awareness and we're trafficking in it.

**Kevin Aldridge** 11:38

Yeah, and that's why, even in this country, when we talk about institutionalized racism and things of that nature, it gets balked at, you know, by certain segments of the people, as of the people who say that that's not a real thing. But when you see it play out in ways like this, where it's in media messaging, it's, you know, whether you're talking about mainstream media, because, as we're talking about here, some of the ways these individuals were portrayed in the United States was, was within the mainstream press of that day, which, I might add, a lot of papers which were owned by slaveholders and, you know, and

**Jackie Congedo** 12:16

and they had a private agenda they were trying to pull right,

**Kevin Aldridge** 12:18

sure which, which they were pushing through through their media, but, but that's that's been typical in the playbook of those who have trafficked in enslavement is - the only way you can participate in that as an industry, is that you have to believe that the folks who you are slaving enslaving are subhuman, just as they talked about that in terms of Haitians back in those days. Yeah, they stopped. They talked about Africans brought to America in the very same way that they were these these savages, these barbarians that needed to be treated a certain way, or they needed to be civilized in a certain way. That's the only way that an individual who is going to take barbaric actions against another human being is to justify it is by making them seem like they're more barbarous than the event, than the than the actions we're taking against them. Right? That's, that's, that's straight out of the out of the playbook. And I've always said for those people who were quick to jump to and believe that Haitians would eat pets in the city of Springfield, that, in and of itself, is endemic of a mindset of almost a cultural brainwashing or stereotyping that you would even give credence to something so outrageous and ridiculous. I mean, when I first heard about it, I dismissed it out of hand immediately, because who's doing that? Like, like, what people do you know are out there eating or capturing pets?

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Your default is, like, that's a crazy thing for any human being to do,

**Kevin Aldridge** 13:54

whether they were Haitian or anybody like, that would be an absolute insane thing for me to believe that somebody would be out there doing that, let alone groups of people. Like, it wasn't just like some one off, you know, like some, yeah, you always have some people who might be mentally challenged or disturbed who will do anything, but we're talking about a group of people. That's how it was positioned, not like one Haitian who they are, yeah, like, it's not like there's one Haitian out there doing doing stuff like that. It's like, no, the community is doing this thing. And for, I think, for people who are so quick to to eat that pablum up, it just sort of speaks to something that people wouldn't admit. But it speaks to exactly like what you're talking about there, this notion of of these things are so baked into into our society and into our minds through our media, or what we're taught or thought to believe about Haitians or any group of people who might be, who might come from impoverished situations or or hardscrabble situations, it's almost like there's the belief that these people, people are capable of anything, yeah, and lack morals and values that, quote, unquote, more civilized folks embody and, and, and that says something about Yeah.

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I mean, I mean even, even any group that's perceived as different, right? It doesn't it. I think about, you know, the way so many people, when they study the Holocaust, it's like, the most common, one of the most common questions we get is, How in the world did that happen? Right? People, when I, when we teach about antisemitism, what it looks like, what it sounds like, people are people? It's almost like, Wait a minute. Do I even really need to take this seriously? People actually believe that there's some cabal of Jews who are conspiring with horns and tails to control the world? It's like, Wait, that's that doesn't reflect anything that's grounded in my rational mind. And so, like, I don't need to think about that. It strikes me that, before this debate, if I had said to most people, you know, we have to help you understand that there's a bias against Haitian communities, and it's rooted in a long history of propaganda related to cannibalism. They would have said nobody actually believes people are eating people these days. Or, you know, people are eating pets. That's crazy. Well, here we are right. And so I think that you're right, that that when we can contextualize or perceive someone as subhuman, it actually allows us to mitigate the cognitive dissonance that we have in insisting that we treat them different than we would treat people we know and love. Because it's like, well, yeah, normally I wouldn't want to send somebody back to a place where there's violence and danger and, you know, I wouldn't want to do that. But these people are different. They are worse than... they are a contagion, right? It's the same, it's the same kind of philosophy, around 6 million people murdered in state sponsored violence organized by the state right in Nazi Germany. How did the Nazis convince a you know, or enable or create an environment where a society of civilized people partook in this, right, or turned the other cheek? Well, it's because they were sufficiently dehumanized. Yeah, Jews were that it's like, well, we're doing the right thing here, guys like, this is what we must do.

**Kevin Aldridge** 17:37

Well, it's more than the dehumanization, it's, it's also the fear factors, yeah, so I'm gonna, I'm gonna throw in a little element here that's at play locally or locally and recently as in or in Springfield, locally. But also even going back to there, if you were, if you look at what the writer wrote there, they said that part of the use of this was to quell rebellion, right? This notion of, if we don't find a way to tamp down this subhuman culture, they will turn around and they'll take over. So part of the dehumanization is also this element of fear that they are coming for your stuff, they're coming, or they're coming for you. And if we, somehow or another, don't quell this rebellion, right now,

**Kevin Aldridge** 18:28

yeah, your pets will be next.

**Kevin Aldridge** 18:29

Yeah, yeah. Not, not just your pets, right? Your daughters, your wives, your property. It's deeper than that, right? It's, it's more insidious than that. And that's the piece that that people have got to get about this is that, and all we got to do is just sort of reverse that language. It's said differently, but it's the same thing. Yeah, we've got this immigration problem. They're coming to replace us. Jews will not replace us. This replacement theory, this notion that there are powers who are trying to bring in people who are different, who are not American, who and on top of it, who are subhuman, people who are capable of this sorts of thing. And if we don't stop it, if we don't find a way to quell it, they'll take over your community, just like they're taking over Springfield. Yeah, it's just like they're taking over border towns and all of these. It's, it's, it's really sophisticated, and you've really got to peel beneath the layers. And most people aren't willing to to sort of do that work, or look how this has been used in history, as if to say, Well, wait a minute, we don't want to traffic in in this type of stuff. And that's where the fear element comes in, that that that some politicians are playing on, which, I said, does a disservice to the to the real argument, like we can have a real argument about, you know, how do we make sure that communities are properly resourced and equipped to deal with new folks,

**Jackie Congedo** 19:54

influxes of immigration

**Kevin Aldridge** 19:56

that are coming into the community? What? What is too many people to come into a small community at one time? And do we do a better job of of, for lack of a better term, locating immigrants in places where they can be successful, but while also not putting too much stress on communities? I think these are real questions that deserve serious thought and look, looking into which are not anti-immigrant stances. We're not saying, Hey, stay out. Don't, don't be welcome. But there is a conversation that we do have to have in this country about, what are the right ways to do this, like, like, what are the right ways to welcome people in so that they can be successful, and that, you know, the the overall structure that we've set up can continue to operate and move in the way that it does. This type of dehumanizing language does none of that.

20:45

Well, that, and that's the problem is, not only does it not allow well, not only does it not do that, but it actually creates a space where it closes space for the... what you're talking about is the work of civil society, leadership and democracy, right where we can say, okay, there's a real problem here. It's not the kind of problem we're going to unpack in a tweet. This is a deep this is a multi factorial, complex issue with many different sides and many different considerations, and we're going to need to get a diverse group of stakeholders together to figure it out, and we're gonna have to make concessions, and we're gonna have to consider alternative ideas. What happens when extremists, extremists enter the game is that they shut down the space for that to happen. So instead of people actually engaging in the process of self governance and civil society leadership. They say that's more convenient for me, the Haitians subhuman eating pets gotta go right. Or the litmus test on the left right, which is that's all made up. And you and by the way, not only is it made up, which in this case, that I just want to be clear, that was went made up, but any concern, any you know conversation about this is trafficking and racism, or is that also shuts down the space for actual democratic practice, and that's when you see the "for us or against us" mindset take hold. Yes, it's a... It's a really dangerous path to go down, because people stop believing in real solutions to real problems.

**Kevin Aldridge** 20:51

Absolutely, and I think, I think we have to avoid that at all costs. That's why it's so tough. I think for politicians to lead, you know, to lead these types of conversations, because politicians tend to be very transactional well,

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and it's incentivized in our politics at this moment. Yeah, you know, it's like, the more outlandish, the more followers. I mean, unfortunately, and I think that, you know, I happen to think that the left is still trying to hold on to the politics of sort of centrist democracy, but it's hard. I mean, the political incentives are there in terms of the bases to pull on the extremes. But yeah, I agree with you. I think that the solutions have to come from our civil society leaders.

**Kevin Aldridge** 23:08

Yeah, it has to be at the local level. It has to be with the organizations within our communities who are doing the work. Look, they say All politics is local. And I believe that you know, you know, in my heart of hearts, that, you know, the changes that we want to see in our country, we're looking to Washington for it, and I don't think that we're ever going to get it from Washington to the degree that we want it, whether that's from the White House, either, you know, either of our houses in Congress, and certainly the Supreme Court is more dubious these days. So I think we've got to look at, how do we do the hard work on the ground in our communities, with the with the established leadership, with the folks who are more interested in common ground and who don't have the political solutions there. Because look, let's take a you know, the the folks in Springfield probably can't solve the resource issue, right that that may be left up to their city council, state leaders and federal leaders there. But certainly what people on the ground in Springfield can do, churches, nonprofit organizations, institutions of learning, certainly what, what people of goodwill in that community can do is sort of come together and figure out, hey, how do we want to talk about this, the situation in Springfield, instead of letting you know the media or outside politicians come in and tell us who we are, because, you know, I lived in Springfield. I went to college in Springfield. I'm a graduate of Wittenberg, proud graduate of Wittenberg University. I spent four years living in that community.

**Jackie Congedo** 24:38

I didn't know that about you.

**Kevin Aldridge** 24:39

Yeah, yeah. I actually also spent a period of time working in Springfield when I worked for Cox media group in the Dayton Daily News, Springfield was at one point in time in my assignment, there was a part of my assignment. So Springfield is a community that I know very well, and I know a lot of the people there in Springfield, and I can tell you for one and. That Springfield is not, you know, sort of what the national reputation of it is there. Don't let people fool you that Springfield is a community torn apart and are, and is a community of disunified people, that, by and large, for the most part, people in Springfield, pretty unified, kind of tend to, kind of tend to get along. And so I think you know what sort of you know needs to happen. There are some really good, honest conversations, you know, held by the good people of their that will drive their local politics, that can then be taken to the state level and talk about, how do we make this work?

25:37

 Yeah, what do we need from the state and federal levels to make sure that we can solve for these things. Yeah, and that those, those, thank goodness, that we do have that kind of leadership locally on the ground and and there are those sort of pebbles in the pond, I would say, you know, with the ripple effects coming outwards of those upstanding actions and that kind of leadership happening in this moment. And we're gonna, we're gonna give some shout outs later about that. But it's just been so it's really, it's interesting when you look back, right, when we were talking about, like, this history of anti Haitian bigotry and propaganda, had no idea that it existed, right? Many of us probably heard that whatever that Thursday night was, and thought, what that either, either, either, you thought that makes sense. Yeah, right, right, because there were some people like you said, who I think have been, you know, socialized enough into this idea of folks who could do something like this that this wasn't surprising, or that this only validated their worldview in some way. And then there were others of us who were like, wait a minute, what did he just say? What I thought he said? But you look back and you can actually see that, hmm, it turns out, you know, there's a history of this kind of propaganda and and it's, it's baked into how we may think, speak without, without us even knowing about that so

**Kevin Aldridge** 27:04

and one last thing I'll say on this, because I know we've got to move on, but, but this is a point that's worth being said for those who may not or who may believe that there are still some serious issues as it relates to immigration, but don't subscribe to the petty narratives. Like it's not enough to stay silent on it. It's not enough to say, "Well, yeah, I don't disagree. I don't agree with that language, but..." there should be no "but," you know, let's just stop right? Like, I don't see enough people on both sides of the aisle saying this is patently false. This is untrue. Those who continue to say it, you know, are lying, and it's not acceptable for whatever issues you might have with immigration or whatever you think, like like this is not acceptable. So we've got to stop with the "Yeah, but" right sort of thing on this, because that's what I see a lot of people on the right doing. They when you when you challenge them, when you push them into a corner and you say, Well, what do you find this type of language acceptable? They'll say "no, but..." No, just stop at the No. Like, let's deal with with the immigration stuff we're going to talk about. But we need to make a clear stand here on this language that is unacceptable, without equivocation, without anything like that. And that's what troubles me in this situation, is there's too much, there's too much "no, but" yeah on that, well, right? And we gotta, we gotta leave, we gotta quit that.

28:38

Right because this, because anything else opens up space right for all kinds of really terrible things, and we're starting to see the beginnings of that right with like bomb threats and all the security and classes having to be canceled. And you know, these are just everyday people trying to live their lives in the middle of this national like you said, bomb throwing that's happening. And what we need is leadership at all levels from all sides of the aisle that can stand up and say, unacceptable, unacceptable. We're not going to traffic in we're not going to traffic in this. We're going to and to your point, there will be a time to talk about the real questions and conversations and challenges associated with this kind of an influx of immigration in a small town, if and where those exist, but, but we're not gonna, we are not going to traffic in dehumanizing rhetoric, because everybody loses.

28:38

Yeah, you'll get to those conversations quicker if you shut that stuff down right, yeah, because think about how much time we've spent, and the media has spent talking about immigrants eating pets in Springfield, and how little time has actually been spent talking about the issues, and people want to move on from it, but those people who want to move on from it haven't done or won't commit themselves to the work beforehand to denounce the ugliness and say, "Hey, this is a distraction from the real issues, and it's not even anything worthy of conversation." Should have never been brought up. It was a terrible thing. Now let's move on from that. Let's all denounce it. Let's move on from it, and now let's talk about the very serious issues. But as long as people are feeling like, hey, if I still don't know whether I'm not ready to talk to you, if I still feel like you can believe this, like, how can I be assured, in good faith, that any conversation we'll have about these real issues is going to have any real serious discussion or attraction if you still believe this? Yeah, I can't talk to I can't talk to somebody who believes in this, yep, in good faith.

29:50

And that's the pragmatist argument, I mean. But you have to be starting from a place of people actually want to solve a problem, right? So, you know me, Kevin, I'm a glass half full person, and I want to believe that people are inherently good and they want to solve problems. I think there are some people who don't actually want to solve this.

**Kevin Aldridge** 30:43

That's true. That's absolutely true.

**Jackie Congedo** 30:59

And I think that, you know, so for me, equally weighted, if not more so, is this idea that this kind of rhetoric is not new. When people are dehumanized like this, it opens up big space for violence and for to justify horrific acts against them. And so, you know, we as a just society of people grounded in our shared humanity, should universally stand up and condemn this kind of dehumanizing rhetoric. I think we, we know too well the consequences of not doing that based on, you know, the history that we teach at the center. So

**Kevin Aldridge** 31:35

absolutely.

**Jackie Congedo** 31:36

So, yeah, it's it's unfortunate to watch, to watch this sort of continue to degrade. But I know that there are some bright spots with upstanders. We'll talk about them in a little bit. Before we do that, we want to get to our two stories we're sharing today. The first one actually is, sort of has somewhat of a direct connection to this, you know, in some ways to this, this idea of an immigrant experience, and this, as I mentioned, is the story of Helen Kaltman and her family. She was born in 1937 in Warsaw, Poland, and when she was two years old, her parents took her and fled to the Soviet Union. They were then sent to Siberia, very small family. They survived the war. All of their extended family members were murdered in the Holocaust, you know, and then they made their way to Israel, started their lives over in Israel, that's where Helen met her husband, Simon, who had survived multiple camps at that point. And then they made their way to Cincinnati, and they started their life another new beginning in Cincinnati. And so we were really fortunate to have Helen and her daughter Elana Grubbs and her granddaughter Ariel Grubbs-Guttman talk with us together, a three generation conversation about what it means to have a new beginning and what they carry with them.

**Ariel Grubbs-Guttman** 32:57

I wanted to add in one thing, if that's okay, too, when we were talking about when you came here, and how hard it was. I think something that people don't remember is two things. One, these were children from France, from Poland, from, you know, Germany. They weren't, first of all, they didn't all speak the same language. My grandparents spoke Yiddish, but they didn't all speak Yiddish. Some of them spoke only Polish or, you know, they didn't know Hebrew when they first went to Israel, and so they came to America, and they were the survivors that were grouped together. And they had so much in common, but they were also so different. Some of them had very different traditions for the holidays. And I think that growing up, I heard how hard it really was for my grandma here, she had no money. You know, they would take whatever they had. They would walk to the bank and save everything they had. They just poured everything they had into their children's education. My grandpa went to finished high school when he got to Cincinnati, because he didn't even have a high school education. He spoke no English. He could really only do things with his hands, you know, work it here because he didn't speak the language. He had no education. She had limited education in English. And you know, they had this group of people that sometimes they felt really connected to, and sometimes they didn't, and their family was back home. And I don't think that people understand how hard it was. I think they see Jews now as they Oh, they assimilated so well. They've got good jobs, but they, you know, it's really because of all the pouring they did into their children of use your education. I didn't even get to go to high school. And so I think that that's really instilled in my generation, and in in American Jews now is the importance of education because of how hard it was for them. And also, I don't think that people understand how hard it was in Israel. You mentioned that. Well also you mentioned in 1925 you know, when they went to ...to Palestine and left. Don't think people realize when these survivors got to Israel, they didn't just like, walk into these beautiful hospitals, and it was horrible for them in Israel. It was hard for them here.

**Trinity Johnson** 35:12

Yeah, I've heard her refer to living in tents early in Israel, and then, to your point, coming here and maybe never finishing school. So it's amazing that your grandfather, you know, finished school, right? And I believe, did he become a plumber in Cincinnati, right?

**Elana Grubbs** 35:31

Well, he had been a plumber all his life in the concentration camps and in Israel. But you had to helping his father. He had to go to school here to do that, you had to learn the codes, you had to pass tests. He was a master plumber here. He studied hard

**Trinity Johnson** 35:46

and getting right to work to your point, because you're providing for a young family, right? And so thank you for bringing up those challenges. You know that we don't always think about what is the immigrant experience, how that isn't just hitting the ground running, that really is a rebuilding process. This question is both for Elana and Ariel, how has the legacy of being the child and grandchild of survivors impacted your lives?

**Elana Grubbs** 36:17

Well, my parents, I will say that my father was somebody of hope. He had a lot of hope, and he tried to always see the good in people, and I do too, and he would focus on that, but he also had a very big mistrust of anyone that wasn't family, anyone that wasn't part of his circle, in a lot of mistrust, and I think that he also taught us to be very careful, because you don't really know people. You just you know, really stay with your family. My mother also family and hope, but also some mistrust.

**Ariel Grubbs-Guttman** 37:05

I actually really agree with that. I think that people see Jews and say they're so insular, and they stay with their community, and it's probably a true stereotype, because I think that after the war, people were very distrustful because it was their neighbors who gave them away, or their best friends. And so I do think that there is a sense of keeping to yourself, and, you know, not being like showy or flashy, you always just kind of keep to yourself because you don't really know other people. And so I do agree that that trauma has passed on, but also I agree the hope, and I just see the strength and my mother and my grandmother, and I think, you know, it really shows that the matriarch of the family has really passed down our closeness and importance to Judaism and family, and I'm really appreciative to my grandma and mom for everything they've given and thank you for giving us the opportunity to share this story.

**Kevin Aldridge** 38:18

So I always just love hearing these stories and hearing people talk, because it just gives me one perspective and history and knowledge that I didn't have. But in every time, it also makes me reflect on who I am, or at least who I think I am, or know myself to be, and you know, particularly that part at the end there, where they were just kind of talking about, you know, generationally, the impacts of their their parents and grandparents on on them. And it just made me sort of start to think about that we're all sort of like this collection, not just of our own personal experiences, but but generationally, what our what our forefathers and mothers have experienced, and what they've passed on to us, and how much of that plays into our thinking and how we move now, sometimes we graduate beyond that and change and do different things, but as we talked about things being baked into the cake, so much that's true, and I think about, you know, how so much of the the hardship of of Black people in this country and what they endured through slavery and Jim Crow is sort of baked into the DNA of each and every one.

39:34

Literally, yeah? I mean, there's this inherited genetic trauma, right? That comes with continue

**Kevin Aldridge** 39:40

Yeah, no, no, no, no. But

**Jackie Congedo** 39:41

traumatized experience, it's passed down,

39:43

 yeah, yeah. I was thinking also just about, you know, the studies around epigenetics and, you know, inherited traumas are so interesting. There was one, I think, that was done where, you know, there was a mice and a cage and the floor, they shocked the floor, right? And actually, they split, sprayed citrus, shock the floor, and the mice jump. Second generation, they spray the citrus, and the mice jump without shocking the floor. And the third generation, they spray the citrus, and the mice jump. So, you know, this is not because mom mouse taught baby mouse. You know, this is what you do, although we know as human beings, that's happening in our environment as well, right? We're a product of our environments and how we are raised and socialized. But like from a DNA, on a DNA level, we are our parents and our grandparents and our great grandparents and our ancestors, and so for better or for worse, right? The Good, the Bad, the Ugly, we carry that with us and with new beginnings. You know, there's these new beginnings. Some, some of them, you know, start from a place of deep trauma and loss. And so, you know, what does it look like to come here and rebuild? And how do you trust people again? Yeah. And how do you overcome your socialization and your hard right wiring, yeah, not to trust people, yeah.

**Kevin Aldridge** 39:43

Right, but it also helps me see the thread that we all kind of share, like, I'm grateful for it, because it it allows me to see the humanity in somebody else. To say, You know what, our experiences might be different, our traumas might be different, but we're all kind of trying to deal. This in the same way, we're all trying to navigate it the best that we can, and we're all a product of the people who raised us and who raised them, and what they've what they've been through, and how experiences change individuals or communities and that it all requires us to take just a minute to pause and recognize that what we see in the people that we interact with every day is but a fraction of who they are, and sometimes what they allow us... allow us to see, and it just makes me recognize and realize that the... how bad the quality of my conversations are, sometimes even with The people who are, who are closest to me, and how we need to get better at that.

**Kevin Aldridge** 42:03

I mean, it, think about what she said about that. She said, you know, part of the reason that it's so hard to trust is that their friends and their neighbors were the ones who who turned them in. Like, I think anybody who's ever been betrayed by a close, yeah, friend or family member in, in, in a less serious way than, like, murder, right? Like, I mean, you know, I mean, it seems very the betrayal seems very serious to us, no matter what it is, but, but here we're talking about life and life and death, betrayal, right? Yeah, one could, I mean, you, you'd have to be, you know, some you'd have to, like, not have a soul to understand, like, how deeply that, you know, could wound somebody, and how, how hard it would be to to get that, you know, to get that back, and how, as someone who went Through that, why you wouldn't pass that, that warning down, you know, to everybody who's beneath you, it's like what to have hope. We've got hope, but, you know, better, keep one eye open.

**Jackie Congedo** 43:11

Yeah, that's a survival of the fittest thing. Yes. Like, fool me once, you know. I mean, we're not gonna, we're not gonna go down that path again. I also love what Ariel said about, you know, this idea of of the perception of Jews, and, you know, being an insular community, and, you know, looking out for, I think sometimes Jews, you know, Jewish people, get this reputation of like, well, they're only out for them, right? They're clannish, they're insular. And there's, of course, 1000s of years of years of history behind those stereotypes related to the propaganda that was spread to sort of... so that, but, but you know, what people don't realize is things like, even in the city, the Jewish Hospital, the JCC, right? People think, well, they're so special. They have their own hospital, their own their own community center. Actually, those institutions are a product of antisemitism. So why do we have a Jewish Hospital in city? Why did we? Because Jewish doctors were forbidden to practice at other hospitals. Why do we have a JCC? Because Jews were forbidden to join country clubs, right and rec facilities, and so I just think the reframe around that, because memory and life, you know, memories are short, and people think, well, you know, the only reason in today's environment of inclusion, right, where, you know, there's this perceived privilege of Jewish people, why would they have their own thing? Why would they insist must be better than, well, actually, those institutions, the origins of that come out of a place of marginalization and antisemitism. And so just this idea that, you know, again, this, this characteristic of Jews being insular, maybe it has something, something to do with the trauma repeatedly. And this is you were talking most proximately about the Holocaust. But this is a cycle, you know, for 1000s. Years in every context. Yeah, you know, it's

**Kevin Aldridge** 45:05

I think every stereotype, I mean, I think this is true. This is a true statement without getting myself into too much trouble. I think every stereotype and trope has a grain of truth in it. What's missing is what you talked about, the context for why this thing may be true?

**Jackie Congedo** 45:22

Yeah,

**Kevin Aldridge** 45:23

that, I think where the where the stereotype and the miseducation comes in is in the negatives that are often placed around, yeah, the origins of certain things. So, so if, if Jews are sort of viewed as insular, one could understand why that, why that might be the case given the given the history. And how do you, how do you have to adjust coming out of a a period of history like that? I might keep to myself as well. If everybody who I thought I knew and trusted turned their back on me and tried to have me, you know, sold me up the river, I probably want to keep to my keep to my kind people that I could trust too. That's that's not understandable. It doesn't mean that that's what you continue to be, what you always are. But there, there is a reason for why some things are the same, the way that they are. You talk about the Jewish hospitals. I say the same thing about... I get this all the time. ?Well, why do you why do you have the the NAACP awards, or the essence awards? Why aren't the Grammys good enough for itself? Or why do you need a Black Walk of Fame? Or why do you need a Black this, that or the other?" Well, the reason why we don't, we would rather not have those things either, to be quite frank, but the reasons that those things exist is because the institutions that originally were established to honor those things didn't include us. Yeah, intentionally excluded them. You know, when you talk about the "Oscar so white" movement, that was, you know, we weren't even involved in the process of the of the selections. And so how can you have people who are solely ignoring your contributions and what you're doing, and you don't have a place at the table, and you're supposed to consider that like reputable or representative of the whole but that sort of thing is, that's the frustrating thing, I think, if you're a part of a minority community in this in this country, is that part of it is never acknowledged. It's always the it's always as if we're the ones creating the division, because we have to go out and create our own, yeah, our own institutions, because we want to be acknowledged. We want to be cared for in a certain way. And over here, was being neglected. So it's always positioned as where the victims are, the ones who are dividing versus the power structures, right? And that's that that can be kind of frustrating.

47:45

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Well, the the upstander story we're sharing this month is a similar sort of story of new a new beginning, and I think in some ways, a new beginning that came out of, well, absolutely, a new beginning that came out of a moment of trauma. And again, this is had the privilege of just having a conversation with one of my friends, Whitney Austin, Kentucky woman who was honored at this year at our Upstander Awards Gala as the nonprofit upstander of the year. Some of you may know Whitney's name. She was one of the victims in the mass shooting in Cincinnati in 2018 on Fountain Square. She was in the Fifth Third lobby, and she was shot 12 times. And if you've ever met Whitney, you would just never know, both in her spirit and her ability, that that this had happened to her, she's she's a woman on a mission now, and you know, she's really committed to making progress on this issue of gun safety. But what I what I love about Whitney is that where she, you know, someone, someone like her, who has every reason to lob bombs, right? She, she literally lived through the consequences of whatever action or inaction we have in our politics that allows for these things to happen. You know, in any aspect of the issue. And she has chosen, she has chosen to pursue a path of common sense, bipartisan reform, because she's a pragmatist, right? And she's, she's grounded in thinking about like, how do we, if the goal is to make sure that there are less of mes, and even more so that there are less of people who did not survive, right, the people who who did not make it out of that building that day alive. How do we best do that? What can we do? Not there's too much to do, right? But again, the upstander mindset of what more can we do? And that's what Whitney's doing. So okay, let's listen to her.

**Whitney Austin** 50:01

As I was in that revolving door, and I was taking gunfire and thinking a million things, mostly, "How do I live, and get back to my children?" One of the things I thought was, "This is a mass shooting. There is no other explanation for what this is. And how dare I think that gun violence won't touch me and that I'm immune to it, because that's what's happening right now. You are being shot in a mass shooting, and you have done nothing to stop it." And so while again, my first thought was, how do I live? How do I get back to my family? Part of what I was thinking was, if I survive if I get this chance to get back to my family like this is the clearest sign I've ever received in my life that you have to do something about this, because you sat around and you missed your opportunity.

50:53

Wow, and you, you know, miraculously, were given the opportunity to pursue that. You know, you were shot. How many times?

**Whitney Austin** 51:05

12 times, and none of them hit anything important. I mean, it's such a miracle. I remember when they told me that night that 12 times, nothing critical. You're so stable, we don't need to take you into surgery until tomorrow. Again, just the biggest sign I've ever received in my life that you you're getting this gift that nobody gets, so you better do something with it. Yeah.

51:35

So you know what's so interesting? And for some people who are watching, you know, you might think, okay, Holocaust Museum. We're sitting here talking about gun safety with a survivor of you know of a shooting. What's the connection here and and what I'm hearing in your story is a similar arc in terms of the you know, upstanders meeting their moments across history and throughout context, right? So it's, it's you're living your life and something happens, or you're activated in some way, in this way, I think it was a really concrete, obviously, activation for you, and you, what you've done is really tap into your strengths, your character strengths, to use that as a moment, not to, you know, fall into a place of, to your point, you know, sort of paralyzing grief or depression, but actually to activate and to Say, I'm going to be part of the solution to this, that must have taken a lot of like, I mean, you say it like it was just a no brainer, but it has to take actually courage every day to make that decision, given the trauma that you've been through.

**Whitney Austin** 52:58

It was pretty immediate, and I think it's the history of events you know, to have been given the opportunity time and time again to participate, and denying that opportunity, certainly there was some guilt. Why didn't you participate? Why didn't you try to make a change, and then pairing that with getting this gift that nobody gets, there are so many people involved in this work to make change, and many of them have been shot one time, and they can't walk. They're paralyzed forever. But yet I got 12 and I can walk and I can jump and I can swim, and I can do all the things that I need to do, minus a push up, which might not have been able to do a push up before I was shot. And so it really was pretty immediate, and I think that's a combination of, again, the history of events, the upbringing that I was given through my parents, and the faith that you know I subscribe to that, yeah, like, this is it? There could be no clearer sign this is what you're supposed to do now. Does that mean that it's easy? No, not at all. Not at all. I am really devastated every time I pay attention to a shooting. Now that sounds weird, but I can't totally pay attention to all of it, because it really will put me into a dark place and prevent me from being productive. But I can't miss all of them, and it doesn't have to be one kind. I certainly feel closest to mass violence, because I know what that's all about. But I've been devastated by children that pick up guns and accidentally shoot themselves or their friends or siblings. I've been devastated by incidents of community. Violence where young black males lose their lives to gun violence. I've been devastated by incidents of suicide, so it is hard, but I try to put controls in place to keep me positive and productive. Because, you know, devastation doesn't help. You know, it's not going to make this issue any better. It's not going to get us closer to materially reducing gun death and injury. So I just have learned how I work, and I try to stay away from the things that really devastate me.

55:36

Wow, yeah. So what I love about that clip is, really, is Whitney talking about choices and how, you know, when she had this opportunity, which, by the way, most people, I mean, if you were to frame that a different way to your point being shot 12 times in a mass shooting, I don't know that. There are many people who would just be like, "That's an opportunity." But in the case, in Whitney's case, you know, she survived this and and she sort of seized it as an opportunity to activate and stepped into that like power and agency. And what I love is that she's talking about, actually, how she maintains that agency because, of course, the trauma of the incident didn't go anywhere, right? And I think about all of our survivors and the choices that they make when they step into a classroom and talk to kids, the choices that they made when they came together and said, "Let's build a museum." I mean, How much easier would it have been, in some ways, to say, "I don't want to talk about that or think about that ever again." And there are some people who survived this history who have made that choice, and it's there's no judgment about that, right? It's in how we process and I think there are probably many survivors, or parents or siblings or, you know, friends of of gun violence victims, who who who have also said, this isn't something I want to spend my time thinking about. But I think what's so powerful about what Whitney shared is that she's found a way to activate and to maintain activation in a way that's incredibly powerful, from a place of great trauma, without losing herself in the trauma in every minute. And I don't know, I mean, I think that about our survival. I don't know how they do it. I really, I really don't know how they do it. I sense, obviously, that there's immense purpose there. But, you know, just thinking about Whitney was thinking about her this weekend, you know, with what happened in Birmingham. And, you know, every other day it seems like when there's another episode, as she said, of some sort of gun violence, the retriggering and the retraumatization. And I know that that's happening for our survivors too. You know, I thinking about after October 7 and and really, in any incident of dehumanization, I think is a triggering moment for them in so many ways. And so it does speak to me of a lot of courage,

**Kevin Aldridge** 55:43

Oh, absolutely,

**Jackie Congedo** 56:59

to be able to continue that fight.

**Kevin Aldridge** 58:08

Yeah, courage. And I think we can just, you know, all acknowledge that it takes extraordinary individuals to to be able to rise above that. But I think anytime any of us has a sort of a life altering or situation, or sort of a brush with death, it does kind of force you into this corner where it asks you, like, Hey, what is what is my purpose? Why am I here? What? What should I be doing? And sometimes that that incident that you have, that eye opening or enlightening experience with becomes our purpose, and I think that both fortunately and and unfortunately is sometimes it takes for us to experience something personally before we get before we get involved. I mean, Whitney said it herself that she had seen and heard gun violence prior to that, but it had never really occurred to her that she hadn't really been much a part of doing anything about it. And I think we, many people can can sit in that whether whether we're talking about gun violence or any other societal ill that you know, or situation that you might want to look at that most people haven't gotten involved in until it's affected them personally and that, and that may be the saddest thing about about us as a society, is sometimes we only care when it, yeah, when it when it lands on our lands on our doorstep, and we, we, we have to challenge ourselves, because none of us are immune to that. You know, none of us are immune to this, but challenging ourselves to care more about things that don't affect us. You know, there used to be a slogan. I can't remember what it was for, but it was, the catchphrase was the life you saved might be your own, you know, and thinking about encouraging you to to get him. All because I think most of us live in this bubble of, oh, well, that's won't happen to me or somebody Yeah, it's somebody else, until it arrives on our doorstep. Then it's like, Oh man, I'm no different than anybody else, yeah. And so I think, I think we all have to recognize, sort of what Whitney came to recognize, and hopefully it's not as we're, you know, dodging a hail of bullets or praying to get home to our families that that we we make a move to, you know, to get involved and try to make a difference. Because there are so many different ways that we can get involved. Like, a lot of times we look at this gun violence situation and we think it has to be through legislative action or something like that, pushing for this bill, or testifying in front of Congress or the state house or something like that. Yes, that certainly is one avenue. But there are many things that lead people to engage in gun violence. You know, I've said this that it's more than just we got a lot of guns out there. Like, you really have to sort of reconcile - Absolutely, we need to make it harder for people to get their hands on guns who shouldn't have them. But then there are the very real societal challenges of, how do we stop people before they even think about picking up a gun? Like what does that look like in terms of our approach to to to ending gun violence like that has to be a part of the equation. I think this, this one, one ideal mindset, that it's got to be banning assault weapons or something like that. Again, I think those things are all part of the stew. But I've always said people who are in who are maybe mentally ill or intent on murdering someone for whatever reason, will find a way to get their hands on something they shouldn't have to be able to do that. So we got to start to talk about, you know, what are other ways to attack this issue that aren't just necessarily about the guns themselves. Yeah, I think that's part of the argument.

1:02:07

Yeah. And Whitney, I mean, she says herself, she was a gun owner, you know, she's, she's a Louisvillian. Is that how you say that? I think, yeah. I've just thought

**Kevin Aldridge** 1:02:17

that somebody will correct us. If there's not, yeah, somebody

**Jackie Congedo** 1:02:20

will correct us, she's from Louisville, and so you know this, and this is she's now gotten some really amazing, made some really amazing progress, not just legislatively, to your point, but also some legislation in Kentucky where, like the Second Amendment is, you know that that's a, that's a deep seated value, and sort of proposition down there, I say down there, like it's so far down there, it's, you know, across the river five minutes. But so she's, you know, she's, she's acting in a lot of different ways. And if you watch her interview, you'll hear talk about some of these, you know. And it's why, again, she's has this, like, when you think about her character strengths, she's a pragmatist, you know, and so she's like, it might not feel so good to me, right? It might not be like, you know, I'm not, she said I'm not focused on, and I'm paraphrasing here, you know, necessarily, like, my approach might not be right for some people on both sides of this, right? But I see this as the most I'm interested in, the most in order to even to take a piece of legislation has to be bipartisan. Like, she's so focused on, what are the pragmatic things that we can do, right? Not all the reasons we can't. But like, there have to be avenues that will advance this. So she's working on stop. I mean, she's got stop the stop the bleed trainings that she does. And she said there are some people in sort of the gun safety advocacy community who will say, don't stop distracting. Stop trying to make that easier to you know, this is the real problem is the legislative issues. Why are we focused on the stop the bleed stuff? Let's get to the heart of the problem. And her point is, it's all part of the problem, absolutely. So let's, let's try and find the solutions where we can get the coalitions to address them effectively. I just think, and, you know, it's easy for you or me, on the outside looking in to say, oh, that sounds like a pragmatic approach, but like, here's this woman who's been shot 11 times, yeah, and almost left this earth and lost her family, and, you know, and she's, she's back, and she's, she is so committed. She is so committed to trying to make progress, I wouldn't say solve this issue. She's trying, she's trying to do what she can with her strengths and her time to affect change. And at the end of the day, what else can we do?

**Kevin Aldridge** 1:04:38

Yeah? I mean, that's the that's the definition of an upstander. She's she's taking agency. She's using her gifts and talents and what she and her experience and what she has to try to make a difference. Look, you know, the most arrogant part, I think, of a lot of conversations and issues that we deal with these days, is to think that there's a magic bullet that's going to solve it like we're going to come up with this, this one or two solutions that's going to eliminate the the issue, and

**Jackie Congedo** 1:05:09

that stops most of us from even trying.

**Kevin Aldridge** 1:05:10

Yeah, and if that were, if that were the case, don't you think by now, we would have already gotten there with a lot of things. Things are not that things are not that simple. So I think, you know, you've got to look at these things holistically and have, you know, approaches from many levels. And if one thing you're doing saves a life or cuts down on just one person getting their hand on a gun that they shouldn't get, you know, we got to learn how to take those incremental victories, right? It's like when we see a mass shooting, we think we stack those. We think of those as huge losses, and they are, make no mistake about it, but at the same time, we've got to look at the incremental progress that we're making, because over time, if we get enough small wins, you know, that'll turn into, you know, bigger victories, bigger victories at the end of the day. So So shout out to Whitney and everything she's doing. I know it can't be easy dealing with your own trauma and reliving that moment while also trying to make a difference for other people so they don't have to live that. That is no small thing. And I think anytime we look at her or hear her story, we ought to give that the respect that it's due. Because, quite frankly, there aren't a lot of people who could do that. There aren't a lot of people who are fortunate enough to be in her situation, to be physically here, able to do that. So yeah,

**Jackie Congedo** 1:06:35

and that's when I think about honoring her. That's the challenge she has for everyone, is, don't wait until it's you

**Kevin Aldridge** 1:06:41

right,

**Jackie Congedo** 1:06:41

whether it's this you issue or some other issue. And sometimes it's like, okay, well gosh, there's so much on fire. Like, I don't know. I can't... I'm not going to do anything because I can't fix it all. But I really do think you know one thing, one moment, and it doesn't have to be a stretch. It's like, what are you good at? Where? Where are you uniquely positioned. Where does the world need you? No one else who can do it other than you. Yeah? So that's, yeah. That's

**Kevin Aldridge** 1:07:06

 Just think about this. We don't, we don't think we're going to solve heart disease by learning how to give somebody CPR, right? We, we think, like that's a good skill to have in the event that I'm somewhere and, you know, maybe somebody suffers some sort of cardiac arrest, or situation where we don't think, go into that, thinking we're going to save humanity or save every person, or solve the issue. It's what I can do in a moment if called upon to be there, right? And that's the way we got to look at, look at these, these situations you don't have to solve it. Sometimes you just need to be that piece in that moment. Yeah, make the difference and be good. Be good with that.

**Jackie Congedo** 1:07:44

Yep, so that's, that's a good segue to our last piece today, the our little upstander shout out that we've decided we're going to start doing, yeah, which, which talk about, you know, your little piece and your little moment, going back to where we started the conversation in Springfield, it's not all bad news. And all bad news in Springfield, as you said, No, there's a lot of good people there, and there's a lot of good people who are actually being intentional about going there. You know, you had a story about a friend of yours who's gonna stop there, right? Yeah,

**Kevin Aldridge** 1:08:16

yeah. So I had a friend who was, who was on my Facebook feed, and they actually posted, hey, "Going to Springfield tomorrow, you know, to patronize some of the Haitian businesses. Do you want to go?" You know? So basically, this individual was saying, hey, one thing that I can do in the midst of this is I'm going to go up there and I'm going to support, you know, these people who are being, you know, villainized, dehumanized, who didn't ask for this, you know, I'm going to go up there and support them. And basically, anybody who wants to ride with me, you're welcome to come along. And I think again, small thing you know, is that going to is that going to change the nature of the conversation that we're having right now in Springfield, or suddenly bring a flood of resources into the community by that one act? Probably no, but it is one thing that will make a difference to those folks that they're going to to pay and make a difference to, and I think that's the way we need to look at it. One other person I wanted specifically that I wanted to give a shout out to, was, was Nathan Clark, and if you don't know who he is, he's the father of the young man, Aiden Clark, who was killed in the auto accident, involving involving a Haitian there in the Springfield community, and he's someone whose name often gets tossed out in political circles as a reason to say, see, this is why we need to fix this, this immigration problem. And I wanted to shout him out because he came to a Springfield city council meeting and he he implored people to stop using his son as a political pawn, and he spoke out about how the rhetoric and what was being done to the Haitians in Springfield was wrong, and in fact, he even went so far as to say he wished his son had been killed by a white man. Think about that for a second. You know what it takes for a father to stand up and. A statement like that, just in terms of how sick and tired he was, of his grief, of his tragedy, of having to relive that every time some politician like Donald Trump or JD Vance wanted to stand up and use that as an example. And he said, Enough is enough. You know, stop, stop using my son in this way, and stop talking about these Haitian immigrants in in, in that way, shape and form. And I think that took a lot of courage for him to stand up and and do that, knowing, you know, the possible backlash that that he could get from that you would hope nobody would would be that disrespectful to do that. But hey, these are the times that we live in. And so wanted to make sure I gave him a shout,

**Jackie Congedo** 1:10:42

yeah, yeah, absolutely. That's so well deserved. I mean, again, another person who faced a moment of adversity and trauma and, you know, found a way to for there to be meaning in that, right, in a way that's like, because think about that if that had been someone else who didn't choose a response of upstanding right? You know? So it's hard to know with this stuff. It's like, what happens in one moment? What does that do? Yeah, or not. Do you know if you don't act or you don't speak or you don't say, Hey, keep my son's name out of this. So absolutely, he should be applauded for standing up in that way. And then lastly, we have to give an upstander shout out today. And this is a little bit less obviously, the gravity of this, a little bit less to the parents of Our Lady of Victory, who, by the time anyone listens to this, hopefully they will have caught the culprit who is responsible for kids there not having school today. Yeah, we have two, two production assistants in house today because one of our videographers has kids at this school, and so they're with him today in the studio. And Kevin, I let you give the punchline. Why they don't have school today?

**Kevin Aldridge** 1:12:06

Well, they were not in school today because apparently a snake got loose in the building, and they're they're on the hunt for him right now, you know? And I heard something about the mascot of the school. They're called the Vipers, right? So, so, you know, I guess the snake's at home. I mean, are you gonna

**Jackie Congedo** 1:12:28

He's like if I can't live in peace here? Guys? This is it. Literally, this building bears my name. What are you doing here? This isn't the Our Lady of Victory, humans, this is the Vipers. So just an upstander shout out to the parents who are just figuring it out on this Monday morning while they catch the snake, and to the upstanding parents who actually answered the call from the school district right the school to come help catch said Snake, absolutely

**Kevin Aldridge** 1:12:58

now those are the those are some good upstanders right there who are going on a snake hunt. I tell you, it's just great to be a kid in 2024, I can't ever recall losing a school day because of a snake. And I'm sure it probably happened when I was in school too, but we didn't know it, you know? Yeah, we just kept on going.

**Jackie Congedo** 1:13:18

So when they catch when they catch the snake. I think that this should be the new mascot, actual mascot of this. Yes, they need to keep the snake in a appropriate size terrarium here. This is a big snake, like four to five feet snake... in a terrarium. And then this is going to be, you know, Vinnie the Viper, whatever. Hey, new mascot today. You know, alliterations are an appropriate asset of mine. Do you like that?

**Kevin Aldridge** 1:13:48

love it.

**Jackie Congedo** 1:13:50

All right. Well, thanks for joining us again for another episode of the ripple effect podcast. It was great being with you. And as always, don't ever hesitate to reach out. Find us on Twitter, Facebook, online, let us know what you think. Let us know how you're using your strengths to activate, to stand up, how you were maybe inspired by what you heard. And we'll see you next time. Yeah, let us know your thoughts on this episode. Our email is in the show notes. You can listen anytime on Spotify, Apple podcasts or visit Holocaustandhumanity.org/podcast. You can also connect with us on Instagram and Tiktok @holocaustandhumanity and X Facebook @cincyhhc. The Upstander Ripple Effect is a production of the Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center. The Center's mission is to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust inspire action today. This series is part of the Cynthia & Harold Gutman Family Center for Storytelling. Visit us in person at historic union terminal in Cincinnati, Ohio, or online anytime at Holocaustandhumanity.org. Managing producer is Anne Thompson. Consulting producer is Joyce Kamen. Technical producer is Robert Mills, and Technical Director is Josh Emerson. The opening sequence is by Ken Furman. Select music is by Kikc Lee. This is recorded at Technical Consulting Partners studios in Cincinnati, Ohio.