I'M HAPPY HE'S GOING TO JAIL!

The Derek Chauvin Trial as Inkblot Test

PART 3

The Dr. JOHN BERARDI SHOW

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Pete Kraska:

I think even some of the more status quo oriented criminologist, they have to concede that this indicates, even to them, a massive race problem in this country, a massive inequality problem in this country.

John Berardi:

Welcome back to part three of this three part series called I'm Happy He's Going to Jail. It's been weeks since the verdict came down that found Derek Chauvin guilty of murdering George Floyd. And as I mentioned at the start of episode one, I've been interested in what people's reactions to the trial can tell us about ourselves as humans, about our world, and how we see it. Now, the voice you heard at the top of this episode was Dr. Pete Kraska, who we featured in part one of this series. His work makes it clear that part of the policing problem today is a race problem. To put this into context, during the Derek Chauvin trial, there were two overarching interpretations of the forces that led to George Floyd's murder. The first is what we'll call the one bad apple interpretation.

Marjorie Korn:

So on the one hand, there's a group of people who are supporters of the police and they said that Derek Chauvin was a rogue actor, this like bad apple, whose actions were not consistent with the training that officers receive, and that a different cop in Chauvin shoes would have acted differently. They fully acknowledge that George Floyd's death was a tragedy. But what happened that day shouldn't be used to indict the whole system.

John Berardi:

And what was the other interpretation?

Marjorie Korn:

The other side basically says that while it may be impossible to know what's in a man's heart, which is to say to know whether race field Chauvin's actions that day, that he was a product of the police structure that targets people of color more than any other group. Whether that's to maintain a power structure that keeps white people at the top or simply an inequity problem that persists from the days of slavery, they claim it causes a measurable harm. That's what Pete Kraska was alluding to in what he said at the top of the show. There's a discussion going on that extrapolates from this and it's dividing us.

John Berardi:

Well, our goal on this podcast is to find some common ground. Does it exist?

Marjorie Korn:

I think for me as a reporter, what's been helpful is talking to people who aren't the kind of hot take types. These experts have been looking into these issues for decades. Whether you agree with them or not, hopefully you'll find some deeper understanding into some really complex and charged issues.

John Berardi:

So should we get started?

Marjorie Korn:

Yeah, do the intro JB and let's dive in.

John Berardi:

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This is the Dr. John Berardi show, a podcast that seeks important lessons in a seemingly unlikely place amid competing points of view. In each episode, we look at fascinating, sometimes controversial topics to the minds of divergent thinkers. And together we tease out unifying threads from ideas that may feel irreconcilable. Today's topic, I'm Happy He's Going to Jail part three. In part one, Marjorie talked with two different academics about what's wrong with policing today, whether the Derek Chauvin trial has the potential to change anything and what change could look like if it were to happen.

John Berardi:

In part two, she spoke with Dr. Larry Rosenthal, professor of law at Chapman University, and Sheriff Aaron Applehans of Albany County, Wyoming, who have slightly different takes and significantly more optimism about upcoming changes to law enforcement in the wake of George Floyd's killing. Here in part three, Marjorie and guests will talk about race. They'll explore why, whether racism motivated children's actions or not, it continues to be an important part of this conversation, both publicly and privately in our homes with our children. So let's get started. Marjorie, I know you're going to talk about race and racism in this episode, I'm wondering how you thought about approaching it?

Marjorie Korn:

Well, I cover a lot of health and science. And one of the things that caught my attention over the last year happened this past April. That's what Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the director of the Centers for Disease Control, released a statement on racism and health. Basically, it says that COVID-19 has caused the death of more than half of million Americans. And it's disproportionately hit communities of color in terms of both case counts and death. Then it says, and I'm going to quote her. "Yet the disparities seen over the past year were not a result of COVID-19. Instead, the pandemic illuminated inequities that have existed for generations and revealed for all of America, unknown, but often unaddressed epidemic impacting public health, racism."

John Berardi:

Alright, so it seems like this is the CDC calling out racism for the first time as an independent risk factor for poor health outcomes. Is that right?

Marjorie Korn:

Yeah, that's exactly right. It goes on to define racism as not just the discrimination against one group based on the color of their skin or their race or ethnicity.

John Berardi:

So just to be clear, when most people think of racism, that's what it seems like they're thinking about, being mean to people of other races?

Marjorie Korn:

Well, I guess I would say that the meanness relates more to discrimination, treating people differently based on their race or ethnicity. Racism itself is the belief that one race is superior. And it can be unconscious too, that's called implicit bias. But I want to also pick up on something Dr. Walensky said it's that racism also includes the structural barriers that impact racial and ethnic groups differently to influence where a person lives, where they work, where their children play and where they worship and gather in a community. Again, according to the CDC, these have lifelong effects on the mental and physical health of individuals and communities of color.

John Berardi:

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I'd like to talk a little more about this, because I think on its face, some people find it difficult to connect racism with health.

Marjorie Korn:

Well, let's hear from Dr. Paula Braveman on this.

Paula Braveman:

I would define the social determinants of health as those factors apart from medical care and apart from genetics that play an important role in shaping health.

Marjorie Korn:

Dr. Braveman is a professor of Family and Community Medicine, and the director of the Center on Social Disparities and Health at the University of California, San Francisco.

Paula Braveman:

There are many examples, education and housing and transportation and the economic system. And there's racial injustice and the physical climate insofar as it's shaped by social policies.

Marjorie Korn:

She talks about how factors like the neighborhood you grew up in, and how much green space you have access to can affect your health. If you come from a neighborhood with clean air, you'd never consider this, but people who live in neighborhoods with polluted air, even noise pollution, see increases in neuro developmental issues and neurodegenerative diseases later in life. How much education your parents received and how far you get in your schooling matters too, so does whether you have food insecurity or live in a food desert, where fresh produce and healthy offerings are unavailable. And these things are highly studied. You can start to predict a person's lifelong health, for example, based on how closely they grew up to a highway.

Paula Braveman:

Take the example of education. Probably most people, if you ask them, does education influence health? They'd probably say yeah, because if you're more educated, you understand what you should do to take care of your health and you're a better problem solver. But education influences health in other ways that are at least as important. For anybody who doesn't come from a family with generations of fabulous inherited health, the main determinants of the income that we're going to earn is our education. Income in turn determines whether we have the money to buy or rent a home that's a healthy place for our kids to be or is it a home that has mold and rats and hazards in it.

Paula Braveman:

Can we buy or rent a home not only a healthy home, but in a neighborhood that's health promoting? Can we be in a neighborhood that has nice sidewalks and green spaces and bicycle lanes and really appealing places to shop for food at decent prices, or we really don't have much choice about where we can live? And we stay in a place that makes us worried every single day about our kids getting hurt or getting into trouble.

Paula Braveman:

And another thing about our income is that it's a big determinant of stress. People think that stress is the kind of thing that the executives and the leaders, the professionals experience stress before we're going to make a presentation or have an interview. But neuroscience has made these leaps in the last 20 years. And what neuroscientists have

discovered is that the kind of stress that we experience when we're facing those acute challenges that we feel are not completely out of our control, that actually seems to be good for our health. What's really toxic is the stress that's constant and persistent over time. That's what takes the toll. And that's what leads to chronic disease like heart disease and diabetes, the biological pathways have been traced and a lot of it involves inflammation, involves compromise of the way our immune systems function.

Paula Braveman:

This is real, the science is there. And I think to some extent that word has gotten out, certainly more than it had 25 years ago. People who work in this field like to use the upstream downstream metaphor, you have a stream, here's its source high up in the mountains and it flows down into a body of water. And before 20 or 30 years ago, if you looked in the medical literature, you'd find what people dealt with as causes of bad health, they were all very downstream. So they might look at behaviors and not look at what is it that had created those behaviors. So education would be upstream. The next one downstream from that is that income that's shaped by the education, etc., etc., etc. And then you get to the behaviors.

John Berardi:

So far, we've heard how say, education is connected to health outcomes, how's racism and health connected?

Paula Braveman:

There are two main ways that racism damages health, and one is the direct psychological stress, but the other one is by constraining the economic resources that people can have. Everything that we were talking about in terms of education and income, the housing, the transportation, all of that, if you do not have the same economic opportunity that a white person has, you're exposed to health harming conditions, you're also not getting the benefit of health promoting conditions.

Marjorie Korn:

It's probably helpful to think about this in terms of communities. So schools are largely funded through local and property taxes. If you're from a wealthy neighborhood, schools are better funded. And that also means that lower income communities get more poorly funded schools. Going to a school that's more flush with cash has developmental and social and psychological impacts. There are enough books for everybody. Classes aren't crowded, there are mental health resources and things like art classes. The school has extracurriculars and standardized test prep. I think it's something to keep in mind like children feel safe. If you're from an economically depressed school, those things can be in short supply.

Marjorie Korn:

And on top of that, children at economically depressed schools are more likely to face food insecurity, which might have behavioral and psychological impacts. And there may be a bigger threat of violence even. Now, white children are significantly over represented in communities with well-funded schools, and black children are significantly overrepresented in communities with poorly funded schools. So here in 2021, education and race are related.

Marjorie Korn:

A simple example of how this plays out is that the more education you attain, the better job you get. Good job in addition to providing a better income that allows you to buy healthy food and live in a healthy neighborhood. It also helps you access better health insurance. So if you do get sick, you can see specialists. And you've probably accrued paid time off from work. And you might have a job that you can even work at remotely.

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Marjorie Korn:

However, if you haven't attained higher education levels, you may be working hourly or working multiple hourly jobs, and your health insurance, if you have any at all, isn't as good. You may not go to the doctor because you don't have paid time off. Maybe you can't afford the meds that they prescribe anyway. So bottom line, a system that consistently advantages white people proportionately more than people of color, which is the definition of systemic racism, it leads to a lower quality education, lower income, less access to health promoting things and more exposure to health degrading things.

Paula Braveman:

There's not enough understanding of how racism continues to play out, people can get it about the police killings. But what about the more subtle stuff? And what about the constant stress that black people experience that is related, fear that the police will pull them over for nothing and then things will spin out of control? But the constant fear dread that somebody is going to say something racially offensive, and the person saying it may not even realize how offensive it is, but the hurt is still going to be experienced.

Paula Braveman:

I think people need to understand that, that there's a stress, a constant stress, just the kind of stress that the neuroscientists have shown leads to chronic disease, there's the chronic fear of incidents or insults that may or may not be very overt or explicit. They may be ambiguous, but still, if the person of color is there experiencing it and going over in their minds, did they just insult me or insult black people and what am I going to do about it? The constant stress with that.

Paula Braveman:

I've been very interested in this issue about where does all the stress come from? And my colleagues and I, quite a while ago, convened some focus groups of African American women, and the organizers of the focus groups were also African American, and the note takers were African American. And we asked the conveners to just draw people out about what their experiences of racism without defining what we meant by racism. And it was really eye opening. Because people definitely talked about incidents, and especially incidents from childhood, that almost made them tear up just thinking about those. But more of what they talked about was that constant anticipation of fear, the constant dread that they carried around with them. And it was the constant fear that they would experience an incident, and also, sometimes what was expressed was the fear that a loved one, typically a son, husband would experience, not just a verbal incidents.

Paula Braveman:

I think it would be good for people to realize that what Derek Chauvin did in murdering George Floyd did not just murder George Floyd, but the fear that that fed among black people about that happening to them. That's not going to just disappear with the guilty verdict that he had just fanned the flames of that kind of fear. And so that experience with those focus groups made us do a study where we asked women about how often they worried about being treated unfairly because of their race. And we wanted to see the relationship between that and preterm birth.

Paula Braveman:

What we found was that for black women, among black women, the black women who said that they often or very often were afraid about being treated unfairly because of their race, they had twice the rates of preterm birth as the other black women who didn't, and we were pulling for over 20 different variables there. So it was hard to say that this was something else. And we were astounded. We wouldn't have done the study if we didn't think there was an effect, but we were not expecting something so out there.

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Paula Braveman:

I just bring that up to say, it's not just the slavery and the Jim Crow and the police killings and the mass incarceration, those things that are pretty easy to understand, it's also the more subtle stuff, those situations where it's ambiguous, the so called micro aggressions, and it's not just those, it's also the worry about it. And so you could never have experienced an incident yourself. But if you were constantly worried about it, that could take a serious toll on your biology.

Marjorie Korn:

In the end, Dr. Braveman thinks that George Floyd killing was an important catalyst for putting some of these issues front and center for people who may not otherwise ever notice them.

Paula Braveman:

I think that it's because of the co-occurrence of a couple of things. And one was the George Floyd murder, then the video of that which went around the world and there's just no other way to interpret that video than to say this is brutality, this is a brutal murder. And the fact that these police murders had been occurring, police were racially disproportionate. Police killings had been going on for a very long time, but I guess it had just never before been so clear.

Paula Braveman:

And that young woman, that teenager, who did the video of the George Floyd murder, I hope that she feels good for the whole rest of her life for all that she contributed in filming that and making sure that it got exposed. The murder of George Floyd was so extreme in the way it was done. I think that it made people able to hear, guess what these things have been going on for a long time and nobody's listened.

Marjorie Korn:

She also makes a connection between George Floyd's killing and COVID. And where we're at as a country, the coronavirus has had this disproportionate effect in the United States.

Paula Braveman:

I don't know whether either one of these could have done it by itself, but the co-occurrence of the George Floyd murder with the revelations of the very stark racial disparities in who was getting infected by the coronavirus, who was getting hospitalized, who was dying, the patterns were just so strong. And it really wasn't very possible for somebody to write them off due to things other than injustice, because the connections with people living in crowded circumstances, people having to take public transportation to work because they couldn't work at home. And people being exposed at work and really not having choices about how to protect themselves. Those two things came together.

John Berardi:

I'm wondering though, Marjorie, how to situate all this in the context of the Chauvin trial.

Marjorie Korn:

I think that there are two levels to it. There's the meta level, which we've discussed. That if you believe in systemic racism, you believe it exists, there's a reading of the world that can identify linkages among all of these social and societal institutions among housing, education, employment, health and medicine, criminal justice, to name a few. Others may believe that some systemic racism exists but it's not nearly as widespread, or that we have cast off most if

not all of our racist history as a country. Or even that our reading of situations and our attribution of racism as a factor is inaccurate.

Marjorie Korn:

In a 2020 op-ed entitled No, Police Racism Isn't an Epidemic, Wall Street Journal opinion writer Jason L. Riley writes, so far, we haven't seen a shred of evidence that George Floyd's death in police custody last month was racially motivated. But for those looking to exploit the incident, that doesn't seem to matter, the violence in the streets and the liberal commentary that toggles between justification and cheerleading is fueled by assumptions that racial discrimination and policing is widespread, that low income minority communities are over patrolled, and that black men are targeted for their skin color rather than for their behavior. There's no denying that there was a time in the living memory of many Americans when this was true. The question is how true it remains.

Marjorie Korn:

So the op-ed goes on to talk about the ebb and flow nature of race relations and violent crime rates among black Americans, and how poverty and violent crime go hand in hand. He says that police shootings have fallen in the past 50 years, and that studies have found no racial bias and police use of deadly force. The problem according to Riley isn't a shortage of data but a race based narrative that is immune to any data that challenge it. Now, we can find individuals who counter those stats with others. But regardless of what the data say, as Dr. Braveman points out, if people of color still believe police are targeting their communities, they'll still suffer the poor health effects.

John Berardi:

I just want to take a little break here to give a shout out to our main sponsor, Precision Nutrition, the world's largest nutrition coaching education and software company. Without them this show doesn't exist. So we're really grateful for their support and their encouragement. If you're interested in nutrition coaching for yourself or you're interested in enhancing your knowledge through their number one rated nutrition certification program, you can check them out at www.precisionnutrition.com. All right back to the show.

Marjorie Korn:

In this next section, we're going to hear from Dr. Tee Williams, an expert in social justice education and organization leadership. Dr. Berardi had interviewed him for a totally different series, but some of what he said really resonated with this one.

John Berardi:

I want to talk about health and wellness and well-being and your work in that community in a minute. Before we get there, though, I mean, you talk about the tough year that, I guess individuals working in social justice have had, as well as a tough year for social justice, the issues. I have a sense of what you mean by that, but for listeners, I'm curious, can you put some words to that?

Tee Williams:

For me, there are multiple levels to that. The first level is that of being a human being in the world and noticing the amount of violence that exists, particularly within the context of the United States. And the hurt that comes from seeing that consistently. And the desire for there to be something more, something better, something greater, not simply for myself and my community, but for everyone. Another level of that is someone who is black in America, and watching the pervasive and incessant violence that is heaped upon folks in my community, that are of other identities than myself.

Tee Williams:

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So in other words, there is pervasive violence that is focused on black men, but there is also violence focused on black women and black trans folk and black poor folk and all of those intersections. And then there's watching, there be no accountability when those things happen despite the fact that they are recording. There's watching white people who are not even law enforcement engage in ways that are deeply problematic and display what I call overseer behavior, right, which is, white people are often socialized to believe they have the right and the power and the ability to control the bodies and the presence and the minds of people who are not white.

Tee Williams:

And you see that consistently, right? For example, there was an episode last year of a black woman who is sitting in a park, across the street from the building she lives in, just sitting in the park. And she was approached by a white woman who began to harass her telling her that she didn't belong there and that she needed to leave. It was an upper class neighborhood. So there's the racist assumptions, but there's also the idea that this is a public park, and that you somehow have the right to approach someone else and talk about these things.

Tee Williams:

And that happens incessantly as well. So for me when I say it's been a difficult year, witnessing all of these things and the trauma that comes from that, experiencing these things deeply, psychologically, spiritually, teaching about these things, organizing, holding space for healing is just a lot.

Marjorie Korn:

In this series so far, the questions we've been exploring have been at times intellectual. How does the organizational structure of law enforcement affect its capacity for reform? What global factors change domestic policing? How do systemic social structures affect public health? But for millions of Americans, these are not theoretical questions. It's about lived experiences and generational trauma. JB, what did you take away from your conversation with Dr. Williams?

John Berardi:

It's actually not what I took away from Dr. Tee, although our discussion was important. It was what I heard from him plus your interview with Dr. Braveman plus your interviews with Doctors, Celano and Hazzard, who I think we'll probably hear from in a minute.

Marjorie Korn:

Yeah, we will.

John Berardi:

Great. So it was this idea of how, I guess repeated exposure to insult and violence and injustice, either in your own life or simply seeing it in the media directed at people like you or affecting people like you, whether it's other black people, trans people, Asian Americans, it's this thing that maps to stress and concern and worry about poor health. I mean, thinking about mothers constantly worried about their black sons being killed by police in their community or trans people worrying about being chased out of bathrooms so they plan their trips out of the house around the bathroom. It feels like it doesn't actually matter what the stats say, whether we can crunch the numbers to show at a granular level that injustice is worse in any given community versus any other point in time.

John Berardi:

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If it's perceived by the people in that community to be worse, they suffer anyway. So that was the big takeaway for me. I love data and I like discussing measurable reality, but this was a reminder to also consider how experiences and feelings play often more important roles in how humans behave.

Marjorie Korn:

To pick up where JB just left off, in his interview, Dr. Williams talked about 2020 as being one full of context, as it relates to the experiences of people of color and other minority groups. The pandemic was one context. Another was the recording of violence against people of color, like George Floyd. At the same time, there was a rise in hate crimes and hate speech in the run up to and the aftermath of the US elections. It all culminated in the storming of the Capitol, which was an attempt to stop the certification of the election results.

Tee Williams:

I don't know if people understand like the significance of that, storm the Capitol while in session. Now, here's the thing, the larger law enforcement knew that this was happening, they had been notified. Nobody took it seriously. However, when Black Lives Matter was protesting, it's the movement that is explicitly nonviolent, you had police presence in riot gear and all the other things, right, and that these protesters who were all nonviolent get roughed up, thrown in jail and all the things.

Marjorie Korn:

There were reports of unmarked police fans pulling people off the streets, journalists being arrested and assaulted, protesters were beaten, pepper sprayed, shot out with beanbag rounds, and at least one case knocked to the ground by a police SUV.

Tee Williams:

We were in a moment are in a moment of regression. And it's extraordinary because some of these things are unprecedented. And what I'm finding is that there are, if we're talking explicitly about race, there are a lot of white people who are beginning to understand that they cannot sit on the fence on this one. And this is one of the things that Dr. King talked about in I think his Letters From a Birmingham Jail if I'm not mistaken, where he talks about the danger of the white moderate, right. And that danger of being white people who are more committed to order than they are to justice.

Tee Williams:

And so we're seeing a shift now, where there is a deeper commitment to justice, while simultaneously, there's a greater expression of white supremacy. So we're still in this moment, right? And we're fighting for the redefinition of this country.

John Berardi:

As we start winding down this series, I want to take a minute to talk about Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. I heard you mention it one day in prepping this series. And I was wondering why it resonated with you.

Marjorie Korn:

Well, I'm going to step out of my comfort zone for a minute. And if there are any theoretical physicists listening out there, please, I need a little attitude on this one. So as far as I understand it, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle is commonly applied to the position and momentum of a sub atomic particle. The principle states, and I did some serious

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Google searching to find this out that the more precisely the position of a particle is known, the more uncertain the momentum is and vice versa.

Marjorie Korn:

Basically, it means for a particle in motion, that you can either calculate where it is at a given time while sacrificing, seeing how fast it's going, or you can calculate its speed at the expense of knowing where it is at a given time. You can try to calculate both simultaneously, both its location and its speed, but then each of those figures are going to be inaccurate.

John Berardi:

So why did that jump out for you?

Marjorie Korn:

Well, having heard from all these experts, it feels to me like we're watching the speed of change, like the velocity of the news, the developments, but where this all falls on the arc of the moral universe as it bends toward justice, for now is unknowable.

John Berardi:

So what now?

Marjorie Korn:

Well, the last two folks I spoke with were doctors Marianne Celano and Ann Hazzard. They're psychologists at the Emory School of Medicine in Atlanta, and they have expertise in children's and family mental health. And they work with trauma, they work on social justice issues. They've been doing this for a really long time. And they just released a children's book called Something Happened in Our Park. And this was a follow up to their earlier book, a New York Times bestseller written in 2016 called Something Happened in Our Town. Dr. Celano explains.

Marianne Celano:

The reason we wrote it is at the time there were a series of widely publicized police shootings of African American men, women and children. I'm thinking here of the murder of Tamir Rice in Cleveland. And we wondered how children understood these events. And we wanted to write a book that would help parents and children understand these events. And we deliberately framed them as an act of racial injustice, right. And we wanted to have parents and children be able to talk about that so that parents could talk to children about how to counter racial injustice in their lives.

Marjorie Korn:

Their second book, Something Happened in Our Park: Standing Together After Gun Violence is reminiscent of the conversation we were having with Dr. Braveman about social determinants of health. What's the impact of violence that happens close to home? I'll read the first few pages of the book, which opens on a black family. A father speaking to his two boys. Something bad happened in our park last night, said Miles's dad. Keisha was shot in the leg, but she's okay. She'll be home from the hospital tomorrow. Miles felt his stomach drop. Cousin Keisha had been living with his family since she started college in the fall. "What happened?" Asked Miles.

Marjorie Korn:

"Someone started shooting during the concert and Keisha got shot by accident," said his dad. If it could happen to Keisha, it could happen to anyone, Miles thought. The book goes on to describe Miles's anxiety and desire to move. And

his father explains that the economics of the neighborhood have changed and it's led to more violence. Keisha comes home but the trauma remains, especially when gunshots can be heard. The family and the community come together to convince the mayor to institute a project called peace in the streets. While the trauma of the shooting never entirely leaves Miles and his family, they do reclaim the park from violence. Police officers help coach the track team. The mayor announces new jobs coming in. And the book ends emblazoned with the words people power and claim peace. Dr. Hazzard talks about this follow up.

Ann Hazzard:

It's another issue that affects many kids either directly if they know someone that's been hurt in a shooting or have heard gunshots in their neighborhood and it also affects many kids indirectly from hearing about shootings on the news or hearing people talk about shooting. So it's another issue that causes kids anxiety and concern that parents might not quite be sure how to talk to kids about.

Marjorie Korn:

What doctors Celano and Hazzard are so good at is understanding how children take in information, how they synthesize it. And that's different from adults. I remember when the terrorist attacks of September 11th happened, the news was on all day and night, and it kept showing the image of the second plane hitting the World Trade Center. I was told the story of a little boy whose parents had the television on nonstop, just like we all did. And he was watching it, and he didn't realize that it was the same attack each time on repeat. He thought that different planes kept hitting different buildings. And he was afraid one might hit his house. So the way that these big heavy issues are framed to children is really important. Dr. Celano explains how much thought is put into that.

Marianne Celano:

Kids don't have the same kind of perspective on time and place when processing images in the media. I can see how kids who see the repeated exposure to a video might think that it keeps happening. And also kids sometimes have a hard time putting thoughts away or putting them in perspective. And so if they see the video of George Floyd's murder, that might be really scary to them. And it may be hard for them to really understand that or to feel safe if they see it or to put it in perspective.

Marjorie Korn:

These books are the product of thoughtful discussions around how to write about big topics in a way that children will understand.

Marianne Celano:

I think it's important to mention, we have a third co-author, her name is Marietta Collins, and two different illustrators for the books. The first one is Jennifer Zivoin and the second one is Keith Henry Brown. But the way we conceptualize the books as a team of three co-authors, two white, one black, and our goals for both books was to have them capture the experiences of real families, to introduce characters that the kids could relate to. For the first book, it was really important to capture both the experiences of black families as well as white families, and to also provide models for how parents could talk to kids about a fictional police shooting, and then how to give the kids specific skills to use when countering racial injustice or bullying in their own lives.

Marjorie Korn:

So I don't have kids. But JB, what age were your children when you started having these conversations with them?

John Berardi:

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I knew I wanted to start teaching our children about things like fairness and respect and shared humanity really early. And we usually begin in our family at age three, that kind of felt like the right age for us. However, around age six is when we've really started leaning into concrete examples of things like poverty and race and gender, homelessness, displacement. And we've used a lot of teaching tools like books and movies and documentaries and even events in their own lives to spark conversation around these issues.

Ann Hazzard:

So we know that sometimes having these conversations makes adults feel a little uncomfortable. But we think that discomfort is outweighed by the ultimate outcome of greater safety for the children and a more explicit anti-racism commitment on the part of children and families.

Marianne Celano:

Black parents have had to talk to their children about racial injustice forever, both to keep their children safe and to try to preserve their children's self-esteem in the face of the onslaught of racism that their kids are going to have to face. But most white parents until recently have not been very active in bringing up this topic with their children and probably have indirectly communicated their own discomfort about the topic. And maybe we shouldn't talk about this, or sort of this idealized notion that we're in a post racial, colorblind society, which is a good idea, but is obviously not reality.

Marjorie Korn:

Doctors Celano, Collins, and Hazzard are working in the space and addressing violence. And as psychologists, they're helping children and their families to process stress and trauma.

Marianne Celano:

I personally was very nervous about the outcome of the Chauvin trial, because if he had not been found accountable, if there had not been some accountability, there was going to be so frustrating and scary for where we're heading. I just think because we're in this area now as authors and talking to more and more parents, the level of personal connection to these issues has increased even within our friendship with our co-author Marietta Collins, who is African American.

Marianne Celano:

For her, this past summer was very emotional after the killings of George Floyd, and then Ahmaud Arbery, who is in Georgia, and Rayshard Brooks, who was also in Georgia. It felt very personal to her as the mother of black children and the level of anxiety and despair she felt in terms of not feeling like she had the power to protect her children. And obviously, no parent has the power to absolutely protect their children from harm. But I think the level of anxiety that many parents of color feel is just very intense. And I hope it doesn't always have to be that way.

John Berardi:

So Marjorie, how do you want to wrap things up?

Marjorie Korn:

I want to tell a joke.

John Berardi:

Are you sure?

Marjorie Korn:

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Yeah. How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb?

John Berardi:

How many?

Marjorie Korn:

Just one, but the light bulb has to want to change.

John Berardi:

Right?

Marjorie Korn:

So that's my way of saying that all of these experts are giving advice about how we would make reforms big and small, but nothing will change without a collective universal desire to change. And I think one more thing I've taken away from this goes back to that point about police decentralization that doctors Kraska and Haberfield mentioned, it's easy to think of these systems, all systems as single entities. And if you do, change is basically impossible.

Marjorie Korn:

Bureaucracies feed themselves, they don't make the choice to self-destruct and they rarely want to change. But it turns out these big institutions aren't monoliths. They're broken up. And making smaller changes on the state level, local level, even community by community that is possible. Yet this needs community participation, as Dr. Kraska said in part one of this series, while we're waiting for change to happen, we still need to engage. We need to educate ourselves in what's going on in our towns and vote in municipal and statewide elections. I know I get really fired up about statewide and municipal elections, but they're really important.

Marjorie Korn:

We also need to think about what we as individuals have to offer. Can you give money? Can you give your expertise or your connections or your time? A few days ago, my amazing friend, Adam Rosante, posted that his nonprofit good eats, it feeds elementary school kids with food insecurity on the weekends, and at the end of the month, so they needed some drivers to deliver food. And I signed up to help. Once you decide you want to help, opportunities start jumping out at you. And I think if we start thinking in terms of serving others, of living a life of service, it does help make things better. It's like structural changes are hard to come by. But that doesn't mean we can't help one another. And if you need help, there are places to get it.

John Berardi:

Got any closing thoughts?

Marjorie Korn:

I mean, it was a really long show, and we just skimmed the surface on so many issues. And I know that we missed big important topics and we overlooked data and we didn't talk about the plethora of life experiences. And I guess I don't have a conclusion really. I guess I want to say that George Floyd's life and death is not a learning experience, it was a life cut short. But maybe we can take a page from Sheriff Aaron Applehans playbook. Have conversations, have difficult conversations with people in your community, with your family. Think about who has privilege and who doesn't. And if it's you who are privileged, how can you make things better for people who aren't? I guess that's it. I am really not good at tidy endings.

I'm Happy He's Going to Jail – Part 3 Transcript

John Berardi:

As you may recall, I originally wanted to do this series because I was curious about what would have to be true for people to feel happy or sad or joyful or angry by the Derek Chauvin trial verdict? Truth is, this series felt like it did veer from that question at times. But it was really, really interesting to make. And I think it did bring us back to that important place. The Derek Chauvin trial, in addition to being a criminal trial designed to enact justice, in addition to being a set of proceedings that deeply affected those intimately linked to Derek Chauvin and George Floyd, it was also an inkblot test for our values and priorities, kind of like every other hot button social issue is.

John Berardi:

Now I can't do anything about your values or priorities or anyone else's, but what I can do is make a personal commitment to think more deeply about my own. I can seek out new information, I can gather new ideas, I can listen to the experiences of people I haven't listened to before, seek out voices that aren't often heard. From there, I can make revisions based on what I learned, and I can take new actions in my life. Truthfully, some of that seems to be missing from a lot of the public discussion I see nowadays. And not just among those I disagree with, all sides seem to be doing less listening. All sides seem to be closing in on themselves. All sides seem to be swimming in the shallowest of waters, even our public figures and role models. And that's got to change without going deeper, regardless of what we see in each subsequent ink blot that scrolls across our media feeds. We all fail the test. And this is a test we can't afford to fail.

John Berardi:

But before we end, I want to let you know that the Dr. John Berardi show is now on YouTube, and that we're running a little contest over there with our two sponsors, Precision Nutrition and Changemaker Academy. There are $15,000 in prizes up for grabs. And all you have to do to enter it's really simple, is to subscribe to our new YouTube channel and take a screenshot of your subscription. Once you have that, email to us at youtube@drjohnberardishow.com make sure you spell it D-R rather than D-O-C-T-O-R, and you're done. Like I said, really simple.

John Berardi:

From there, just before the release of our next show, we'll randomly select three winners who get to choose from among 15,000 in prizes, including a spot in the Precision Nutrition level one certification, the Precision Nutrition level two certification, or Precision Nutrition coaching. Winners get to choose which one they want. Winners also get to choose one of the following, a copy of my book, Change Maker or up to $75 of Precision Nutrition apparel. And finally, winners also get a spot in Change Maker Academy's new course, the career blueprint. I can't wait to find out who wins.

John Berardi:

Before signing off, I'd like to thank our production team, Marjorie Korn, my research partner and co-writer on the show, Martin DeSouza, our producer, Dylan Groff, who edited and sound designed this episode, and thanks to you for listening.