

Shannan Martin

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SPEAKERS

Shannan Martin, Lauren Pinkston

L Lauren Pinkston 00:04

Well guys, I have an old internet crush with me today. Shannan Martin is with us. And Shannan, I have been following you and your writing that just tugged at my heart since probably 2012 I think is when I started following you way back when it was the OG blog. Do you remember those days?

S Shannan Martin 00:27

Oh absolutely "Flower Patch Farm Girl" days. We go way back.

L Lauren Pinkston 00:32

You were making pickles and making arrangements. But I just like really more than anything attached to your writing style and the way that you brought such a vivid language to the human experience that so many people, especially in the faith community have failed to do, because it's the way that you walk alongside your neighbors and I don't know that there's anyone within the Christian space right now who so beautifully shares the realities of walking alongside the marginalized like you do. Living within the tension of the privilege of of your race and your you know, your financial status, but also with deep burden to be tethered to those who don't have that access to privilege. So, thank you so much for being willing to dive into a really complicated conversation today. Before we get started, what would you like to share with everyone just lay the foundation of who you are and what comes at your heartstrings?

S Shannan Martin 01:35

Yeah, the big question. Yeah, I'll just give just a little snapshot of who I am and where I am and then we'll go from there. But I just want to thank you for having me on. The feeling is very mutual. And I'm I can't wait to dive in with you. So yes, I have been married for I don't know, 24 years now. My husband and I met in a very different time of our lives, you know, back in

college, and one of the interesting facts about our life is that we both kind of got our professional careers started in conservative politics. So we lived in Washington DC for a while and my husband worked for two United States Congressmen for about 10 years, and I worked for a conservative think tank. And now you know, all these years later life just looks very different. So he is the chaplain of our county jail now. We are the parents of four kids. Our oldest is grown and out of the house, and then we have one at college, 2 in high school. All of our kids came into our family through adoption. So I know that's something we'll be talking about today. And then the biggest thing is our family moved into the neighborhood 12 years ago, and that's when just a lot of the different facets of our lives began to shift in turn, little by little bit by bit and in ways that are now pretty, you know, we kind of look back on our lives now and see sort of life before the move and life since the move and the ways are our neighbors and the ways you know, Corey's connections with them, the community who are incarcerated, the ways those folks are very present in our lives. I mean, it's just it has changed the way we see the world, the way we see God, the way we see our place in the world. It's the way we see politics. It has changed almost everything for us. So, you know, again, those are conversations that I look forward to diving into but in addition to being an author, I've written three books and I'm also on staff at our community kitchen, where I get to help make lunch for my neighbors a few days a week. So yeah, that's a little bit about me.

L

Lauren Pinkston 03:47

I always want to run up and eat lunch with you and I see that like gourmet foods that you're making a community kitchen is always proud of it. I mean, like the balance of flavors, I can taste it on my palate. It's so great. Shannon you made you made a nod to this in what you just shared. But as we think about moving into the neighborhood, I want to frame this conversation around that piece because there no matter where people are listening to this, we are all a part of a neighborhood. So already if we're in rural communities, you know, you can identify a neighborhood in one way if you're in an urban setting. We just we all have a neighborhood and I love the concept of of doing life with our neighbors but it takes getting to know them right and it takes intentionally connecting and you've done that so so well. As you think about the ways that you and your family live and work among the marginalized. I'd love to have you just share kind of what are some of those critical lessons that you think you mentioned that you've noticed, especially as the lives of the incarcerated have become a part of your dinnertime conversations, the people that you are visiting the people whose mothers and Auntie's are a part of your life. What are what are some of... I say Auntie's, but, you know, what are what are some of these critical lessons that you've learned?

S

Shannan Martin 05:12

I mean, where do I begin? You know, that's it. It most of the people who are in and out of our home, are people rebuilding after incarceration, or people who are actively incarcerated on home detention at the work release center, that's just a couple blocks from our house. And so it's honestly you know, these are a lot of the people who have just had such a profound impact on not just you know, some of these big sort of high, high value lessons, but even just on the nuts and bolts of like, how do we do this? How do we get to know each other? How do we engage with each other? How do we form community? Because you know, the most recent book that I published start with Hello, I talk a lot about like, how do we do this? And I say all the time, anything, I've learned anything I know, I've learned from the people around me. And so

I've learned from a lot of these people, what does it look like to set the bar at a very accessible place? What does it look like to welcome people into our homes as they are to welcome our or other people into our lives as we are and and it's just you know, that there's this authenticity piece that I that I discovered pretty early on with a lot of our friends that that just made me really kind of take a step back and think oh, a lot of us are getting this wrong, myself included. You know, we spend a lot of time trying to polish ourselves up into our best version. And at the end of the day, that that often is the thing that stands in the way of us really knowing each other and really forming connections. That that are sustainable and that can last so yeah, just just that kind of easy. This is who I am. This is what my life looks like. I'm not walking into shame about this, but I'm just being honest about it has been something that that will stick with me forever. I think you know, God reveals God's self through but there are people who have struggled in ways that I have not necessarily struggled and you know, understanding resilience. I mean, I could just go on and on and on. About the ways the the sort of stripped down honestly, I think that's at the heart of of all of it, understanding that we've all made mistakes, and that we are all kind of a work in progress and we are all children of God. The way that I see that carried in the lives of of my friends who are at the margins in one way or another is just a gift.

L

Lauren Pinkston 07:50

You know, when I when I announced that this was the topic of of this next season for me that we were looking at revisiting orphan care and vulnerable children. You were so generous and sharing the voice of adult adoptees of people who were really leading the fight and the voices that we should be elevating at the center of this conversation. And so I just want to make clear that you were hesitant even in in centering your voice in this conversation because we are not at the center of of what's going on. What I do appreciate about you is that as someone who has walked with people with a traumatic history, and someone who has shared many, many tables with those who have a traumatic history, we do have this opportunity as as women who have access to the people of our and our communities we have I think Shannon Watts who started the oh shoot, what's the Morgan that man? Yeah, yeah, Moms Demand and that she's shared a couple of weeks ago, she shared on her substack about how black women in America don't just need us to be allies. They need us to be traitors. And I found Yeah, I found that really compelling because it's, it's our social location that that we need to be the agitators in a system that has not always centered the voices that you want to uplift. So with that caveat. Let's let's talk about the US justice system. And even people who have been on the receiving end of the justice system would would say it's not a justice system. There's a lot of a lot of criticism about the way that even privatized prisons as has created such a problem. In our country. We have more incarcerated individuals in the United States than any other country per capita. Not other countries don't even touch the amount of imprisoned and incarcerated individuals we have right so I want to bring a lot of nuance to this conversation. I know you will, too. But would you start by just kind of sharing, maybe a time that you were concerned for someone that you love, or someone that you're close to was concerned for someone that they love interacting with law enforcement in a way that might endanger them?

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Shannan Martin 10:07

Yeah. And I'll give the caveat that my oldest son Robert is very comfortable with me sharing parts of his story. So you asked me that question. And there are so many stories that come to mind but the the one the ones closest to my heart are involved my son Robert, who's 29 Now

he's a black man. He is formerly incarcerated. So when, when he became part of our family, he was still, you know, he was 1819 years old and was incarcerated in the county jail and then spent about nine months in prison and then was released into our home on home detention and you know, that was years and years ago, and so watching him navigate life. post incarceration has been I mean, just beyond eye opening. But I there there have been many situations in in those 12 years or so. That he's been a part of our family where and as we have honestly built trust and become a family, you know, we became a family late in his life. And I think we were all always aware that like we had time to make up for and so we've watched that relationship, deepen and grow and it didn't take very long for us to be, you know, as his parents, his adoptive parents, the people who, who received those phone calls from him or sometimes from law enforcement, and it has, there's nothing that that can make my heart drop, quite like one of those phone calls. And so, you know, I think of a time not so long ago when he called and said, You know, I am Is there anything you and dad can do? This was several years ago, but he said, Is there anything your dad can do? I was pulled over four times this weekend, four separate times. And he was just feeling that that sense of like, what what can I do, like, get me out of this. This is just my life. And every single time the police are, you know, they're pulling me over for these really weird reasons. Like, you know, I didn't engage my turn signal at exactly the right time. I don't even know what that right time is. You know what I'm saying? Like, I probably do that wrong often. But being pulled over just the way over and over again, over a short period of time being asked every time do you have weapons in your car? Do you have drugs in your car? Those are not realities in my personal life. And every single time one of those situations happens to my son or to other people in our community and in this world. It is a danger to them. It is an act of danger to them. And so even navigating with him the understanding that, you know, without a warrant, he wasn't under any obligation to allow them to search his vehicle and those kinds of things. And yet, on the on the other side of that agency is the idea of upsetting an officer and upsetting the wrong officer and you just don't know. And so that was it. I won't go too much more into that story other than to say, Cory, and I did get involved because he asked us to, and we did have a little bit of that access. To power that he didn't quite have. And we did end up in a meeting with a with a police chief and, you know, a government of a local government official and we're able to sit down and try our best to advocate for him. It was ultimately not a very encouraging conversation. But the conversation was had and sometimes if that's the the, the littlest we can do is to kind of turn that light on to the conversation and to say, you know, we we see this from a different angle, and we see what's happening here, and we love our son, and we want our son to be safe. I mean, I remember saying in that meeting, I personally am the one who really pressured Robert to get his driver's license, and it was not something that he had foreseen as part of his future for a lot of different reasons. And we just felt like it was so important than you know, it gave him access to jobs and those kinds of things. But now I'm sitting here feeling in some way responsible for this constant danger. And this this constant, just harassment, honestly. And so saying to some of these people, you know, what do I told my son, I kind of demanded that he do this, and he did. And now he's, he's constantly under scrutiny in that way. So yeah, I think I think finding ways you know, I hope that the takeaway can't be in this conversation. That as adoptive parents are as adoptive parents of bipoc kids, you know, that has impacted my life. And I know that has impacted your life and yet, we have to find ways for all of us to care. It can't just be those for whom it's really personal. But finding ways to really wake up to, to the injustice, to wake up to the danger and to find ways to, to stay vigilant and to stay attentive, and to stay watchful. I think that's no small thing.



Lauren Pinkston 15:34

It's, it's so compelling to share that something that has been so obvious to you and so safe for you something as simple as getting a driver's license and driving through your town would not have to mind as something that could be introducing harassment and a repeated trauma for someone that you love dearly. I I have been contacted and I know you have like I can imagine you have as well on Instagram anytime I speak up about police brutality. I have been contacted by wives of police officers I have been contacted by people in law enforcement saying we are not the enemies here. They're you know, and the age old debate of there's bad apples in every bunch. And so we're not framing this conversation in the terms of we need to get rid of law enforcement and I want to just before anyone gets defensive to realize that law enforcement officers are butting up against traumatic events themselves every single day. They are saying things that they can never talk about, and we definitely need maybe maybe the people and our communities would be safer if law enforcement was also supported through trauma informed and trauma centric policies. But at the end of the day, there is a clear discrepancy and how people not just from racial, racially diverse backgrounds, but people from socio economic backgrounds. Interact with law enforcement in our country. Your husband, Ori is working with these individuals on the inside of the prison as chaplain. I'm curious what he would say about those that he walks alongside how how would he talk about those residents of incarceration?

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Shannan Martin 17:23

Yeah, just a small clarification. He's a chaplain, not at a prison, but at a county jail. So...

L

Lauren Pinkston 17:30

Thank you.

S

Shannan Martin 17:30

Yeah, sure.

L

Lauren Pinkston 17:32

And for those of us who have not gotten involved in communities, I wasn't sure actually where he was, but what's the difference in a prison versus a jail because a lot of people don't know that.

S

Shannan Martin 17:42

Yes. So so people in a county jail typically should be pretrial. So they have been charged with a crime but not convicted of a of a crime. At the point that they would be convicted they would typically go on to, you know, work release or prison or probation or, you know, so they're, they're pretrial folks. We happen to have the largest the second largest county jail in the state of Indiana, and our county and so that's where Cory spends all of his time. He is with the he works directly with the men which make up probably 90% of the people inside the jail and then he has a female staff person assistant that works directly with the females. But I get

to be I get to be in the room when he comes home every day and talks about what he got to do talks about the the ways he spent his day. And you know, he does a lot of interesting things. They do a lot of interesting things inside the jail with this community. But I would say the first thing that comes to my mind when you say you know what would he say about these folks? He always always refers to them as his friends. So he he'll say, like, hey, you know, I was talking to one of my friends, or one of my best friends and then jail, or, I mean, I just and I don't even know that he does that necessarily. Intentionally. I think that's just where his heart is at with it. And they you know, they they spend time so I'll say a little bit more about this because again, this is something that a lot of people probably don't don't know as much about just as I didn't know before Corey got this job we I should back up before Robert was incarcerated. We had never even been to the county jail. We had no contact. And so it's been a big learning curve. But as the chaplain he is a person of faith who connects with the the men in the prison, regardless of their race. So you know, somebody might be a different religion, Corey would still be their contact person for helping them find the resources they need to, to live and express their faith. Corey's coming from a Christian perspective. So they do lead Bible studies and things like that, but they also do. They do some college classes inside the jail through one of the colleges in our city. They do book clubs that are not necessarily faith based. They do different classes. They do you know, classes on fatherhood, and he just comes away. He talks a lot about what he learns by just being in the room with them and by hearing from their perspective, and one of the things he says often is, you know, so much of our life is dependent upon where we started, and he carries with him this tension of, you know, if I started and it's not about like, starting better or starting worse, but like if I started in that particular social location that a lot of these men started in my life would probably look pretty familiar and pretty similar to theirs. And so when when you can kind of start to understand that it's not just about a particular choice that has been made by an individual, but that that person has been absorbed into a system into you know, systems of so many areas that impact our life and you kind of play that out, you start to understand how, how, you know, this all comes together for some of these guys.



Lauren Pinkston 21:29

Absolutely. I feel really, really lucky. One of the reasons that I don't want to leave the town that we are in is because our city police are fantastic. They were the first squad in Tennessee to adopt body cams and they have really set a standard across the state and for how they really lean into trauma centric approaches into our community. But our Sheriff's Department also has really taken a big turnaround with a sheriff that was elected several years ago. His father was incarcerated when he was a kid. And one day his mom and his aunt and several of his cousins went to go visit his dad for whatever reason he stayed home. And that afternoon that jail, caught on fire, and his entire family passed away and that fire is that included goodness is tragic story. And he's now our county sheriff and has worked tirelessly to bring humanity to the what he calls residents of the jail. He never calls them inmates ever, never uses that word. And I appreciate that so much about him. And so bringing in like you said classes we have huge, huge percentages of the residents there who are getting their DRGs and the state of Tennessee has looked to him and said how are your recidivism rates so low and your county and and it's because you know, there are there are so many opportunities that are being poured into those individuals. You're running for city council seats. So you're in the middle of a campaign yourself. How do you see government and the role that we have as as mothers specifically, really playing into certain policies that you would like to see move forward or practices that you think should be implemented within the justice system?

S

Shannan Martin 23:55

Yeah. So I am I'm running for a district seat on the city council in Goshen, Indiana. And so you know, a lot of the things my mind goes to happen at a at a higher level and we can talk about some of those things because they're worth talking about in terms of just municipal like city government. I just think the the bare minimum is that we have to be really mindful of the lens with which we are seeing our city, our place, the people in it and the language we're using to talk about our neighbors. I mean, Corey gets a firsthand look at at people, you know, people who are part of law enforcement, and would would agree with what you've said like there are some there are some people doing good, good work. And so it's it's not about you know, this this binary law enforcement is good. Let law enforcement is bad. But I think, you know, when I think about my involvement here at the city level, I just hope that we can be people who agree on focusing on everybody's basic humanity, seeing everybody's dignity, caring, you know, holding that with care, that would be my hope. You know, I guess I'm not coming into this election with you know, some big agenda when it comes to law enforcement. But I know that that we depend on law enforcement. I know we work closely with law enforcement and my hope is that we can be people who who agree on that. And then we go from there to try to figure out like, what is what is best for the city. What is best for our neighbors? I have a particular a particularly dear place in my heart for our unhealth community in Goshen. Those are a lot of the folks I get to see at work and eat with at work and I you know, I know them by name and they know me by name I know what they like on their tray and what they don't like. And so that's some that's a big topic of conversation and Goshen right now is this idea of, of people who are experiencing homelessness and, and that's something I'm kind of excited to be able to kind of bring my voice into, because I just I live with a different level of proximity than most of the people in our city do and I'm just, I'm eager to invite people into into community with people who are affected in that way rather than just labeling this as an issue. You know, I think that's what that's where it's at, like this idea of relationship is where it's at, but But I will say since you asked the question, when it comes to just like bigger systemic issues in our criminal incarceration system, I struggled to even call it a justice system, honestly. But I think of you know, I think of like, what can we do about cash bail? How can we revamp child support, and the way that that is handled within the criminal incarceration system, and the way that can often be something that is the actively works against people who are trying to rebuild, you know, we talked about recidivism, and and there's just this part of me that feels like there's so many places the system is built for recidivism, the system is built to retain people. And so it becomes an almost an unhelpful tool sometimes and even identifying the success or you know, the failure of a particular system. I think, you know, I think of something that happened to my son, Robert, and we've seen it happen to so many people in our lives. After his initial incarceration, he was on probation for 10 years. He's off probation now. And that was one of the most celebratory moments of my life and I know for his life because it's very, very difficult. To achieve that. And he did and it's huge. But before he was done with probation, he ended up being arrested and brought back to the county jail. He was a passenger in a car of somebody else who had been arrested and so it was kind of like a, you know, sort of wrong place at the wrong time. But he was brought in he was retained at the county jail for three months. In that amount of time. He lost his job. He became further behind on child support. He was stripped away from the active everyday lives of his kids. You know, he had he lost his home. He lost a lot of the property that was in his home over these three months. At the end of three months he was released. So there was no there was no trial. There was no the charges were dropped by the powers that be and he was simply released into life that he no longer had a place in and into life. He didn't recognize it. And we see that happen over and over and over again. And it feels like the state should be accountable. When that happens, you know, if you're going to

hold somebody for something that you really don't have reason for, there should be accountability in some way. There should be restitution in some way. So yeah, I could I could go on and on, but there's just a lot of room for growth within this system.

L Lauren Pinkston 29:15

It really is. And unfortunately, the people who tend to run the system are people who have never neighbored.

S Shannan Martin 29:23

That's right.

L Lauren Pinkston 29:24

And so I think about the churches that I grew up in, I think about the narrative that was spread through the Christian community that I grew up in, even the Christian community that I am very much, you know, rubbing up against today. And the way that we talk about people who are incarcerated the people we talk about the way we talked about people who are have used to drugs, and there are so many assumptions made about individuals when we have never sat with them to hear directly their stories, the perfect example the one that you just shared. Some of those, you know, well, if you were just out of trouble, this wouldn't happen or if you were having it's I even hate to repeat the things that are said. Yeah, what where do you think that the church in America is missing? What opportunities are they missing by avoiding engaging with with those who have childhood trauma with those who are or have been incarcerated what what is what are they missing?

S Shannan Martin 30:24

I think we are missing a true and full picture of who God is and how God loves us. I think we are so wired to gravitate towards what's similar, what's familiar We are wired to to distance ourselves from difference because we find it uncomfortable in some way. And so we've landed in this place where it's kind of like you stay over there. You stay over there. You can't talk to each other. You can't be friends. I lived the vast majority of my life well into adulthood, surrounded by people who looked and lived and believed like I did. And when we live our our lives in that way. And again, a lot of a lot of our our just our structures are set up in that way. And so we have to actively fight our way out of that, to some extent and it's not just about where we live. You know, I like what you said like we all live in different places and in our lives are different. I think there's a place for all of us in this conversation. And it doesn't typically mean that we need to sell our house and move that happened to be the impetus for my family. But that's not the goal here is to get everybody to move. The goal is for people to to give themselves permission to engage with difference. You know, I grew up thinking and I don't know that anybody ever told me this, but like, you know, certain people were dangerous. Certain people were I should be fearful or afraid. Certain people were just gonna be a bad influence all these different ideas that just kept me at arm's length from from the people who now that I get to live my life with people who are different for me in so many ways. It's like then

you get a bigger picture. You get that wider scope of, of having kind of different eyes on the world. I mean, before before I lived this portion of my life, it was all too easy. To say some of those, you know, those kind of cliché narratives, you know, if you don't want to do the time don't do the crime. Well, I mean, I know a lot more now about wrongful conviction and I know a lot more about the over policing of certain communities and you know, on and on and on we go I think until we we live in such a way that our our closely held beliefs are potentially hurting the people around us. It doesn't require us to to think more deeply about why we believe the things we believe because I can tell you I was just kind of handed I was handed like a basket of beliefs. This is what we believe. And I never gave it a lot further thought until I lived in a place where I was kind of actively bumping into and rubbing shoulders with people who who made me start to think oh, maybe getting some of this wrong. Maybe I wasn't taught the full truth about this. Or, or maybe I just have have I've been able to exist with a certain level of, of ignorance or, you know, just, I didn't have to care in the ways that I do now. So I think finding our way into discomfort, finding our ways towards people who are different than us and giving ourselves permission to just be curious and to just be present. And to just be kind. I think that the church is missing out on so much until we begin to do that.

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Lauren Pinkston 33:57

100% and when and you mentioned that we you know we are all we all are reflecting a different a different piece of the person of God. When we are only staying with people who look like us think like us spend money like us, we are missing out on really a full picture of who who got is if you have seen trauma, close and personal and you have seen the way that the brain is impacted by trauma inflicted pictures of a trauma brain versus a healthy brain if you have been in the room with someone whose fight or flight or freeze response took over their body and then you layer that with images of arrests. And we have we have all seen too many videos that have surfaced. Yeah. What comes to your mind knowing what you know about trauma responses in the body and the way that either arrests take place or the way that people are treated after committing a crime.

S

Shannan Martin 35:08

Again, I think of my son I think of people I love in my life and the way I'll just continue to use Robert as an example. Because I know he doesn't mind. He lives at a at a low boil of anxiety and stress. And and just looking at you know that example of being arrested four times in one weekend that takes a toll on a body. We have walked through like just just how do we how do we walk alongside him to address some of some of these long held trauma responses. And it's but it's not just things that happened in the past. I mean he he has a lot of hurt and trauma in the past. And he also has the trauma of of being a black man trying to get to work trying to provide for his family constantly being watched in you know, the over vigilance and the the insistence on being you know, for law enforcement to just be skeptical of him. There was there was a time not too long ago where he and I met up for coffee at a coffee shop we wouldn't we now and then like have these like sort of professional meetings and it's very fun for both of us talk about all these different things. And so I had walked in and he had driven there and we met up and then afterwards I said hey, can you just give me a ride home? And of course he said yes. So we it was a Sunday afternoon. I get into his car and we're heading towards My House which is not far and I watch a police officer do a u turn in the middle of a main street and and start following us and I'm panicking you know, this is after the the being pulled over four times

in one weekend and I'm like getting sweaty. I'm pitting out, I'm nervous. I don't know what's happening. And he says oh, they're just checking my plates that happens all the time. And they for the officer followed us for about a mile and then eventually turned off. But that takes a toll. You know, and I know that that my son's experience is just not at odds with so many other people's experiences. And we just have to be willing to call it what it is and open our eyes to it and say it doesn't have to be this way. And no, that doesn't mean it doesn't mean that that law enforcement as a whole is bad. Law enforcement does a lot of good in our communities, but it does mean we have to find ways to come together and have honest conversations and you know, deal with with our own stuff. You know, I took the implicit bias quiz that you can google and find it online. I failed it. You know, I'm the I'm the I care deeply about these things. I care about my mostly bipoc neighbor hood. I care about my kids, and I failed that test. And so it's just a reminder of it doesn't have to be this defensive response of like, oh, no, not me. We've got to come to a place where we can begin to say, you know, this is in us in some degree or another. And so what are we going to do from here because this is a it's not working for a large segment of our population to be under constant scrutiny and duress and anxiety. We're seeing the implications of that as well and it's just not working.

L

Lauren Pinkston 38:42

That's right. It's not working. And there's just such a lack of understanding of the layers of the human experience when it comes to what led someone to incarceration. I know I've I've worked with women a lot in my 15 years. The last 15 years I've worked directly with women who are recovering from addiction who are trying to get their kids back who are overseas or here you know, it's been in trafficking situations and getting them into safe places. I have not met a single one of these women who was not who did not experience something incredibly traumatic, mostly from a family member as a church, right? Yep. And that is not the narrative that I understood growing up, you know, it all especially for and I have to say from a Christian perspective, it was it was so often told that a person's decisions led them there and their desire you know, to for themselves like them there but we could even look at her as someone from the white community who grew up in a well, you know, a wealthy family and was introduced to narcotics through a surgery and the way that their incarceration experience is different than someone who experienced tragic trauma from the bipoc community growing up, and, you know, was found with a dime bag of marijuana and their incarceration experience was completely different.

S

Shannan Martin 40:05

Yeah, yeah. I mean, we Corey says all the time, and others do as well, the jail is filled, you know, people would look at the where he spends his time and think, oh, you know, you're spending your time with dangerous people. And he's saying, I'm spending my time with poor people. Jails are filled with people who cannot afford bail. End of sentence. And so it just leads to this enhanced misunderstanding of you know, who's, who's the bad guy and who's the good guy, you know, who's in the jail and who's not in the jail and it's so murky and reality, but the system is set up that it is it is the poor who are housed inside a jail pretrial. And that's just that's just the way that it goes. I would say for anybody who who cares to learn more about this a couple resources that have been just tremendously helpful for me, and enlightening for me and there are there are many more but I'll just give a couple. The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander was eye opening for me. And then there's the Rethinking incarceration by Dominique

Gilliard and heat so that's a similar idea but written from a faith based Christian perspective, both just phenomenal books at starting to, you know, understand this from a different perspective, because not all of us most of us can't just decide Okay, so I'm going to go out today and you know, find myself in connection with a really different community. than I've been in connection with before but we do have Wi Fi codes and library cards and social media accounts. And we we can we can choose today to be learning from, from people who are impacted in these ways, from a much closer experience. We can do that today.

L Lauren Pinkston 42:02

Yeah, I love the action step. I just finished Tyler Johnson Was Here, it's a nonfiction book about a boy who's whose brother was his twin brother was killed at the hands of like police brutality and just kind of it said in modern times, it's a it's an easy fast, not an easy but fascinating read. I also saw Diana Ostrich probably a friend of yours as well shared yesterday about a way to to become a a writing partner with somebody who's on death row. So we'll share that in the show notes as well several of you who listened this podcast signed up yesterday to just become someone who shares your life via letters with someone on death row. And I think that that's just the the stories that I hear out of that I know I wrote back and forth with women in the women's prison here in Tennessee a few years ago, but to hear the things that individuals love the way that they miss their families, the way that they care about their children. is such an incredible way of of welcoming, welcoming neighbors into your life. Yeah, even if... Yeah, go ahead.

S Shannan Martin 43:06

No, I was just gonna say in many times, you know, I think one of the ways we tend to kind of stereotype people who are incarcerated is like, "Oh, they need God." When in reality, this is another thing Corey would say over and over again, the ways they have already they come with a rich understanding, with a rich background in the faith with a rich understanding of of Scripture. And so I want to just kind of give that little caveat to because I think I shared that thing, too, that Diana had shared and, you know, I had some people that said they signed up. And so we want that, but I just want to give the reminder that we don't need to lead with the assumption that because somebody is incarcerated. They need God or that they don't in some way already have a close relationship with God. They might and they might not. But But oftentimes we see that they really do. And so to just leave some of those assumptions behind and and interact with each other on a human level and to start there.

L Lauren Pinkston 44:06

Yeah, that's that's super helpful. And I'll I'll also link to an episode of The Daily that was published by The New York Times did you listen to the episode last week about the fentanyl crisis that again, like as much as I try to hang out in the space and continue learning it pushed on so many assumptions that I have made. And the guy who's at the center of this story, you know, again, experienced abuse as a child, the friend that was with him when they bought a bag of fentanyl. also experienced abused as a child and they were leaning on each other and trying to get jobs and to get clean. And this particular purchase was laced with illegal amount of fentanyl. And he was charged with murder of his friend that he tried to resuscitate for so long. What what pushed on me in that episode even was just seeing how, how hard this young

guy was trying. You're trying to make it in life, and now he's incarcerated and he's the one that's hosting Bible studies with the guys in the prison and that's not for us as Christians to say like he's not because these are the Bible studies. He's he's worth our you know, our defense, right but, but just to highlight that we are not you don't have to take God into prisons, that God they're there and he is a part of the lives of people who times understand him better than we do. That's right. Any other resources that you want to share as we kind of wrap up this conversation.

S

Shannan Martin 45:39

I every time I think I need to just make an official list because I I just devour podcast series and books and I'm just I'm an eager learner and I'm making up for a lot of lost time. I will say a couple off the top of my head. You know what, if you think of like social media accounts, that type of thing, the Innocence Project is something I enjoy supporting in a variety of ways and listening to the Marshall Project is another. I think I found them initially on Twitter and they're just doing really good work and then pro publica journalism is I just see that, you know, they're engaged in a lot of areas of justice in journalism and you know, kind of bringing accountability and visibility to things. So it's not just specifically on you know, the the incarceration system but but they've done really powerful work and they have done some really powerful reporting from here in my community. They they got involved in a case at the neighborhood work release center several years ago, and so I got to see firsthand they're digging in and they're, they're asking the better and the deeper question, and that's what I am always trying to encourage myself to do. My followers on Instagram or you know, people who are reading my work. We have to get better at going deeper. We've got to dig under the easy narrative, the simple answer, and figure out you know, it's not about who's incarcerated. But it's about you know, the things we're talking about today, like what led to this, this incarceration and if we can start to do that and do some of that work that puts us on that path, I think.

L

Lauren Pinkston 47:34

For sure, and as people of faith, who have who have been towards politics or haven't been towards government, I think a lot of us have felt a little disenchanting over the last eight years because we don't want to be seen as a person of faith that is just trying to protect the past and the ways that Christians have traditionally held on to power and a lifestyle that allowed them to ignore the marginalized in this country. And so I think you're a perfect example of why it's important to get in there and be a person of peace, before you are trying to stake a claim of what you believe you deserve and what the government owes you. But to be a person of peace that is offering peace and justice to those to those in your neighborhood. So thanks for being so involved. Thank you for teaching us thank you for speaking up. And thank you for the ways your family just reflects a different light of who God is around you.