

Afghanistan, Murdering Your Spouse, Finding Your Biological Parents What Happens Next – 8.22.2021

My name is Larry Bernstein.

What Happens Next is a podcast where experts are given just SIX minutes to present. This is followed by a Q&A period for deeper engagement.

This week's topics include Afghanistan, Murdering Your Spouse, Finding Your Biological Parents. Our first speaker will be Retired Lt. General Andrew Leslie of the Canadian Army who served as the Commander and Chief of Staff of the Canadian Army. Andrew previously served in Afghanistan. It has been a tumultuous week as US troops, personnel, and citizens evacuate the country.

I want to learn from Andrew what exactly happened on the ground. Was this loss of Afghanistan inevitable? What was the response of our allies to our surrender? Why were we left alone to handle the long-term nation building in Afghanistan? What will be the consequences to the Afghan people in the long run from a Taliban victory? There is much to talk about here.

Our second speaker will be one of my best friends Darren Schwartz who will discuss his own adoption and his 30-year search for his biological father. I want to learn about our universal longing to find our kin, and our desire to love and be loved by our parents.

Our final speaker is Robi Ludwig who is a nationally known psychotherapist and a regularly speaks on CNN and Fox News. I met Robi when our children Jonathan and Jaimie started dating seriously 18 months ago. Robi will be discussing her book Till Death Do Us Part: Love, Marriage and the Mind of the Killer Spouse.

Many marriages end in heart ache and divorce and very few result in the death of a spouse; yet, this topic is of keen fascination to many of us. I want to learn why some of us murder our former lovers and also why we care so much.

Our first speaker today is Retired Lt. General Andrew Leslie of the Canadian Army, Andrew please go ahead.

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

Thanks Larry. In 2003 and '04 I was the deputy commander of the international security assistance force, headquartered in Kabul. Spent about eight or nine months there in that role. And then every four or five months, I went back for a week or two as a major general, and then subsequently as a lieutenant general. I was the commander of the Canadian Army, did that for about seven years. So I did not have a unique perspective but a deeper understanding than most of the situation that was playing out over the course of time in Afghanistan.

First and foremost, what is happening in Afghanistan is a defeat, and our allied nations lost because they lost the will to fight the good fight. They were tired of expending time, blood and treasure. As well, our nations lost because they stopped listening. They heard, but they weren't actually listening to what was happening on the ground to the extent that they should have. And a whole bunch of nations got locked into a scenario based on time or sequence of events, which if they didn't happen, by golly, they were going to press forward and meet those timelines. Look, soldiers can do a variety of things, in counter-terrorism, in counter-insurgency or nation building, but the big thing that we can do is buy time. Buy time for eventually a negotiated settlement between the protagonist, even though it may gall to negotiate with terrorists or those who commit terror, even though it may drive certain persons to frenzies to actually deal with people who are trying to destroy the nation that you spent so much time and effort to build up, but eventually you got to talk.

You got to sit down and negotiate. And that didn't happen, at least didn't happen under the right circumstances. For those of us who served, I believed it was a fight worth fighting. We were sent by our countries to do so and we fought that good fight. We attempted to support and protect those Afghans who want to basic rights for women and girls, who wanted to listen to music or play soccer or football. We were willing to fight, and we did, to get them the opportunity to live more peacefully than under the Taliban or those that had preceded them. But this is an ancient land Afghanistan, and it's seen armies like ours come and go. It's seen coalitions wax and wane. Matter of fact, they watched with cold eyes, Alexander and his armies moved through. And Alexander and armies did not enjoy the experience, especially on the withdrawal. Does this sound familiar?

There are some lessons to be learned. Here are some I would suggest. First and foremost, the United States is tired of doing the heavy lifting, essentially alone. They asked for help and have been asking for help, increased contributions to multinational security missions overseas and I'm not convinced they got it. The discussions with the Talib started under former President Trump, who was directly negotiating through his agents with the Taliban, and then with President Biden, who drew a line in the sand and eventually concrete saying it was going to be the end of August and then 11th of September when the last of the US forces were going to leave. To everyone's surprise, actually to their surprise, a whole bunch of us predicted this was going to happen six or eight months ago.

As soon as this decision was made to stop supporting the Afghan troops on the ground and that a definitive closure date was there, the Afghans in the field, the soldiers lost hope because they lost their heavy fire support. The fighter bombers, the long range artillery, the attack helicopters, medical evacuation teams, and quite frankly, they could see the writing on the wall. And their culture has been when they have large powerful forces assembling that are willing to die to complete their objectives, a lot of them are not averse to changing sides or at least going neutral. The second big lesson is that without the United States and their magnificent armed forces and their world class unmatched logistics, difficult and complex international missions aren't going to get done. The third lesson is the world a lot more dangerous and complicated than some socially progressive folk might wish for.

And the next lesson is you can't ignore what happens overseas and certain things are worth fighting for. And the final lesson perhaps, is what happens over there can impact us here,

especially in this multilayered, multidimensional world, that's constantly changing and evolving. And if we do nothing, all that is required for evil to spread is for good men and women to sit idly by and do nothing. If we do nothing, more will die and more people will leave their places of origin to seek safety and security elsewhere, which will create further international instability on which others will prey.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks, Andrew. Let's talk about Biden's recent statements during his press conference. When pushed, he said that this result is what he expected, he was not particularly surprised by it. How do you feel about the decisions that went on at the national security level to decide that this was the right decision?

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

Well, I've had the opportunity to interact with Senator Biden, who was extraordinarily knowledgeable about Afghanistan. This is when I was the Army commander for Canada. And every time I'd go to Washington, which was a lot, there'd be interactions with senior members of the Senate and Congress. So he knows that of which he's talking about. No doubt about it. I think he was driven by the political agenda vis-a-vis the United States where I believe understandably, the typical American citizen is getting sort of more than tired of the forever wars, and Afghanistan it's been going on for a very long time. Especially in such a dynamic and vibrant society is that which we find in the United States where perhaps attention spans aren't as long as in other places, oh for example, Afghanistan, where they can be decades in duration. So I think he made up his mind that it was time to leave. I think he laid a date down, which later became cast in concrete. And despite a variety of other of his senior members of the National Security Council, who themselves have firsthand knowledge of Afghanistan having fought there, he was determined to set the example and not bend. Was he as surprised as most others by the absolute chaos that ensues? Probably not, but a lot of people were, though a bunch of us predicted that this is exactly what would have happened. What else would you expect to happen, when essentially the guarantor of security, sustenance and firepower to the fighting forces of the Afghan army says, "Right, we're done on a certain date."

Larry Bernstein:

What is the relationship between the American military and Biden specifically? Years ago, I had for book club with General Stan McChrystal, who was relieved of duty during the Obama administration when members of his staff undercut Biden's position and his qualifications, when the Rolling Stone reporter visited him in Afghanistan. Are you aware of that situation and has Biden been able to improve his relationship with the military?

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

Well, I'm very aware of it. I've spent 35 years as a Canadian soldier. And in that period of time, spent a considerable amount of time fighting or serving as peacekeepers alongside American troops, point number one. Point number two, the President of the United States is the

commander in chief of the United States Armed Forces. So he has a legal and moral position which is unique at the top of the pyramid.

As a matter of fact, the combatant commanders, so in this case says, Stan McChrystal, whom I know is a hell of a soldier, by the way, he was a direct report to the President of the United States when he was wearing the hat of his combatant commander. Well, of course the president has the authority to remove generals for a whole host of reasons, or actually just if they lose confidence in that General's ability to successfully execute the resident of the United States' intent. Vis-a-vis President Biden's relationship with the generals as you call them, well, President Trump certainly wasn't great. So I think anything's an improvement in that regard. And don't forget President Biden's been around Washington for a couple of decades, he's well-known to the more senior generals who each have a certain amount of Washington time.

Larry Bernstein:

We got a question from Ruth Mandel, she's a professor in the department of anthropology at UCL in London. She asks a question about nation building in a country like Afghanistan, is that folly to begin with because it really isn't a nation, it's really just a collection of ethnic groups? Your thoughts on nation building in Afghanistan as a project?

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

Well, 1500 years ago, and you can see them when you're flying in a helicopter or low over some of the deserts. 1500 years ago, there were a complicated system of irrigation canals, which would take the spring runoff from the mountains, the Hindu Kush and push the water out onto the plains to allow crops to grow. So in one sense, though nation building and Afghanistan you're quite right, has not been a coherent nation except for one or two brief periods of its history, perhaps the most recent, less than 100 years ago.

If a significant proportion of the population want to better themselves, want to make sure that there's a difference in how their sons and daughters can have expectations for more peaceful or prosperous life and to do that, they're willing to invest in the concept of nation. Then I think it's in all our interests to give them a hand. Now how much, and under what circumstances? That's a tough question to decide, but that's why we've got international bodies to help us make those sorts of decisions. It was the right thing to do considering the size and the numbers of folks who were clamoring for change.

Larry Bernstein:

We have a question from Alan Herskowitz. Here's what he asks. He wonders whether or not making a democracy out of Afghanistan was a worthy project. We tried in Iraq, we tried experiments in Libya and Afghanistan. It doesn't appear to be working too well in the Islamic world. Is there something that's specific about Islamic nations that makes this more challenging? Is it cultural? What's going on there?

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

I'm not sure it's specific to Islamic nations. I do know that there is a very strongly held belief amongst progressives, those who have a sort of an air of sophistication and almost a relentless desire to try and better themselves and others, that democracy is the most efficient and effective and egalitarian form of rule, and I happen to agree with them. There's also a flip side, a darker side of the argument, which if you speak it aloud these days, you tend to get yelled at by just about everybody that certain nations may not be ready for democracy. In other words, they don't have the same judicial standards, they don't have the same cultures in terms of discourse and debate.

And in nations that are recently fractured or there's significant hostilities between tribal groupings or ethnic subdivisions, it can be tough. As a matter of fact, I know several democracies that are incredibly sophisticated and successful, where there's still significant tensions between linguistic groups or religious groups. Nation building as an idea is a good one. The devil is in the details and how much do you apply? And the whole idea that democratic values, how much do you discern in terms of the populations willing to adapt them and adopt them? That's a tough one.

Larry Bernstein:

You mentioned specifically protecting Afghan women and girls and their rights, their ability to play football and be educated. You mentioned in your prepared remarks. But when we sent the military to Afghanistan, we went there to kill Osama Bin Laden to make sure that that country was unable to project force against the United States and its allies. To what extent should the demands change or morph into a pro women or pro-democracy or pro human rights and away from a more simplistic, understandable military objective?

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

What this recent debacle in Afghanistan and debacle in the sense of how it ended, is going to be studied in staff colleges and universities for the next 100 years, amongst others that have happened and will happen in the future.

It started with counter-terrorism like you've identified: hunt and kill. And actually the United States in the main assisted by some others did a hell of a good job at targeting those specific individuals that had either contributed to 9/11 or were engaged in supporting those activities in which the protagonists of 9/11 were allowed to flourish and thrive. Then we moved into counterinsurgency, dealing with those who were trying to overthrow the government, the remnants of the Soviet withdrawals and then what happened after the Taliban were there last time and demonstrated such savagery towards women and girls. And then we started getting into nation building because a whole bunch of folk quite rightly looked around and said, "Well, we could do more. We could do more to help this group. We could do more over here. Why aren't girls going to school? Why don't we have female infantry officers in the Afghan army? Why is it that there's no women in the shuras, let alone the nascent parliament?"

And at some point, you had counter-terrorism activities alongside counterinsurgency efforts with nation building all wrapped up into a complex ball. And it's easy in retrospect to say, "Well, we should have done one or the other. A light touch with just the hunting and killing, a medium

touch with counterinsurgency and not so much nation building." Difficult though, when you're dealing with hundreds of thousands of people who want just a little bit more to get a crop in that isn't opium that could actually contribute to foodstuffs or more legitimacy. So that's going to be something that they're going to talk about in the staff colleges for a long time.

Larry Bernstein:

You talked about staff colleges and learning from our mistakes. But what this experience most reminds me of is Vietnam. We came with certain objectives, it morphed, we lost our willingness to fight and then we had this incredibly embarrassing withdrawal. And a power vacuum that resulted in a loss of rights and loss of life to our allies who had supported us. But another way it was similar was that there were allies of North Vietnam in the area which prevented us from taking the war to them and they had constant ability to resupply. And in this example, I'm thinking of Pakistan and their willingness to provide certain elements of support to the Taliban. To what extent is Pakistan responsible for this victory of the Taliban?

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

I think they, and a bunch of other neighbors have been enablers for a very long time, and just as is true of what's happened in Vietnam. Let's not forget one of the trigger points for the American forces going in was the disasters that befell the French army.

Pakistan has had a role to play. They have issues with their neighbors, which are complex and dangerous. And at best, I think they've tried to see and neutralize Afghanistan to operate against elements inside Pakistan. And their Northwest frontier region is extraordinarily problematic and it is home to a variety of massive displaced person refugee camps, which have turned into training centers for young Afghan, mainly men who cross the Pakistan-Afghan border who have killed our soldiers in large numbers and Afghan civilians.

Larry Bernstein:

And we have a question about multilateral support for these sorts of objectives. Canada was a leading force in Afghanistan. The United States has limited means, we can't fight multiple wars at the same time. How does Canada view itself and its role to support these sort of activities? And why did Canada cut and run a decade before us? What motivated their decision to no longer want to fight the fight as you called it, the good fight? Was it too expensive in loss of life and in treasure? And Canada wasn't alone.

There were other allies of the West who sort of slipped away. When the US went to fight in Iraq, we said to our allies, "You take care of Afghanistan. We're going to go fight a different war. It's up to you." But then they sort of disappeared. How do we think about maintaining multinational support for these sorts of peace keeping operations and why it just the United States that was left to take the last chopper out?

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

Let me answer that last question first. The United States is not perfect, no nation is, but as a soldier, as a pragmatist, as someone who's studied my profession in a variety of universities and

staff colleges around the world, I'm kind of glad the United States is the world's superpower. And I'm kind of glad that it's been, though sanguinary at times, it's been much more benevolent than if you look through centuries gone by when there was one or two nations that were vastly more powerful than others, it was pretty unpleasant for everybody else around them. The United States has tried to help, they haven't been shy of committing blood and treasure, to use your language, to solving really complicated and wicked problems. The strength of their economy, of their democracy, their enthusiasm, their energy has been infectious, as has their culture for pretty close to a century. There are near peer competitors that are getting stronger, especially China. The Russian bear is diminished but it still got claws.

And the United States is and has been the world's policeman for at least 80 years of the last century. Everyone loves to criticize, but I think a whole bunch of people secretly are kind of grateful. And that's why whenever there's a multinational problem that's wickedly complicated and lives are being lost in large numbers, people will say, "Well, where's the United States?"

The Americans have tried to build consensus and multinational for, be it the United Nations or NATO or a variety of other regional organizations. And at times they've had to go it alone, usually quietly, but someone eventually has got to do it. The flip side of that argument is no. No, no one has to do it. And just rely on the innate common sense and the ability of folk to get along and it'll eventually settle out. Well, tragically it doesn't. Someone has to do that job.

Larry Bernstein:

One of the reasons that Biden gave for leaving Afghanistan was to reallocate resources, to pivot to use the Obama word to Asia with our finite resources. The United States with its coalition partners, which they refer to as the Quad: India, the United States, Australia, and Japan plan to contain Chinese power in the South China Sea with the objective of maintaining the independence of Taiwan. But stories like Afghanistan illustrate the flaws of multilateral organizations or combinations of states working together on a mission that will take time and energy. How do you think about the Quad's ability to contain Chinese power, and does giving up on Afghanistan undermine future missions?

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

Well, let me just build on your question and point out to use a naval analogy and full disclosure, I'm an army guy. But if the intent is to try and contain China using the Quad with the strategic objective of the preservation of Taiwan, and of course other like-minded nations, by the abrupt and hurried withdrawal which has led to questioning of America's will to contribute to international stability missions, and as well has sort of sent a shudder through a bunch of allies that have come to rely on the steady presence of the United States, I noticed that there's a picture of the head of the Taliban and the Ambassador of China to Afghanistan in a variety of newspapers. And let's not forget that China has a border with Afghanistan just in the Badakhshan Province to the north.

China has the ability to assist with mischief that may arise out of Afghanistan. China has the potential to do that. Will they? We don't know. But if we don't have folks there, we certainly won't be able to influence what happens, at least not directly. And the impact of what has just

happened in Afghanistan, the ripples of that will be felt for at least a generation or two in the region, if not further afield.

Larry Bernstein:

Well, you got a question from a mutual friend of ours, Alex Graham. He asks, did the diversion of US forces to the invasion of Iraq doom the Afghan mission at its birth?

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

No, I don't think so. And a lot of my professional colleagues will disagree, but Afghanistan started out as being a light touch, the counter-terrorism moving into counterinsurgency. It wasn't until nation building really took off that you had the demand for more troops to essentially help with the stability operations inside the various provinces and districts.

Generals always want more troops, been one, ask for more all the time. It's up to the political masters to decide what is reasonable and what impact, not exceeding to the generals demand, will have on the probable outcome of the war. And there's a variety of political factors. But no, I don't think it had a terribly negative effect.

The big issue is that the good fight was fought for 20 years. Women and children in Afghanistan for those 20 years, in many cases were allowed to spread their wings and fly, much more so than in the past. I think all that's going to come to a shuttering halt. But the real impact of Afghanistan will be felt amongst those who are watching the issue with cold, hardened, ruthless eyes, people who are not necessarily our friends.

Larry Bernstein:

Why did Canada leave the coalition?

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

Lost the will to fight. That simple. Just like what happened now with the United States, just happened to us sooner. And by the way, when I say lost the will to fight, perhaps I should rephrase that. The political elite in Canada lost the will to fight. Soldiers didn't. And I suspect the average Canadian in the street was quite proud of what their troops were doing, not only in fighting and protecting those who were seeking a better life, but also some of the nation building activities like building schools for girls and helping plant crops and veterinary training to people taking care of animals, and the list goes on. And that's what does happen in democracy. See, the political elite lose the will to fight.

Larry Bernstein:

There are a lot of NGOs that ended up in Afghanistan. My friend, Roy Stewart started a NGO in Kabul. And as I understand that there are 10,000 to 15,000 American citizens who remain in Afghanistan, I assume predominantly worked at NGOs, trying to improve the quality of life for Afghans and build institutions. Why do you think that we hadn't really considered how to get our citizens out earlier? Why did we wait to get these people out? How did we not plan the end game very well?

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

I've met Roy. I had the privilege. He's a remarkable fellow, a true, a true gentleman, a true adventurer, who actually walked across Afghanistan shortly before I arrived there ... If I tried to do the same, I'd make damn sure I was surrounded by several hundred of the best soldiers in the world with air cover. So quite a guy.

The 15,000 remaining Americans, it's tragic what's happening in and around them. I believe the State Department for the last month or so has been fairly vocal in trying to warn people that this was possible. But to get to the root of the question, why wasn't it better organized for the end game? I think people had a sense that shortly after the Americans withdrew their air power and the technicians to support and fix the machines that provided that air power, all of whom were American contractors, that the end would not be far away. I just don't think they thought it would end that soon.

And this is often the case. People think more of the journey and not the end. And there's a certain amount of denial, and people sometimes under those stressful circumstances and especially in Kabul, they hear sometimes what they want to hear, not what they should be listening to.

Larry Bernstein:

One of your responsibilities was being a senior commander with NATO. And that's just at another multilateral organization whose purpose is to defend Western Europe, Canada, the United States. How does that organization able to adapt and morph to deal with issues like Afghanistan or provide support for the Quad in case of an invasion of Taiwan, how does that organization work and can it be effective outside its original goals and objectives?

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

NATO was set up as a defense coalition, essentially focused on preventing the re-occurrence of war, specifically nuclear war, and the designated enemy, and the most likely at the time being Russia and the Warsaw Pact. Under a specific article in the constitution of NATO, if an attack is made on one of the member states, then the other member states of NATO have an obligation to assist in their defense. In this case, it was determined correctly that the attack originated from elements trained and organized within Afghanistan. And so when the United States went in, they invoked that and asked allies to help, and most did, including Canada. And by the way, I still, I haven't gone around to answer your question about the details of the Canada-US relationship. I'll do that at the end.

NATO, and I was part of that first force commanded by a NATO three-star. I was his deputy to a German three-star, as a Canadian two-star, and was able to help in a variety of areas, ops and stuff that happens at night and all that kind of good stuff. It was a transition. It was complicated. It was cumbersome as coalition warfare often is. But I think any general with operational experience in a contemporary theater will tell you it's better to fight with allies than with none, because at the general officer level, you have to be aware of what you're trying to achieve politically, you have to understand that the application of force is there to achieve

certain specific political objectives. And the more voices you can have around the tables of the world, the better when it comes time to come with solutions and as well burden sharing.

Larry Bernstein:

Andrew, I like to end on a note of optimism. This is a challenging one. What are you optimistic about as it relates to the US mission in Afghanistan?

Ret. Lt. General Hon. Andrew Leslie:

For 20 years, people were given the opportunity to better themselves, and two generations, maybe even three of women and girls became police officers, helicopter pilots, doctors, members of parliament, artists, robotic engineers, soccer players, and the list goes on and on and on. That spark has been reignited because it was there 50 or 60 years ago as well. And no matter what happens, and this is going to be tragic and awful and bloody, and is just going to make, it's going to be repulsive what is going to happen there in the short term, but that flame is there.

And it's my hope that the cycle will turn and there'll be progress probably 10 or 15 years out, if not sooner, because like happened last time, the Taliban are not one single group. They're united in ideology, actually a unique interpretation of a specific religion, and they are essentially adopting the same moral attitudes and ideas that existed 600 or 700 years ago. They are fiercely independent. They are professional warriors, not trained soldiers. They're not unified by a code of service discipline. They don't really respect authority that well at all, if it's outside the religious sort of stream. And they are all tribal members. And those tribal tensions, trump all, they will eventually collapse under the weight of their tribal conflicts. And that's when the slain can perhaps come to life again.

Larry Bernstein:

We're going to go to our next speaker Darren Schwartz. Darren is a very good friend of mine, and he was adopted as a child and has been seeking his biological parents for the last 30 years. Darren, go ahead.

Darren Schwartz:

As long as I can remember, I was adopted. I never knew my heritage, but I really never thought about it. I didn't look like anybody else in my family, but it wasn't an issue, did not consume me. I was raised in suburban Detroit by a doting Jewish couple, Maury and Rita Schwartz. And there's been lots of love in my life. Unfortunately, my father died when I was 11. After his death, it became important for me to find who my birth parents were, specifically my birth father. An interesting fact is that most adopted children have fantasies about who their real parents are, and they're typically grandiose. Whether it's an actor or astronaut or a president. No one imagines that their real parents are middle-management.

In 1990, when I was 21 and senior in Michigan State, I decided to look for my birth parents. I called the adoption agency in Michigan that did my adoption, and they connected me with Marilyn McAllister. I introduced myself and to my incredible shock she said, "Yes, I remember

you and I remember your adopted father, meaning Maury Schwartz." She had literally done my adoption 21 years earlier. But all she was willing to give me was non-identifying biological information, which she sent me by mail. When I received it, it stated that my mother, birth mother was Lutheran, some information about her medical history and how many siblings she had. And again, to my surprise, my birth father's information listed that he was Lutheran and similar information about him.

I'd always been told that my birth father was Jewish, my birth mother was Lutheran. It didn't matter if my father was Lutheran. It was just a big surprise. However, a few days later I got another letter from Marilyn that said, "Darren, I'm so sorry. We made a mistake. There were two names for your father in your file." And what had happened is that when my birth mother went in originally to the adoption agency, she was joined by her mother, and she was embarrassed to admit that she didn't know the real birth father, so she gave a name that her mother knew. There were two names for your biological father in our file. But at that point that's all the information that I could get.

I said to Marilyn. "Marilyn, you can't by law give me the name of my birth father or my birth mother." She said, "That's correct." I said, "Can you give me the name of the person who is not my birth father in the file?" And I suspect that she'd ever been asked that question before. And she said yes. So she gave me that guy's name. His name was Dennis. And I figured I could talk to Dennis and maybe backtrack and find information about my birth parents.

I gave Dennis a call. And he said, "I think I'm your dad. I think it's me. And based on the timeframe of when you were born and when you were conceived, I think it's me." So I went in and I met him and we talked and we embraced as father and son. I met his family. And I shared with Marilyn that I think I found my birth father, or I did. A few days later I got a call from a very agitated birth mother who said, "I told them that's not the name of your birth father." I said, "I appreciate that. I'm just doing what I can do. Could you please give me the name of my birth father?" And she's relented and she also had told me that his name was Tony. For this discussion I am going to use the last name Smith as a place holder but it was not Smith. Your father's name is Tony Smith.

My only option at this point in the year 2000 was to mail a letter to all of the Tony Smiths in the country. I mailed all the Tony Smiths in the country, basically are you my daddy letter. I did not receive any replies. The trail for Tony Smith went dead. So fast forward to 2006, ancestry.com took off. I did the DNA test and I did not get find any close relatives whatsoever. My DNA test did however confirm that I was 50% Jewish, which was interesting because I was not positive until then. However, the trail was dead. In 2019, I did a DNA test with 23andMe, and if anyone who knows how those tests work, it'll give you relatives and their names, at least on Ancestry, and what percent you're related to them. I didn't get anything that was material.

About four weeks ago, I logged on to ancestry.com and to my shock and I almost fell over when it disclosed that I was related to a Dave Smith. It was the first time I'd ever seen the Smith name as a potential cousin. I immediately reached out to Dave. He had just done this himself. And he also had not known his own family, but just four months prior, when he did this, he connected with all the Smiths. He said he would help and get back to me. He texted me a week later and said he had some information. We got on the phone. He said, "Darren, I know who

your father is." I was in the ninth hole of Belvedere Country Club in Charlevoix, Michigan and I almost collapsed. He said my father's real name was Ricky. Tony was a nickname. My dad had left the country in the early '70s and he is alive and well living in Norway with two daughters and a son.

I was floored. This information had come from my aunt Bonnie, who my cousin Dave had met. The family didn't know about me. She did not know if she was going to call and tell Ricky that, and she didn't know if she wanted to talk to me yet. I thanked Dave from the bottom of my heart. I played on and made a 15-foot putt for par.

A few days later, I received a voicemail. Now I will do my best to imitate the accent. "Hello Darren. This is Tony. You say I'm your father. I'm trying to reach you. I don't know how to get a hold of you. Please call me." I was paralyzed with emotions I cannot describe. I had three thoughts. Oh my God, this is my father I've been looking for, for 32 years and I've wondered about for 53 years. Two, he has a Norwegian accent, which seemed super cool. And three, I'm already in trouble for not calling him back.

I called him back. First thing he said was, "Darren, I did not know. Had I known, I would never have let you go." And that was a powerful, incredible statement that I'd waited for my entire life. And although that was profound, for some reason the next thing he said made me break out sobbing, which was everybody in the entire family is so excited to meet you.

My dad's story is that he left the US in the early '70s, traveled up and down the Mexican and South American coast, surfing and playing music. He was a singer songwriter. He said he had a private concert for the Maharaja and he partied with Mick Jagger. He wound up in Norway and has lived there for 50 years. He has sent me some of the songs that I'd say is a combination of Cat Stevens and John Denver. We've spoken many times. I Snapchat with my new sisters every few days. I've talked to my father many times. I plan to visit him and see my new family in October if COVID allows.

Larry Bernstein:

It's fantastic Darren. Can you expand on your relationship with your birth mother? She was resistant. Can you explain what she had to say, why she didn't want to have a relationship, and what that meant to you?

Darren Schwartz:

Well, my biological mother never told her dad she was pregnant and had a child. I suspect that they were very religious. The only person that knew about my birth was her mother when she was away at school. She was a freshman at Michigan State and her family wasn't seeing her a lot. And now she had kids, she had a family, and she didn't want that to be broken up. I think at the time when I spoke to her, her kids were probably in their early teens.

And I felt very rejected. It was very upsetting. But because my adopted father had died, Maury Schwartz, he's my dad, my father, he was always my hero. I wanted to, in a way kind of replace him, which kind of seems unrealistic. But the one thing my birth mother said, and she said it multiple times to me is, "I gave you, life. I'm sorry I can't give you more." In time, I've come to really appreciate and honor those words.

Larry Bernstein:

It's incredible that she was aware that she could give you, life and no more. What should we be thinking about in the terms of women that give children up for adoption? Is that a fair expectation? And that when we do go seek out biologic parents and they've moved on with their lives, does it make adoption ex ante that much more difficult?

Darren Schwartz:

The answer is that I think that she did what she could and she was young. And I think that as an adoptive kid, like all kids, all you think about is yourself. And as you grow up, you kind of realize that it's not really like that and the world's different. So I will tell you, honestly, I was very frustrated and very hurt and angry at that moment. Like I said, I've come to really appreciate what she's done. The way to think about it, I think that's every person's individual opinion.

Larry Bernstein:

You were very clever, Darren, in terms of manipulating Ms. McCallum. They had certain rules and the rules were simple. Her job was not to give away the name of the birth mother and not to give away the name of the birth father. And then you said, "Well, if that person in my file is not my father, could I have his name?" And she willingly gave it up. Did you get around the original intent of the organization, which was to protect the mother and father? How do you think about your ability to break through?

Darren Schwartz:

And I think by manipulation, I think you mean the caring, thoughtful approach. Well, here's what I know, is that since 1980, I was born in the late '60s, I think in 1980, at least in Michigan, every family or parents that give the child up for adoption are presented with a waiver, meaning that when the kid that you're giving up for adoption is 18, do you authorize that child to reach out to you? And I don't know what the percent of parents that actually do that are, but it didn't exist when I was that age. I think that their job is to protect the parents. But I think that that law implies that there's an understanding that there's going to be a desire for children to reach out and try to find their parents. I think it's a little bit on both sides.

Larry Bernstein:

Technology is what really changed the game in the past 30 years. Your example of 23andMe and Ancestry.com provided you a list of relatives. It allowed you to fill in the blank to find Tony, your father. And there's going to be a lot of surprises about who your real biological father is, even within marriage. I have a cousin of mine who donated to a sperm bank and has multiple children through that method. There's going to be a lot of surprises and discovery about biological parents in the near future offered by this technology. Is this a source for good? Is it a source for bad? How should we think about this changing dynamic?

Darren Schwartz:

I've heard multiple stories already, and I'd say that several are not so good. You have parents, people that gave up a kid for adoption, and now they're in their forties or fifties or sixties, their oldest child is 30, whatever it is, and then now a 35 year old kid comes out of the woodwork. I've heard those stories. At the same time, I have heard wonderful stories like mine. And oddly enough, mine is both. I would love to talk to my birth mother, but she wouldn't do it. And my birth father has embraced me and vice versa. I think that technology is incredible, but there will absolutely be some pain as well some joy.

Larry Bernstein:

There's this constant universal question about nature versus nurture. And as you've met your father, what have you found similar? What have you found different? And how would you explain your connection?

Darren Schwartz:

It's incredible. First of all, nurture. My adopted father Maury Schwartz was incredible. He had a great sense of humor. Many people think that I'm very funny.

Larry Bernstein:

I agree.

Darren Schwartz:

My biological birth father is a singer-songwriter. I'm a singer-songwriter albeit a poor one, but it's always been a passion of mine. So I think I got the passion, maybe not the skill. He's zany and funny. I think similar, he collects things: I do too. I collect lighters and glassware. And his profession in Norway was working with startup businesses and I've been part of early-stage companies. He scuba dives. We both went to Michigan State. I'm guessing he got a higher grade point average than I did.

Larry Bernstein:

What would you advise someone who is adopted to do, given your experience? Was this a worthwhile journey, given the pros and cons of going through all this? I also find it rather miraculous that you were able to find Tony, given that he lives in Europe. How do you think about the challenges ahead for someone in the same position as you?

Darren Schwartz:

Well, I think it's a personal thing. I think the first thing that has to happen is someone who's adopted want to find their birth parents. I don't think that's necessarily a hard and fast rule. I have a very close friend of mine who was adopted. And he said, "Well, I don't know if I want to find my birth parents, my birth mother. I feel like it'd be an insult to my mother," which I think was a very profound thing, because he came from his background. Mine was mine. So I thought that was very interesting. I think it's your own personal journey.

I think what's universal is the feeling of being connected, a feeling of belonging, and that is universal. And for me, I think, in general, adopted people have that curiosity. But for me, I think that was really accelerated because I'd lost my father who adopted me. But before he died, it was never an issue. I think at some level, I felt proud of it, like somebody wanted me. But I think some people feel the opposite, someone didn't want me. I think the answer is people want to be connected, they want to be loved, they want to be part of something.

Larry Bernstein:

Well, I have Robi Ludwig on the line as well. She's a psychotherapist. Robi, you want to join the conversation?

Robi Ludwig:

Sure.

Larry Bernstein:

What do you make of this universal desire?

Robi Ludwig:

Oh, it's really interesting. I think it is wanting to see people who look like them, that there is that visual reminder of, who do I look like? Who do I belong with? They say psychologically that people who are adopted are born with this sense of abandonment. I don't know if that's true across the cases out there. And I've met people who were adopted who did not want to search for their birth parents because they so loved their adopted parents. I think it makes sense to do whatever works, but it also makes sense to be prepared for the worst case scenario as well.

Larry Bernstein:

Darren, how much do you look like your biological father?

Darren Schwartz:

A lot. He also is very good looking. But my cousin Dave, who's one of the heroes of this story. Because I called him and he had just gone through the same thing and he's like, "I'm on it." My aunt Bonnie, who's the one that got this information. During that time before they were deciding if they're going to connect me with my birth father, they sent a picture. And when I first got the picture, I was outside, sun was glaring. I looked at the picture like, "Who's sending me a picture of me?" And it was my dad. I absolutely look just like him. When I sent the photo to my family. They all almost plotzed, which is actually the word one of my older aunts used, which is Yiddish for almost falling down. And Robi, I think you're right. It was an amazing piece that had always been missing. I didn't look like anybody from my adopted family. So I agree.

Larry Bernstein:

Within days of discovering who your family was, you were able to meet your uncle Ted and play golf with him at the country club across the street from where I am right now. How was it

meeting the first person from your biological family? And what that would mean for meeting the rest of your family?

Darren Schwartz:

It was amazing. I had my second conversation with my birth father, which was with the family in Norway. The second day after first contact, we had a Zoom and we saw everybody. And moments after hanging up with that, I got a call and it was, "Hey, Darren it's your aunt Bonnie." And so that was my father's sister. We talked to her for a while. And then I hung up the phone and I got another call, "Darren, it's your uncle Ted." And we talked. I was like, "Uncle Ted." All of a sudden, I've got people I've got to talk to. He's a golfer. I said, "Where do you golf?" He said, "I golf at Sunset Valley in Highland Park." Sunset Valley is two and a half blocks from my house. He's been golfing there probably for five or 10 years. I'm sure I was playing the same golf course with him at some point.

Darren Schwartz:

And I thought, I said, "Let's get together," and said, "How about golf?" "How's Tuesday for you?" I'm like, "Tuesday's great." And within three days, I was on the golf course with uncle Ted who's given me all the backstory of the family. And it was interesting because I now have a higher sense of responsibility in an odd way, even though these people are new to me. But it was pretty amazing.

Larry Bernstein:

Darren, I'd like to end on a note of optimism. What do you have to say this optimistic about both your own family and the role of finding your biological parents?

Darren Schwartz:

Well, I think that the most important things we haven't talked about, is my family, the family that adopted me and all my cousins and aunts and uncles. I didn't need to go find my birth family to find love and belonging. These are the people I grew up with, my cousins, which are like my brothers, and sisters and aunts and uncles. And what's also important about that is that they were totally supportive. When I told some of them what was going on, and they all cried and were filled with joy and excitement. I think ultimately, the takeaway, whether you layer in what's going on with COVID and everyone being at home and just the world being upside down, is that what's optimistic is people and our world and communities have a really high capacity for love and taking care of family.

Larry Bernstein:

Darren, thank you so much. We move on to our final speaker, Robi Ludwig, and this is a topic that is where it starts as love and ends in depth. So, this is a discussion about Robi's book about killing your spouse.

Robi Ludwig:

Thank you, Larry. A woman's life is safer with a stranger than with a man she knows. Think about that for a moment. One out of every 10 people murdered is by an intimate partner, and seven of those 10 murdered are women. Over the years, many of these cases have attracted national attention, as millions of viewers and true crime aficionados try to understand how one spouse could kill another. As an incurable romantic, when I was asked to write about this subject, what fascinated me the most was this question: how could someone fall in love with and marry his or her killer? I was curious if there was some unconscious suicidal wish lurking behind this partner choice. But this wasn't the case for most of the homicides I studied. The more striking similarity amongst these ill-fated victims was an idealization about romance. Blindsided by love, the capacity to see the red flags just were not there.

Violence is a dark contrast to what many of us still believe marriage is supposed to be. For the cases I discussed on TV and in my book *Until Death Do Us Part*, it was not uncommon for these doomed couples to appear happy and in love. Very often, they were the love at first sight couples. No one would ever have predicted marital homicide was around the corner. There's a dark side to all relationships. Culturally, we're taught the romantic ideal is reality. And the quest for romantic perfection is a powerful drive. But the truth is we all marry people who, on some level, are unknown to us. And part of what fascinates us about these couples who've revealed their dangerous side is that they seem so much like us, yet they're not. There's a myriad of reasons for each type of intimate partner homicide. No two killings are exactly the same, but each marital killer shares an inability to neutralize their rage and aggression, and ultimately decides to act on their homicidal fantasies.

Given our timeframe, I'm going to focus on some of the motives behind the pregnancy killer. Expected mothers are more likely to die from murder than pregnancy related medical problems. The same myth that airbrushed the realities of marriage also impact our ideas about having children. Pregnancy can bring a whole host of strong emotions, and not all of them are positive, thoughts like, "I don't want to have a baby. Now, my life will be over." It can also represent the death of one's youth and freedom. The Scott Peterson and Chris Watts headlines brought national attention to the unpleasant reality, pregnancy can be a dangerous time for some women. It's hard to imagine an act more horrifying than killing a pregnant partner, even worse when that killer is her husband and the father of her unborn child.

In some cases, the birth of a child marks the end of a hedonistic time in a man's life. The days of seeking pleasure without having to answer to anyone are over. These men don't want to be held back by a wife or child. Approaching fatherhood can sometimes trigger depression, an unfounded obsession with health concerns, and in the most severe cases, suicide and or homicide. And if this wife got pregnant against her partner's wishes, the male's aggression factor increases. Abusive husbands may want to harm the fetus because they feel jealous over the attention their partner is getting, or they feel neglected and no longer a priority. They know any threat to the unborn child will upset the mother. They falsely think targeting the fetus will return this lost attention back to them. In some cases, the abuse from the male partner is triggered by the stress brought on by the pregnancy, like worries over finances.

The pregnant woman is more tired and may not want sex, getting her spouse to feel abandoned, replaced, and rejected. Some men feel pregnancy challenges their idea of manhood, which doesn't include taking care of babies. For Scott Peterson and Chris Watts, the

Colorado man who killed his pregnant wife and two children, pregnancy symbolizes a loss of freedom to live a carefree life on their own terms. They believe their charm and good looks would help them get away with murder. After all, who would believe such attractive, normal looking guys could do such a heinous thing? Scott and Chris felt their wives were interfering and blocking them from living the life they deserved to live. Their wives made a choice to get pregnant, and now it was time for these husbands to make their choice, to get rid of the person who was stopping them from being successful, happy, and free. Scott and Chris came first, second, and third in their world. No one was going to get in the way of them authoring their own life, even if it meant their wives. And in Chris Watts' case, his entire family had to die.

Underneath the rage and despair is a grandiosity, the feeling they had the right to change their fate by any means. Homicide offered them a life do over that was too appealing to pass up. For Scott and Chris, their lethal philosophy was, if you're not for me and only me, you're against me. And that simply was not okay. This egocentric mindset and primitive problem solving skills were the impetus for these murders. There's a quote, "Love is blind, but marriage is an eye opener." The truth is we don't really know our partner in depth until we've lived together for a long time or have been married. Killers can be quite lovable. The non-homicidal aspect of their personality can be charming and pleasant, successfully splitting off the dangerous and unlovable parts of themselves when they aren't angry.

There are many reasons why someone might kill, including hatred, jealousy, fear, greed, or revenge. In some cases, these killers don't want to kill their partner. They just want to get rid of the unlovable parts and keep the rest. Murder fascinates us because the desire to kill comes from the deepest part of our psyche, living inside our unconscious mind. It's nature's way of helping us to survive. Murder doesn't happen out of nowhere. While it's hard to project marital homicide, there are signs to keep in mind. For the homicidal male, poor ideas about women, high frequency of violence, depression, use of drugs or alcohol, possession of weapons, and threats to kill and or to commit suicide. When we idealize success and what it means to be happy, the frustrations of life can make any of us vulnerable to anger, and in its worst form, violence. And for spousal killers like Scott and Chris, murder is seen as a reboot, a solution for emotionally surviving, resolving interpersonal conflicts, and getting another chance to achieve their life dreams.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks, Robi. Let's start with a question about why spousal killing fascinates us so much. There's a whole industry of television programs about some spousal killing. The OJ Simpson trial, for example, this took on global interest for a marital dispute gone wrong. Why do spousal killings become front page news? What is our fascination? Why do we care so much about it? What is the universality of it?

Robi Ludwig:

We go into relationships thinking, "This person is going to help us become who we want to be," that, "This person is going to take care of us." And so within any long-term relationship, there's disappointment. And these people who act on their murderous feelings, in some ways, they're extreme versions of all of us. We've all been in relationships where at times we wanted to kill

the partner or just wanted to seek revenge, or whatever the case may be. Even for couples who divorce, they're higher functioning than these people who actually murder. But I think it's very identifiable, and there is something by curiously thrilling about watching somebody behave in this primitive way when we can understand maybe the feeling or the mindset, but know better than to act on it.

Larry Bernstein:

I hear that half of all marriages end in divorce, but very rarely does it get to be murderous. Why do certain spouses choose murder over divorce as a solution? You kept mentioning rage and inability to control emotion. Is it emotive failure? What is it that divorce solution isn't the right way to go?

Robi Ludwig:

I would get a lot of questions when I would talk about these high-profile marital homicide cases. Why didn't they just get divorced? And really, divorce is expensive. It sometimes takes a really long time. A person's status changes. There's a lot of financial loss. And in some cases, a person's standing in the community falls. And so there are a lot of risks associated, even today for getting divorced. And the people who end up killing, I think in part have personality disorders where their needs come first, and they truly see their partner as getting in the way. The partner is the obstruction to them living a happy life. And their coping skills are not highly developed. They're more primitive.

Robi Ludwig:

So for somebody who's having an argument with their partner, sometimes humor can really reduce that tension in the room. Or the ability to communicate better so that each person can see the other's side. I think with the people that we see who murder, they don't consider their partner as a three-dimensional human being. They become demonized in a way. And it's almost like a very concretized idea of how to resolve a solution. The partners in the way, get the partner out of the way and like magic. Now they can live a life of freedom, or now they can be with the person they really love, or now they can be truly happy. And so it's a distortion in thinking in addition to not being able to neutralize the anger that is going on within them.

Larry Bernstein:

One of my favorite chapters in your book was on black widows. These were women who had killed a number of their husbands in the past, usually for the insurance money, that there had always been very little love in their relationships, and this has been some sort of diabolical plan from the beginning to get the insurance money. That seems very different than the other examples you gave of rage and aggression, to plan subterfuge by the black widow. How do you compare the black widow and the pregnancy murder?

Robi Ludwig:

The black widow is basically a con woman, and the fact that she targets her partner shows a deep rage about relationships, however that gets expressed. So in the cases I wrote about in my

book, there was a deep rage towards men, and so they go into the relationship planning their revenge. And also seeing these men as basically ATM machines. So the anger is there. It's like they go into a situation where they already hate who they're with, they just have an agenda. I remember when I was co-hosting *Scorned* on Discovery ID, there was this woman, and all the men were seduced by her, and she would take their money and run and just go on to live her best life until she found her next victim. And what was so striking in Discovery ID, everybody looks like a Victoria Secret model.

So of course, the protagonist was this gorgeous woman, so you could see how men would fall in love with her and be victimized by her willingly. And then they did a split screen and this woman looked like, oh my God, like everything you would never imagine a man would love. And I gave her more credit because she was obviously able to seduce somebody who was vulnerable. And very often con people go after people who are lonely, who are desperate, they have a sixth sense about where they could seduce. So there is a rage there, but it's more, the goal is greed, the goal is retaliation. Only it's probably more transference when you think about it, whatever their hate was towards, it wouldn't surprise me if they were sexually abused, or beat up, or saw something that got them to believe men were evil and deserve to be punished.

Larry Bernstein:

The other example of angry, murderous women was when the man had an affair and really pushed it in their wife's face to a level where the wife could no longer control her rage. There are lots of affairs out there. What is it that causes certain women to crack and others don't? These are very public cases that I'm sure you've dealt with on your television programs. And why does the public find it so scandalous when the women take matters into their own hands to not only kill the man, but also his adulterous?

Robi Ludwig:

I'm thinking of Betty Broderick. She was the perfect example of that. And I think for someone like Betty, she really envisioned life looking a certain way and her husband became her property. And there was a dependency there. In order for Betty to feel good about herself, she needed to be with her husband who she really felt she helped him to become successful, to be the person that he became. And what did he do to thank her? He was disloyal and went with a younger woman. I thought it was interesting in her case, how she killed her ex after stalking him and threatening that she was going to kill him, and his new wife, that she killed her ex and his new wife in their bedroom. And I think that's symbolized a lot, that she did not want to see her ex have a new life with new children. And it's interesting to me that it happened in their bedroom.

And when you saw interviews with Betty Broderick after she was in prison, she was knitting. It seemed like she was still happy that she killed her ex. Why? I think the feeling was, if you're not going to be with me, then it will be till death do us part and I'm going to kill you. You do not deserve to live if you can't honor your agreement or keep your promise. But if you scratch the surface again, there's some kind of impairment because there's no resiliency. The idea to move on and actually have a successful life with other love who can love her differently or better did not exist. So many of these people because of a dependency or an inability to have a resiliency

that's productive, they end up being in prison. And I think of Betty Broderick case, she had no regrets. I think her rage was that deep.

Larry Bernstein:

You mentioned at the beginning of your talk, when we get involved in relationships, when you get involved in a marriage, we really don't know the partner at all. We're blinded by love. And it's true of all of us, of all of our marriages, of all our relationships, we get to be intimate very quickly without a lot of knowledge. There's a lot of risks that we take. And for many of us it turns out fabulous. Why focus on those few rare, bad apples? Why can't we focus on the positive? How should we think about risk taking? And how would you advise our children of taking these risks?

Robi Ludwig:

You bring up a great point. And I've often said the healthier you are as a person, better chance you have of choosing another person who is also healthy. So very often just if someone goes into therapy and can think through, what does a healthy relationship look like? What are the characteristics of somebody who is trustworthy? Somebody that I feel I can grow with? That is tremendously helpful in terms of using your head and your heart to be in a situation that is rewarding, fulfilling and non-murderous. But for people who kind of go into relationships, they're young, and naive, and just think feeling is everything and don't think through, who is this person? What are their past relationships like? To get more information that would fill in the blanks. And it leaves them vulnerable to somebody like an abusive partner who very often comes off as a romantic hero.

They really do put the woman on a pedestal at the beginning. There's something called love bombing, where they buy flowers. They act like these men in the movies or in soap operas. And for somebody who is unaware, they might see that as perfection. So I think that's one thing. But, truly the ability to kind of raise awareness, that there's a difference between romantic fantasy and reality. And the more that we can get that idea across then it's really like armor. It's helping people think through the most important decision in their life, because who you choose as a partner impacts everything. Everything. So I think there probably should be some skills taught in school, or kind of imparting that knowledge of get healthy, be a whole person, and then you'll find someone who is more like-minded and that will be who you resonate with.

Larry Bernstein:

Sometimes when we hire people for jobs we ask for references, maybe your previous places of employment. But when we're dating, we never ask to talk to your old girlfriends or old boyfriends. We would view the question as absurd on its face. But that seems to be what you're suggesting?

Robi Ludwig:

What were your past relationships like? And if there's a lot of hate towards women or a lot of hatred towards exes, that should be something to think about. And this is the challenge with online dating, because you don't really have the advantage of a community who can share

information about who you're dating. But I think it's through conversation and using your intuition, asking questions, how somebody feels about their parents or relationships in general. And people will tell you about themselves, especially at the beginning because they have nothing to lose. Don't dismiss the red flags, consider the red flags,

Darren Schwartz:

You said something else that was very interesting that you should see, relationships that are fulfilling, rewarding and non-murderous. I think that's a fair bar. But I guess my question is, have there been any scenarios or instances where there's a murder, but the murderer gets off because there's some kind of justification? And I don't mean self-defense, but there's some kind of justification, whether it's psychological abuse is proven or something else,.

Robi Ludwig:

I'm sure there are and there should be. And it used to be called battered woman syndrome, and they would consider that in the court of law. And sometimes it works out and sometimes not. But there is a gender bias where actually women are considered less murderous than men. But in some cases, it is life or death. For the woman who is being battered, and beaten and threatened that her husband is going to kill her, if in a moment she feels it is life or death, it's going to be him or her, then what choice does she have in that moment? And very often murderers feel that way anyway. They feel like their partner is draining the life from them and that it's a survival. Now, maybe it's a distortion, but the feeling is it's me or them and the survival instinct kicks in.

I think people do look at those cases very carefully in an attempt to be fair. What was going on in the home? Because some homes are war zones, where people lives are at risk. And it does need to be considered, and hopefully with the right lawyer, it can be, on the right judge or jury.

Larry Bernstein:

I want to just continue on Darren's question about punishment. In reading your book, you often described the Jury verdict for the homicide. And in many of the cases, the jail sentence was life. And they were even considering the death penalty in a number of them. But it seems bizarre that, I mean, you're not going to kill your next spouse. You're not really going to feel this sort of rage and aggression generally. Are we over punishing spousal killers? Should there be much less time in jail for spousal murder as compared to a random killing? Or are we trying to send a message to the community? Look, we find nothing more sacred than marriage, so killing your spouse is going to be the ultimate penalty. How do you think about punishment and spousal rage?

Robi Ludwig:

Of course each case is different. Do I think life for Scott Peterson is a sound sentence? Yes, I do. Because there used to be this thinking that if you beat your partner, well, you're fine in the community. You're probably not going to go up and beat somebody on the outside. So what goes on in the home stays in the home. And that was the thinking for a very long period of time. But then there was a recent study looking at spree killers, and they found that many of the

spree killers were abusive partners. And so to look at this kind of abuse in the home from a different lens, that these people are violent, that they're out of control and dangerous. And it was interesting that they focused on these spree killers and looked back, how were they as husbands? How were they as fathers?

And there's another case in my book where I called it the transference killer. This guy had this beautiful wife, beautiful life. He ends up killing his wife, getting away with it because it looked like an accident. Then he married somebody who looked exactly like his first wife. Exactly. They almost looked like twins, and he kills her too. And the second time he didn't get away with it. So when you use murder as a problem solving solution, your mind is already gone there. There are no more boundaries. That becomes a potential solution. I think these people can be dangerous, because they probably will get married and the rage will come up for them. And the potential to be dangerous is there.

Larry Bernstein:

Robi, I'd like to end each talk on a note of optimism. How would you combine marriage, love, anger into something positive to end on?

Robi Ludwig:

Well, I think if we expect it to be a norm, but not a deal breaker, then mentally we will be prepared instead of being shocked. Oh, marriage should be perfect. You should be happy every day. I think for young couples, sharing the realities and offering tools. And also helping people get the mental health treatment that they need as soon as they need it. To take away the stigma. Because very often what I see in my own practice, and I have somebody who was dating somebody who was really lethal, just teaching her just a few small ideas, and now she's in a nice relationship with a dentist who's non homicidal. So sometimes it just takes a little bit of information to set your life on a better path.

Larry Bernstein:

Robi, thank you.

That ends today's session. I want to make a plug for next week's episode.

Our first speaker will be Martin Seligman who runs the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania. Marty is one of the leaders of the new field of Happiness and has written books on learned optimism, authentic happiness and hope. He will be discussing his life work from his book *The Hope Circuit*. Marty is one of the most important living Psychologists and is the former President of the American Psychological Association.

Our second speaker is my friend Michael Kahana who is also a Professor of Psychology at UPenn. Michael studies memory, and I am an investor in Michael's new venture Nia that helps people improve their memory. Michael has found a way to install very small wires to key areas of the human brain that can then be zapped with an electric pulse when the individual enters a

poor memory state. The results have been incredible and his research may improve the lives of those with Alzheimer's, dementia, or anyone who has a poor memory.

Our final speaker will be Jorge Castaneda who is the former Foreign Minister for Mexico and previously ran for President of Mexico in 2006. Jorge is now a Professor of Political Science at NYU and the recent author of the book entitled America Through Foreign Eyes. I expect to learn from Jorge about the view of America from senior government officials in Mexico. Jorge is an expert in the Left-Wing movements in Latin America, so I hope to find out what will happen in Cuba and Venezuela in the years ahead.

If you are interested in listening to a replay of today's What Happens Next program or any of our previous episodes or wish to read a transcript, you can find them on our website Whathappensnextin6minutes.com. Replays are also available on Apple Podcasts, Podbean and Spotify.

I would like to thank today's speakers for their insights. I would also like to thank our listeners for their time and for engaging with these complex issues. Please stay tuned next Sunday to find out What Happens Next.